PG SW/PS S4-04 (DSE)

# TWO YEAR MASTER'S DEGREE COURSE

## (CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

### SEMESTER IV

# WOMEN AND POLITICS

Surya Kumar Bhuyan School of Social Sciences

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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## COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is discipline specific elective course of Fourth Semester of MA in Political Science of KKHSOU which is entitled as Women and Politics. The course 'Women and Politics' is designed to help the learners to have an understanding of various important issues associated with the role of women in society and politics. The first unit of the Course makes the learners familiar with the basic concepts of gender and patriarchy. This unit discusses the meaning and nature of gender and patriarchy and forms of patriarchy. Feminism as a movement has assumed its present shape by way of its evolution through various phases. The second unit of the course has described the history and development of feminism with reference to the first, second, third and fourth waves of feminism. A number of theories have been formulated whereby the concept of feminism is sought to be explained through particular standpoints. Accordingly, various theories of feminism, such as theory of Liberal Feminism, theory of Marxist Feminism, theory of Socialist Feminism, theory of Radical Feminism, theory of Cultural Feminism, theory of Eco Feminism, theory of Postmodern Feminism, theory of Multicultural Feminism, theory of Global Feminism are discussed in the third unit. The fourth unit highlights two very important concepts associated with feminists movement, such as gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. The fifth unit discusses the history of women's movement, contemporary women's movement, women's movement in India, various issues concerning women in South Asia. Family is the primary unit of the society. Position of women in the family reflects the position of women in the society. Relationship between family and women, power structure of family, position of women in the family have been discussed in the sixth unit of the course. One major problem faced by women across the world is violence of various forms. Violence against women is a serious crime which violates basic dignity of human being. The seventh unit of the course examines various causes of violence against women, forms of gender based violence more particularly sexual harassement of women at the workplace and female trafficking. Empowerment is one of the important ways through which the position of women can be uplifted to a great extent. The concept of empowerment refers to the process of strengthening oneself to be more potential and powerful to guide himself or herself for a good life and to claim his or her rights to lead a good life. The concept of empowerment of women is related to gender equality. To ensure women empowerment, equality must be established between men and women. Accordingly the eight unit focuses on the concept of gender empowerment, political empowerment of women and the present scenerio of politcal empowerment of women across the world. The ninth unit discusses the issue of political empowerment of women in India and in Assam. In India a number of measures, both constitutional and legislative, have been adopted to ensure political participation of women. But at the same time there also exists various obstacles in the

way of political empowerment of women in our country. The ninth unit discusses the various measures adopted for women empowerment and obstacles in the way of political participation of women. This unit also analyses the position of women in the Indian Parliament and in the Assam Legislative Assembly. The tenth unit deals with the process of economic empowerment of women. This unit also examines various issues and challenges faced by women in the path of economic empowerment. In the eleventh unit importance of economic empowerment and skill development has been discussed. In this context, discussion has been made regarding the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001. In India Self Help Groups (SHGs) have provided significant contribution towards economic empowerment of women. Self Help Groups are voluntary association of people to attain certain collective goals, both economic and social goals. Self Help Groups are normally formed by the economically weaker section of the society, coming from rural or semi-urban areas. Accordingly the twelft unit discusses the role of SHGs in the economic empowerment of women in India and in Assam. The thirteenth unit deals with the impact of various environmental issues on women. The last unit of this course discusses the participation of women in two very important socio-political movements of Assam, such as- the Assam Movement and the Bodoland Movement.

While going through the units of the block, you will find that unit is further divided into certain sections and sub-sections, wherever necessary, for your better understanding. The units carry certain *activities* after a particular section where needed. These “ACTIVITIES” will provide you the opportunity to practically apply your own thoughts based on the knowledge gained from reading the text in a particular section. Besides, in order to give you additional information on certain relevant topics, you will find a category called “LET US KNOW” after the sections in each unit. Another category that has been included at the end of each section of a particular unit is “CHECK YOUR PROGRESS”. The purpose of this category is to help you to asses for yourself as to how thoroughly you have understood a particular section. You may then match your answers with “ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” given at the end of each unit. The section “FURTHER READING” in each unit contains the names of a few books which you might want to consult if you are intereted in learning more elaborately about the concepts discussed in a particular unit. Furthermore, the category called “POSSIBLE QUESTIONS” is intended to give you a hint of the type of questions you are likely to get in the examination.

# UNIT 1: CONCEPTS OF GENDER AND PATRIARCHY

## UNIT STRUCTURE


1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Gender: Meaning and Nature

1.4 Patriarchy: Meaning and Nature

1.4.1 Forms of Patriarchy

1.5 Let Us Sum Up

1.6 Further Reading

1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.8 Possible Questions


## 1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the meaning and nature of gender
- examine the differences between sex and gender
- describe the meaning of pa triarchy
- explain the nature of patriarchy
- discuss the various forms of patriarchy.

## 1.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to one of the widely discussed topics in our society i.e. gender. Gender is an important concept of our society that defines and imposes specific roles and behaviours to women and men. Patriarchy is another important concept associated with the concept of Gender. In this unit we shall discuss meaning and nature of the concepts of Gender and Patriarchy. Various forms of patriarchy shall also be highlighted in the Unit.

## 1.3 GENDER : MEANING AND NATURE

In this section we shall discuss the meaning and nature of Gender.

- **Meaning of Gender**

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behavioural aspects, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. It implies social construction of male and female identity. It is a social recognition of biological differences. In Social Sciences, the term gender is used to indicate the differences in social status of man and woman. In a patriarchal society, the concept of gender is understood as an ideological mechanism in the subordination of woman. Gender identity is not fixed at birth rather it gains a core identity with the physiological and social factors. It is developed by means of social reinforcement and language. Here we may refer to Simone de Beauvoir's opinion that "One is not born a woman; one becomes a woman." The formation of gender differs from one culture to the other as it is a culture specific aspect. Ann Oakley regards gender as a matter of culture. It refers to the social classification of men and women into 'masculine' and 'feminine'.

The term gender has been increasingly used to identify gender role since 1950's. The World Survey 1999 on the 'Role of Women in Development' defined gender as 'the social meanings given to biological sex differences'. It is an ideological and cultural construct. It affects the distribution of resources, wealth, work, decision making power, rights etc. both in public as well as private life. It stratifies the society between the sexes assigning different roles with other stratifiers like race, class, caste etc.

Gender is not static rather dynamic. It changes from time to time, culture to culture and even family to family. Thus, there are different features within the definition of gender that include ideology, cultural construct, identity, entitlements, along with other social divisions such as race, class, identity, sexuality, age etc. The word gender is now used sociologically or as a conceptual category. It is used as an analytical tool to understand social realities with regard to women and men. Every culture has its own way of valuing and assigning different roles, responses and attributes to girls and boys. Every society gradually transforms a male or female into a man or a woman with different qualities, responsibilities, rights and expectations. Infact, gender has no biological origin, and the connections between sex and gender are not really natural at all.

- **Nature of Gender**

In common parlance, the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are used synonymously. However, technically there is a distinction between these two terms. Gender is 'social classification' of people. On the other hand sex is 'biological classification' of people. The distinction between the two can be summed up as follows.

1. Gender is a social and cultural construct of images and expectations of both males and females. Whereas, sex is biological differences between men and women such as reproductive function and secondary characteristics like body hair and breast development.
2. Gender is made whereas sex is born. A child is born as a baby boy or baby girl, but develops into a man or a woman when assigned a particular role in the society.
3. 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' are gender categories whereas 'Male' and 'Female' are sex categories.
4. Gender reflects nurture whereas sex reflects nature. In other words, gender develops as a result of nurture while the development of sex is the result of nature.
5. Gender discrimination is a social discrimination whereas sexual inequality is an inborn phenomenon.
6. The task of feminism is to abolish gender inequality and not of the sexual one. The ideology of feminism advocates gender equality within the framework of sexual inequalities.

Kishore and Gupta (2006) has identified three dimensions of gender which can be mentioned as follows:

(a) Gender tends not to be value neutral. The roles, rights and obligations assigned to each sex are not just different, but also unequal with male roles and rights generally valued more than female roles and rights.

(b) Gender is not static or immutable. Being socially constructed, gender roles, rights and expectations can change over time and

across geographical space as societal needs, opportunities and customs change.

(c) Gender involves differences in power. Generally men tend to have greater power than women.

From the above analysis, we can summerise the nature of gender as follows:

a) Gender is socio-cultural and it is manmade.

b) Gender refers to masculine and feminine qualities, behaviour patterns, roles and responsibilities.

c) Gender is variable. It changes from time to time, culture to culture and family to family.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** State the meaning of gender.

.....

.....

.....

**Q.2:** Gender is …… not static. (Fill in the blank)

**Q.3:** Sex is biological, where as gender is …… (Fill in the blank)

**Q.4:** Mention any two differences between gender and sex.

.....

.....

## 1.4 PATRIARCHY : MEANING AND NATURE

In the following section we shall discuss the meaning and nature of patriarchy.

- **Meaning of Patriarchy :**

The word patriarchy has been derived from the Greek word ‘‘patriarkhes’ which means “father of a race” or “chief of a race”. Patriarchy thus literally means the rule of the head of the family or in short, of man. Originally it was used to describe a specific type of ‘male dominated family’

which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of the dominant male. Today it is generally used to refer to the power relationships in which men dominate women and to characterise a system where women are kept subordinate in a number of ways. It may be described as a political structure which favours man and propagates women's subordination as natural and inevitable. Patriarchy thus represents male chauvinism and hence results in the oppression of women. Patriarchy is associated with male sex, and therefore, with male gender. Sylbia Walby in her book *Theorising Patriarchy* describes Patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women." So patriarchy is associated with the rule of men over women where men are the ruler and women are the ruled. For example, in some South Asian languages, the words used for husband are swami, shauhar, pati, malik all words means 'lord' or 'owner'.

The nature of patriarchy is different in different classes in the same society, in different societies and in different periods of history. However, the broad principles remain the same that is, men are in control, but the nature of this control may differ. For example, the nature of patriarchy is different for tribal women and for upper caste Hindu women, for women in the USA and women in India. It is mainly because each social system throws up its own variations on how patriarchy functions and how social and cultural practices differ.

The feminist's sociologist has given three types of account of patriarchy. Firstly the French psychoanalysts and structuralists have argued that a society's culture is dominated by the symbols of male origin. The second account argues that patriarchy is essentially based on the household in which men dominate women economically, sexually and culturally. This view regards marriage as a labour contract through which women exchange unpaid domestic services for their upkeep. And thirdly, the Marxist feminists argue that patriarchy and capitalism support each other. Within the household, men take benefit of women's unpaid domestic work and thus relieve their employer. Outside the home, women are segregated to perform

some specific jobs for which very low wages are paid. Thus, all these accounts focus on different aspects of women's exploitation in our society. Man's domination and woman's subordination are the two sides of the same coin and both relate themselves to the term patriarchy. Patriarchy thus represents male chauvinism and hence results in the oppression of women. The literature on patriarchy and feminism overlaps. Notable readings include, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Eva Figes '*Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970), Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970). However Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1985) is important in so far as it provides a theoretical frame to the concept of patriarchy.

- **Nature of Patriarchy:**

Patriarchy is based on a system of power relations which are hierarchical and unequal where men control women. The nature of control and subjugation of women varies from one society to another due to the differences in caste, class, religion, race and various socio cultural practices. However, the broad principles remain the same i.e men controls but the nature of this control may differ. For example, Indian women face a different experience of patriarchy than a woman in USA. Similarly, it is different for a upper caste Hindu woman and a tribal woman. Each social system or historic period throws up its own variations on how patriarchy functions, and how social and cultural practices differ. However, inspite of these variations following are some of the common characteristics that can be found in every patriarchal society.

a) **Male Dominance:** In a Patriarchal system, it is the male who dominates in every sphere and all aspects of life. Men make all decisions in both society and in their family, hold all positions of power and authority and are thereby, considered superior in all aspects.

b) **Male Identification**: Men are concerned with identification that includes qualities of control, strength, forcefulness, rationality, strong work and competitiveness. Each of these qualities contribute to male identification in a patriarchal system.

c) **Male Centredness**: In a Patriarchal society, the center of activity is focused on men and what they do to move the society forward, in any patriarchal system. Man will be the focus and developer of all events and inventions. Men will be the heroes in all situations.

d) **Obsession with Control:** In a Patriarchal society it is the male who controls or takes charge at all the times. They have a desire to control all social and family situations and make all decisions within and outside the household.

Thus, patriarchy implies a measure of power. It is the power of man over woman.

### 1.4.1 Forms of Patriarchy

Patriarchy is an ideology based on the assertion of male superiority over women. Today it dominates social organisation and thereby exerts control over all spheres of human life such as political, social, cultural, religious and economic. Sylbia Walby in her noted contribution 'Theorising Patriarchy' argues that patriarchy is an indispensable concept for an analysis of gender inequality. Walby also distinguishes between two forms of patriarchy i.e., private patriarchy and public patriarchy. Private patriarchy appears inside the household with a patriarch controlling women directly in the private sphere of home. Infact, the institution of family is probably the most patriarchal. A man is considered as the head of the family who controls women's sexuality, labour, reproduction and mobility. Within the household women extend all kinds of activities and selfless service to their children, husband and other members of the family, throughout their lives. Sylbia Walby calls this a 'patriarchal mode of production' where women's labour is expropriated by their husbands and others who live there. It is the male who takes all decision within the family. A woman is not allowed to take even those decisions that affects them. Men also control women's reproductive power. In many societies, women do not have the power to decide how many children they should have, when to have them or whether they can use contraception or terminate pregnancy. According to the radical

feminists women are mainly subjugated because of this burden of child bearing and rearing. There is a hierarchy in which man is considered superior and dominant and woman as inferior and subordinate. Infact family plays an important role towards socialising the next generation in patriarchal values. It is within the family that one learns the lesson of domination, humiliation, subordination and discrimination.

Public patriarchy, on the other hand, is based on structures other than the household i.e. in the public sphere. Men control women's labour both within and outside the household. They force their women to sell their labour or they may even prevent them from working. Infact many women are forced to sell their labour at very low wages. Thus through this control and exploitation of women's labour men benefit materially from patriarchy. Men also control women's mobility. The restrictions or limitations on interaction between the sexes and so on are all imposed to control women's freedom and mobility. Religions also plays an important role in defining male authority as supreme. Almost all major religions consider women as inferior, impure, sinful. They have been created, interpreted and controlled by upper class and upper class men. They have defined morality, ethics and even laid down the duties between men and women.

The legal system in most countries is patriarchal. Laws pertaining to marriage, divorce and inheritance are closely linked to the patriarchal control over property. For example, in South Asia, all legal systems consider men as the head of the household, the natural guardian of the children and the inheritor of property. Men also controls the economic institutions, own most property and determine the value of different productive activities in a patriarchal society. Women though constitute half of the world's labour force; their contribution is hardly recognised and valued. Similarly, the political institutions in our society at all levels form Parliament to Panchayats are all male dominated. Women are mostly used for vote bank politics. One could see only a handful of women in political parties or organisation who determine

the fate of ourtheir countries. Ever since education became formal and institutionalised, men have assumed control over vast areas of knowledge, philosophy, law, literature, arts, science. This male hegemony has marginalised women's knowledge and experiences, their expertise and aspirations.

Thus the characteristic values of patriarchy are ingrained in the socialisation process that starts form childhood and is reinforced through education, literature, religion, and the like. Men possess greater position in all domains of life. The gender relations are so structured that a woman has to depend on a man to satisfy her basic needs and thus in the process accept her servitude. Thus patriarchy is not only the rule of male over the society, but the rule of man over woman. And thus gender discrimination occurs due to the presence of these patriarchal values in our society.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.5:** The word patriarchy has been derived from …….. word. (Fill in the blank)

**Q.6:** State the meaning of Patriarchy.

.....

.....

.....

**Q.7:** Who is the author of the book "Theorising Patriarchy"?

.....

.....

**Q.8:** What are the two forms of patriarchy?

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.....

**Q.9:** What do you mean by patriarchal mode of production?

.....

.....

.....



## 1.5 LET US SUM UP

- Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behavioural aspects, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. It implies social construction of male and female identity. It is a social recognition of biological differences. In Social Sciences, the term 'gender' is used to indicate the differences in social status of man and woman.
- Gender is not static rather dynamic. It changes from time to time, culture to culture and even family to family.
- There are differences between sex and gender. Sex refers to biological classification of people and gender refers to social classification of people.
- Regarding the nature of gender, we can say that gender is socio-cultural and it is manmade. Gender refers to masculine and feminine qualities, behavioural patterns, roles and responsibilities. Gender is variable. It changes from time to time, culture to culture and family to family.
- The word patriarchy has been derived from the Greek word 'patriarchies'. Patriarchy literally means the rule of the father. It is an ideology through which men dominate women.
- The nature of patriarchy differs from on the basis of culture, religion, community and region, though its principles remain the same i.e. man is the ruler and woman is the ruled. The patriarchal values are transmitted from one generation to the other through the process of socialisation. Gender discrimination occurs in our society because of the presence of patriarchal values.
- There are two forms of patriarchy, i.e. private patriarchy that occurs in private sphere and public patriarchy that occurs in public domains.



## 1.6 FURTHER READING

1) Arora, N.D.& Awasthy, S.S. (2004). *Political Theory*. New Delhi: Har Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd.

2) Bhasin, Kamla. (2003). *Understanding Gender*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.

3) Bhasin, Kamla. (1993). *What is Patriarchy?* New Delhi: Kali for Women.



## 1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behavioural aspects, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriates for men and women. It implies social construction of male and female identity. It is a social recognition of biological differences. In Social Sciences, the term gender is used to indicate the differences in social status of man and woman. In a Patriarchal society, the concept of gender is understood as an ideological mechanism in the subordination of women.

**Ans to Q No 2:** dynamic.

**Ans to Q No 3:** social classification of people.

**Ans to Q No 4:** (i) Gender is a social and cultural construct of images and expectations of both males and females. Whereas, sex is biological differences between men and women such as reproductive function and secondary characteristics like body hair and breast development.

(ii) Gender is made whereas sex is born. A child is born as a baby boy or baby girl, but develops into a man or a woman when assigned a particular role in the society.

**Ans to Q No 5:** Greek word.

**Ans to Q No 6:** Patriarchy literally means the rule of the head of the family or in short, of man. Originally it was used to describe a specific type of 'male dominated family' which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of the dominant male. Today it is generally used to refer to the power relationships in which men dominate women and to characterise a system where women are kept subordinate in a number of ways. It may be described as a political structure which favours men and propagates women's subordination as natural and inevitable. Patriarchy thus represents male chauvinism and hence results in the oppression of women.

**Ans to Q No 7:** Sylbia Walby.

**Ans to Q No 8:** The two forms of patriarchy are- Public Patriarchy and Private Patriarchy.

**Ans to Q No 9:** Within the household women extend all kinds of duties and selfless services to their children, husband and other members of the family, throughout their lives. Sylbia Walby calls this a 'patriarchal mode of production' where women's labour is expropriated by their husbands and others who live there.



## 1.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** Mention the Greek word from which the word Patriarchy is derived.

**Q. 2 :** Who had famously stated "one is not born a woman; one becomes a woman"?

**Q. 3 :** Write briefly about the meaning of Gender.

**Q. 4 :** Explain the differences between sex and gender.

**Q. 5 :** Discuss the meaning of Patriarchy.

**Q. 6 :** Write a note on the nature of gender.

**Q. 7 :** What are the two forms of Patriarchy? Explain.

**Q. 8 :** Discuss the nature of Patriarchy.

*** ***** ***

# UNIT 2: HISTORY OF FEMINISM

## UNIT STRUCTURE


2.1 Learning Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 Waves of Feminism
  2.3.1 First Wave of Feminism
  2.3.2 Second Wave of Feminism
  2.3.3 Third Wave of Feminism
2.4 Let Us Sum Up
2.5 Further Reading
2.6 Answers To Check Your Progress
2.7 Possible Questions


## 2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the history of feminism with reference to the first wave of feminism
- discuss the second and third waves of feminism.

## 2.2 INTRODUCTION

Feminism is an ideology that seeks to achieve equality and justice for women. It is a revolt against the patriarchal values of the society. Feminism aims at eradicating discrimination against women in all aspects of life. It argues that women must have equal share of resources and opportunities so that they can equally participate in the society. The ideology of feminism has assumed its present shape by passing through a long history. In this unit, we shall discuss history of feminism with reference to the first, second and third waves of feminism.

## 2.3 WAVES OF FEMINISM

Feminism is a movement that seeks to establish equality between women and men. It aims at defining, establishing equalities in all spheres

of life including social, political, economic, cultural, legal spheres. In many societies, women have to face discrimination and subordination because of their sex. Feminism always argues that there can be no difference between men and women only on the ground of sex. Both women and men must be provided equal opportunities to develop themselves. Regarding definition of feminism many scholars have pointed out many things. Prominent feminist Kamala Bhasin has put forward two definitions of feminism, such as-

- Feminism is an awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at the place of work and within the family, and conscious action to change this situation.
- Feminism is an awareness regarding patriarchal control, exploitation, and oppression at the material and ideological levels of women's labour, fertility and sexuality in the family, at the place of work and in society in general and conscious action by women and men to transform the present situation.

According to the first definition, anyone (men or women) who recognises the existence of sexism (discrimination on the basis of sex), male domination and patriarchy and who takes some action against it is a feminist (a person whose beliefs and behavior are based on feminism). Feminist recognises that, all over the world women are subjected to all forms of discrimination and unequal treatment in all spheres such as- education, political, social, cultural, health, religious etc. Feminism as a concept is very broad. The feminist movement advocates for changes in the social, economic, political, cultural, religious systems which are discriminatory against women. By changing all these structures discrimination against women can be eliminated and gender justice can be achieved. It indicates a movement for rightful and democratic position of women in the society.

The feminist movement has assumed the present shape by passing through various phases. The origin of feminist movement can be found in the western world. The feminist movement started in the late 18$^{th}$ century. In the west, various social and democratic movements of the 18$^{th}$ and 19$^{th}$ centuries revealed the position of women in the societal, political, economic

spheres. The Industrial Revolution (1760 – 1840) also raised several questions about the rights of women. Several noteworthy scholars made significant contribution to the feminist movement during this period. For example, we can refer to Mary Wollstonecraft who through her work *Vindication on the Rights of Women* (1792) contributed significantly. We can discuss the evolution of feminism in three waves. These three waves are- first wave of feminism, second wave of feminism and third wave of feminism. In this section, we shall discuss these three waves of feminism.

### 2.3.1 First Wave of Feminism

The First Wave of feminism refers to the feminist movement that started from the 19th century and continued till early 20th century. During this phase feminist movement focused on voting rights of women and political equality between women and men. Apart from political rights of women during this period, emphasis was also given on working condition, educational rights, reproductive rights as well as marriage and property rights of women. The first women's rights Convention was held at New York in 1848. At this Convention a Declaration of Sentiment was signed which outlined the grievances of women and set the agenda for women's rights movement. At this Convention a set of 12 resolutions was adopted calling for equal treatment of both women and men under laws and regulations. Scholars like Virginia Woolf was associated with the first wave of feminism. In her book *A Room of One's Own,* Woolf described how Men dominated women socially, physically as well as psychologically. She recognised the social construct that restricted women in society and prepared literature to contextualise it for other women.

### 2.3.2 Second Wave of Feminism

The period between 1960s – 1980s is considered as the second wave of feminism. The second wave of feminism began in the United States of America and spread to the other western countries. During the second wave of feminism the feminist movement emphasised

on gender equality in laws and culture. Feminist movement during this period raised awareness about sexism and patriarchy, gender based violence, domestic abuse and marital rape. During this period distinction was made gender and sex. It also stressed on legalising abortion and birth control. The feminists associated with the second wave explored various dimensions of female subordination. They emphasised on various factors which are associated with female subordination, such as- control of men over reproductive technologies, social practices that always keep women in the private sphere. One very famous feminist associated with this wave of feminism was Simone de Beauvoir. Simone de Beauvoir's famous book *The Second Sex* is considered as one of the foundational texts for the feminist thought. During this period the feminists argued that women must realise that their lives are deeply politicised and this reflects sexist power structure. In this context, another famous feminist Carol Hanisch coined the slogan "The Personal is Politics" which was related to liberation of women.

### 2.3.3 Third Wave of Feminism

The failure of the second wave of feminism led to the emergence of third wave of feminism in the early 1990s. It emphasised upon the post structural interpretation of gender and sexuality with focus on micro-politics. During this wave debate arose regarding the distinction between sex and gender. It was argued that sex is biological and gender is social construction. During this wave, feminist analysed various issues from the perspective of intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of various social categories, such as- race, class, caste, gender etc. which may lead to advantage or disadvantage of a particular group of people. This wave of feminism also focused on stereotype concerning women, media portrayal representation of women and the use of language to define women. In fact this wave of feminism emphasised on discussing women's issues by encompassing all diversities in different socio-cultural political and economic situations.

Apart from these three waves, the fourth wave of feminism began from 2012 and still continues. During this period the feminist movement has focused upon the empowerment of women in social, economic, cultural, political, technological and all other spheres. The feminists have emphasised upon the empowerment of women through the use of information technology. Like the third wave, the fourth wave of feminism has also raised the issue of intersectionality of various factors that lead to marginalisation of women of different categories. The feminists, during this period, have strongly demanded adequate representation of women in politics and business, justice for women against assault and harassment, equal pay for equal work for both men and women, freedom and autonomy for women over their own body and spirit.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.1:** Who is the author of the book *Vindication on the Rights of Women*?

.....

**Q.2:** Who coined the slogan "The Personal is Politics"?

.....

**Q.3:** What are the areas on which the first wave of feminism emphasises?

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**Q.4:** Write briefly about the second wave of feminism.

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## 2.4 LET US SUM UP

- Feminism is an ideology that seeks to achieve equality and justice for women. It is revolt against the patriarchal values of the society. Feminism aims at eradicating discrimination against women in all aspects of life. It argues that women must have equal share of resources and opportunities so that they can equally participate in the society.
- Feminism is a movement that seeks to establish equality between women and men. It aims at defining, establishing equalities in all spheres of life including social, political, economic, cultural, legal spheres. In many societies women have to face discrimination and subordination because of their sex. Feminism always argues that there can be no difference between men and women only on the ground of sex.
- The feminist movement has assumed the present shape by passing through various phases. The origin of feminist movement can be found in the western world. Feminist movement started in the late 18th century. The evolution of feminism can be divided into three waves. These three waves are- first wave of feminism, second wave of feminism and third wave of feminism.
- The First Wave of feminism refers to the feminist movement that started from the 19th century and continued till early 20th century. During this phase feminist movement focused on voting rights of women and political equality between women and men. Apart from political rights of women, during this period emphasis was also given on working condition, educational rights, reproductive rights and marriage and property rights of women.
- The period between 1960s - 1980s is considered as second wave of feminism. The second wave of feminism began in the United States of America and spread to the other western countries. During the second wave of feminism the feminist movement emphasised on gender equality in laws and culture. Feminist movement during this period raised awareness about sexism and patriarchy, gender based violence,

domestic abuse and marital rape. The feminists associated with the second wave explored various dimensions of female subordination.

- The failure of the second wave of feminism led to the emergence of third wave of feminism in the early 1990s. It emphasised upon the post structural interpretation of gender and sexuality with focus on micro-politics. During this wave, the feminist analysed various issues from the perspective of intersectionality.
- The fourth wave of feminism began from 2012 and still continues. During this period the feminist movement has focused upon the empowerment of women in social, economic, cultural, political, technological and all other spheres. The feminists, during this period, have strongly demanded adequate representation of women in politics and business, justice for women against assault and harassment, equal pay for equal work for both men and women, freedom and autonomy for women over their own body and spirit.



## 2.5 FURTHER READING

1) Bhasin, Kamla. (2003). *Understanding Gender*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
2) Menon, Nivedita. (2012). *Seeing like a Feminist.* New Delhi: Penguin India.
3) Tandon, Neeru. (2012). *Feminism A Paradigm Shift*. Atlantic Publication.



## 2.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Mary Wollstonecraft

**Ans to Q No 2:** Carol Hanisch

**Ans to Q No 3:** The first wave of feminism emphasised upon voting rights of women, political equality between women and men, working condition, educational rights, reproductive rights and marriage and property rights of women.

**Ans to Q No 4:** The period between 1960s - 1980s is considered as the second wave of feminism. The second wave of feminism began in the United States of America and spread to the other western countries. During the second wave of feminism the feminist movement emphasised on gender equality in laws and culture. Feminist movement during this period raised awareness about sexism and patriarchy, gender based violence, domestic abuse and marital rape. During this period distinction was made gender and sex. It also stressed on legalising abortion and birth control. The feminists associated with the second wave explored various dimensions of female subordination. They emphasised on various factors which are associated with female subordination, such as- control of men over reproductive technologies, social practices that always keep women in the private sphere. One very famous feminist associated with this wave of feminism was Simone de Beauvoir. Simone de Beauvoir's famous book The Second Sex is considered as one of the foundational texts for the feminist thought. During this period the feminists argued that women must realise that their lives are deeply politicised and this reflects sexist power structure. In this context, another famous feminist Carol Hanisch coined the slogan "The Personal is Politics" which was related to liberation of women.



## 2.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** Write briefly about the meaning of feminism.

**Q. 2 :** Who is the author of the book “A Room of One's Own”?

**Q. 3 :** Write about the fourth wave of feminism.

**Q. 4 :** Discuss the development of feminism with reference to the three waves of feminism.

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# UNIT 3: THEORIES OF FEMINISM

## UNIT STRUCTURE


3.1 Learning Objectives
3.2 Introduction
3.3 Concept of Feminism
3.4 Theories of Feminism
  3.4.1 Theory of Liberal Feminism
  3.4.2 Theory of Marxist Feminism
  3.4.3 Theory of Socialist Feminism
  3.4.4 Theory of Radical Feminism
  3.4.5 Theory of Cultural Feminism
  3.4.6 Theory of Ecofeminism
  3.4.7 Theory of Postmodern Feminism
  3.4.8 Theory of Multicultural Feminism
  3.4.9 Theory of Global Feminism
3.5 Let Us Sum Up
3.6 Further Reading
3.7 Answers To Check Your Progress
3.8 Possible Questions


## 3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the concept of feminism
- describe the development of the concept of feminism
- discuss the various theories of feminism.

## 3.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to one of the most important concepts in political theory, namely, Feminism. Feminism is an Ideology. Feminism is a movement which advocates equality between men and women. It seeks to achieve justice and equal rights for women as that of men. In this unit we shall discuss the various theories of feminism.

## 3.3 CONCEPT OF FEMINISM

Feminism is a revolt against patriarchy. It is a political movement and an ideology which stands for equal rights of women. It considers the relationship between the sexes as one of inequality, subordination and oppression. The term 'Feminism' is derived from the Latin word 'femina' meaning women 'having the qualities of women'. It began to be used in the 1980s with reference to the theory of sexual inequality and the movement for women's rights. In a broader sense, feminism means advocacy of women's rights against inequality of sexes and in its narrower sense, the word refers to everyone who is aware of, and seek an end to women's subordination. The feminist theory sees women and their situation as central to political analysis. The feminists have highlighted the political relationship between the sexes, the subordination of women and male supremacy in most, if not in all, societies. The chief characteristic of feminism is that it regards gender division as political rather than natural. It insists that politics is an activity which takes place within all social groups including family. Thus, feminism stands for equal female emancipation, freedom from sex-determined roles, freedom to express opinion and freedom from oppressive restrictions. It is, thereby, an ideology whose goal is to remove discriminations against women and to break down the male dominance in society.

Although the term feminism belongs to the twentieth century, feminist views were expressed as early as the ancient civilisations of Greece, China and India. Respect for women had been a chief characteristic of the oriental societies. In medieval Europe, the defenders of women's nature included Jean de Meung, Cristane de Pisan, Marie de Gournay, Aphra Behn and Mary Astel. Infact, Christine de Pisan's book *Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) foreshadowed many of the ideas of modern feminism. However, it was only in the 19$^{th}$ century that an organised women's movement developed. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is a noted contribution in this regard. The women's movement acquired a central point indicated by campaign for women suffrage in the mid 19$^{th}$ century. This period is known as 'First wave' of feminism. The 'second wave' of

feminism emerged since 1960s through Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1985) and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970). During this period political emancipation of women and their liberation became the main objectives of feminism. The third wave feminism developed in the 1990s with various new issues and trends such as postmodern feminism, global feminism, black feminism, etc.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** What is meant by the term Feminism?

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**Q.2:** The term feminism has been derived from the …….. word. (Fill in the blank)

**Q.3:** Who is the author of the book "A Vindication of the Rights of Women"?

.....

## 3.4 THEORIES OF FEMINISM

In this section we shall discuss various theories of feminism.

### 3.4.1 Theory of Liberal Feminism

Feminism has fragmented itself into a number of schools of thought. One of such schools of thought is the theory of liberal feminism. Liberal feminism is based on the principle of individualism. It believes that all human beings are equally important, and therefore, all are equal. There should be equal rights for all the people without any discrimination. All the people should enjoy equal opportunities to participate in the public sphere. Therefore, any form of discrimination against women in this respect should be clearly prohibited. Mary

Wollstonecraft in her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) argued that women should be entitled to same rights as on the ground of being 'human'. She advocated equal education for men and women as that would lead to the cultivation of their rational and moral qualities which would be beneficial for the welfare of the society. Other liberal feminist scholars such as J.S. Mill, Harriet Taylor and Betty Friedan also talks about equal rights of women as men and thereby combined gender justice based on humanism. They strongly advocated equal political rights and economic opportunities for men and women. The first wave of feminism overlaps with liberal feminism roughly from the period 1830-1930. During this period many developments took place around the world such as American Declaration of Independence, French Revolution which provided the basis for many liberal beliefs such as individual rights, liberty, equality, government formation with the consent of the people etc. Liberal feminism was also based on these values. The central idea of liberal feminism is individualism. Every person has the right to develop his/her personality.

However, liberal feminism is essentially reformist. They do not wish to abolish the distinction between public and private spheres of life. Rather they actually seek to open up public life so that each individuals i.e., both men and women get equal chance to participate in public life.

### 3.4.2 Theory of Marxist Feminism

Influenced by Marxism, Marxist feminism believes that empowerment and equality for women cannot be achieved within the framework of capitalism. The Marxist feminists argue that working class women are subjected to exploitation due to capitalism. Their inequality is rooted not only in political and legal structure but also in social and economic structure. Women are in a disadvantageous position due to the emergence of private property and their lack of ownership of means of production. Capitalism is based on private property which leads to class exploitation. Women helped the

sustenance of a capitalist society by reproducing and nurturing the labour force through their unpaid domestic labour. They also socialise the next generation of workers and provide service to the current workers (their husbands). At the same time, they constitute a reserve army of labour who are called upon to work at a very low wage when there are insufficient male labourers. Thereby, they are taken temporarily by the bourgeoise when necessary to make production more flexible. Friedrich Engels noted contribution *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* looked at the conditions of working class families , particularly women and thus says that both capitalism and private property had led to the erosion of the 'mother right' leading to the defeat of the female sex. Thus, Marxist feminists regard class and gender inequalities as dual systems of oppression, both of which reinforce each other and create group divisions that are doubly oppressed. Thus, it believes that the end of capitalism would lead to an end in class division which would eventually end all forms of gender oppression from the society.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.4:** What is meant by Liberal feminism?

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**Q.5:** Write the names of two liberal feminist thinkers.

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**Q.6:** What, according to Marxist feminism, is the main cause of women's oppression?

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**Q.7:** Who wrote the book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State?*

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### 3.4.3 Theory of Socialist Feminism

The socialist feminist approach is partially influenced by Marxist theory. However, there is difference between these two streams of feminism on the ground that while Marxist feminism regards capitalism and the class division behind women oppression, socialist feminism, on the other hand, asserts that women are subjected to oppression both by capitalist forces and patriarchal structure. Women are thus seen as subjected to both classism and sexism. Socialist feminism draws attention to issues such as reproduction, sexuality, gender socialisation, class conflict etc. Marx, Engels, Juliet Mitchell, Hei Hartman and Zillah Eisenstein are some of the eminent socialist feminist writers. Socialist feminists consider that unequal position of women in both the workplace and domestic areas has put them in a disadvantageous position. They perceive that prostitution, domestic work, marriage, child bearing and child rearing are ways through which women are put in a secondary position. The patriarchal system devaluates women and the work they do through institutionalised mechanism and practices. Women have to be dependent on men for opportunities and resources and thereby under the control of men. Therefore, liberation of women is possible through overthrowing of capitalism and also patriarchy and its institutions have to be rooted out from our society.

### 3.4.4 Theory of Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is another branch of feminism that was formed during the second wave feminism since 1960's. The Radical feminists opine that patriarchy is the main force behind women's oppression. They view society as fundamentally a patriarchy in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women both within the public and private sphere. In her famous essay "A Room of One's Own" (1929), Virginia Woolf dwelled on how men socially and psychologically dominate women. The patriarchal structures prevent equal

participation of women in the social, economic and political systems. Simon de Beauvoir, a French novelist and author of the book *The Second Sex* (1949) asserted that 'A Woman is not born but made'. She argued that the dependent and derivative status of woman 'as the other of man' was the product of her upbringing in society. Therefore, she argued that a change in the status and lifestyle will uplift her position in the society. Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* argued that patriarchal powers have military and financial means. The process of domination and control is the result of socialisation process. Similarly, Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1972) claimed that the basis of women's subordination is biological. Particularly, the child bearing and child rearing role of women make them dependent on men and also creates a division of labour in the society. Thus she argues that women should be freed from this role of child bearing and rearing through the use of modern technologies such as contraception, abortion and artificial reproduction.

Thus, radical feminism sought to provide radical changes in the society by overthrowing patriarchy. With their famous slogan 'the personal is political', radical feminists vehemently opposed the exclusion of women from the public space. At the same time they tried to bring the personal experiences of women into the public sphere by repudiating the public-private dichotomy.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.8:** What is the main difference between Marxist feminism and Socialist feminism?

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**Q.9:** What is the main reason of women oppression according to Radical feminism?

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**Q.10:** The Radical feminist raised the slogan of ……..…… .
(Fill in the blank)

**Q.11:** Who is the author of the book *Sexual Politics*?

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### 3.4.5 Theory of Cultural Feminism

Cultural feminism is developed from radical feminism. 'The term cultural feminism' was propounded by Brooke Williams who considered it as an offshoot of Radical feminism. The cultural feminists argue that the main cause of women's oppression is biological. The sexuality of women is controlled by men through the institutions of marriage and family. The cultural feminists had emphasised on the 'sex roles' which is rooted in the pattern of male and female behaviour. They believe that the institutions of marriage, family, prostitution and heterosexuality all exist to perpetuate the 'sex role system'. Therefore, they demand that women should be given freedom such as reproduction freedom, child birth, abortion, sterilization or birth etc. In short, women should be given free choices regarding her body. They also revealed that male culture has changed women's bodies into objects of male desire. Thus the cultural feminists consider women as individuals, not a class or race. The primary aim of cultural relativism is to destroy this sex class system.

The cultural feminists also believe that women are more evolved than men. They assert that women's differences are not only unique but also superior to men. Cultural feminism emphasises differences between men and women, based on biological differences in reproductive capacity and thereby attributes those differences distinct and superior. Both men and women possess certain attributes

which are different in its essence and are inherent. Thus, cultural feminism commends the positive aspects of women. They believe in equal partnership of men and women who have separate existence and different basic function.

### 3.4.6 Theory of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism, also known as ecological feminism, is a new form of feminist thought. It emerged in the mid 1970's along with second wave of feminism and green movement. This movement gained momentum in the recent decades in the form of innumerable protests against the burning problem of environmental degradation. The interconnectedness between woman and nature has its historical roots from the organic to the mechanistic world. Both nature and woman have some similar characteristics. Both can make a man happy, unhappy or infatuated. Moreover both are reproductive and creative in nature. Thus, Ecofeminism sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of natural environment on the one hand and oppression and exploitation of women on the other. Ecofeminism is an ideology that aims at the preservation and protection of the earth and the mankind through sustainable means of existence and development. The earth cannot be seen merely as a source of raw materials but as the sole haven for animate and inanimate forms of existence. According to Ecofeminism, there is a similarity between man's attitude towards nature and woman in a patriarchal society. Like nature woman has also been objectified and subordinated in patriarchy. Women are merely reduced to a commodity to be acquired, possessed and exploited. The term was coined by French Feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. In her controversial book *Feminism or Death,* she raised the issue of ecofeminism. The earth was appropriated by male. This male society took over the administration of the earth with competition, aggression and sexual hierarchy as the basic features. Thus mother earth also experienced the pangs of phallocracy (idea of male being superior).

Male superiority is continued in woman's life through the institution of family. Exploitation and subjugation of women in a patriarchal society is closely connected with the domination and massive exploitation of nature by human beings. Just as women's domination is detrimental to society, similarly exploitation of nature is detrimental to the biotic community.

Thus Ecofeminism is seen as a solution for this patriarchal society. It envisages an egalitarian world. The dignity of the human being should be recognised irrespective of the person's sex. Therefore, Ecofeminism strives to rule out domination and exploitation of women and nature and thereby helps to develop a caring, loving and sympathetic attitude towards all forms of life.

### 3.4.7 Theory of Postmodern Feminism

Postmodern feminism is a combination of feminism and postmodernism. It has emerged as a branch of feminism only in the last few decades. Postmodernism rejects all feminist thoughts, ideas and meanings which give a single explanation for women's oppression or suggest steps for women's liberation. Thus, postmodern feminism promotes the idea of plurality, multiplicity and difference. Its goal is to destabilise the patriarchal norms entrenched in societies that have led to gender inequality. It, therefore, embraces the differences that exist amongst women as they believe that a universal truth cannot be applied to all women in society. Postmodern feminism departs from other branches of feminism on the argument that gender is constructed through language. In her book, *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler criticises the distinction drawn by previous feminists between biological sex and socially constructed gender. For Butler 'woman' is a debatable category, complicated by class, ethnicity, and other facets of identity. Thus, there is no single cause for women's subordination and no single approach to deal with the issue. The postmodern feminism criticised mainstream feminism as being too narrow and inattentive to related issues of race and class. It accepts diversity, multiple truths, multiple roles and multiple realities.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.12:** Who propounded the term 'Cultural Feminism'?

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**Q.13:** Who coined the term 'Ecofeminism'?

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**Q.14:** What is the main idea of postmodern feminism?

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**Q.15:** Who is the author of the book “Gender Trouble”?

.....

### 3.4.8 Theory of Multicultural Feminism

Multicultural feminism is a practice of feminism, developed by Third World women. It mainly questions liberal feminism which is largely a product of the West. Like liberal feminism, multicultural feminism seeks the betterment of the lives of women but unlike the former, it does not see that the path to it is the same for all women. Multicultural feminism seeks to empower women within the context of their particular societies and cultures. It takes an interdisciplinary cross-cultural approach to the study of women from diverse racial, ethnic, sexual and class background. Multicultural feminism acknowledges the social construction of differently situated social groups. Each person experiences gender, class, sexuality and race unique to their environment, thus there is no single identity and entity. Its main goal is to increase awareness among women of all races about their commonalities and differences that they experience. Women in different parts of the world experience different forms of oppression and discrimination. For example, an African women experience a complete different form of challenge than an Asian woman. Race, class, gender, that is, the various issues of

oppression are all interconnected. Therefore, multiculturalism recognises the different experiences of challenges faced by women throughout the world. Thus, it is very important to examine the structures of domination in order to understand the social construction of gender.

### 3.4.9 Theory of Global Feminism

Global feminism, also known as International feminism, is an inclusive feminist theory which seeks to ensure a better understanding of gender inequality. It believes that women in every corner of the society without any discrimination on the basis of race, religion, culture, community should be entitled with equal rights and opportunities. The movement of global feminism was started by Annie Lennox.

Throughout the world women are treated as a secondary citizen. Though women constitute half of the world's population yet they are worse positioned in social, political and economic hierarchies. She has to suffer from numerous atrocities both in private and public sphere. However, women experience different form of inequalities on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, income, etc. Women remain affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Though they constitute half of the work forces yet they are paid less than men. In terms of education, job, resources, political activities, economic opportunities women lack much behind her male counterpart. Moreover, she has to suffer from sexual harassment, domestic violence, rape, trafficking or other forms of gender based violence. Thus, global feminism has been critical of the earlier notion of 'global or universal sisterhood' and its uncritical attachment to commonalities of women's oppression around the world.

Apart from the above mentioned theories, there are also other theories associated with feminism, such as –black feminism, post-colonial and third world feminism etc. Black feminism argues that

exploitation of women is interlinked with other factors too. According to it sexism, class oppression and racism are interconnected. The post-colonial feminism argues that women in post colonial societies are subject to exploitation and oppression due to colonial experience, such as racial, ethnic and class oppression. The post-colonial feminists rejected portrayals of women of non western societies as passive and voiceless victims of patriarchal oppression and western women as modern, educated and empowered. The third world feminism criticises the western notion of feminism which does not take into account the unique experiences and factors of women of third world countries.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.16:** Multicultural feminism is developed by …… (Fill in the blank)

**Q.17:** What is the main goal of Multicultural feminism?

.....

.....

**Q.18:** Global feminism was started by ……..... (Fill in the blank)

**Q.19:** Global feminism is also known as …….. (Fill in the blank)



## 3.5 LET US SUM UP

- Derived from the Latin word 'femina', feminism is an ideology which stands for equal rights for women. Feminism stands for equal female emancipation, freedom from sex determined roles, freedom to express opinion and freedom from oppressive restrictions.
- There are three waves of feminism. First wave developed in the 19th century. The second wave developed in the late 1960's and the third wave in 1990's.

- Liberal feminism argues that since all men and women are born equal by nature, therefore, women should be entitled to the same rights and opportunities like men. They do not wish to abolish the distinction between public and private spheres of life.
- Marxist feminism believes that women face a disadvantageous position due to capitalism and private property. End of capitalism would lead to end of gender oppression.
- Socialist feminism, assert that women are subjected to oppression both by capitalist forces and patriarchal structure. Women are thus seen as subjected to both classism and sexism.
- The Radical feminists opine that patriarchy is the main force behind women's oppression. They view society as fundamentally a patriarchy in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women both within the public and private sphere.
- The Cultural feminists argue that the main cause of women's oppression is biological. The sexuality of women is controlled by men through the institutions of marriage and family and had emphasised on the 'sex roles' which is rooted in the pattern of male and female behavior.
- Ecofeminism is an ideology which establishes a relation between environment and women. Both experience exploitation and degradation caused by male.
- Postmodern feminism is a combination of feminism and postmodernism and promotes the idea of plurality, multiplicity and difference. Its goal is to destabilise the patriarchal norms entrenched in societies that have led to gender inequality.
- Multicultural feminism seeks to empower women within the context of their particular societies and cultures. It takes an interdisciplinary cross-cultural approach to the study of women from diverse racial, ethnic, sexual and class background.
- Global or international feminism rejects the notion of 'global sisterhood' and thus tries to ensure equal rights for women understanding the problem of gender intersecting with race, sexuality, class, income, religion etc.



## 3.6 FURTHER READING

1) Arora, N.D & Awasthy, S.S. (2004). *Political Theory*. New Delhi: Har Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd.

2. Bhasin, Kamala. (2002). *Understanding Gender*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.

3) Gauba, O.P. (2019). *Political Ideas and Ideologies*. Delhi: Macmillan Publishers India Ltd.



## 3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Feminism is a revolt against patriarchy. It is a political movement and ideology which stands for equal rights of women. It sees the relationship between the sexes as one of inequality, subordination and oppression. The term 'Feminism' is derived from the Latin word 'femina' meaning women originally meant 'having the qualities of women'.

**Ans to Q No 2:** Latin.

**Ans to Q No 3:** Mary Wollstonecraft.

**Ans to Q No 4:** Liberal Feminism stands for equal chance of both men and women to participate in public life.

**Ans to Q No 5:** J.S. Mill, Harriet Taylor.

**Ans to Q No 6:** Capitalism.

**Ans to Q No 7:** Friedrich Engels.

**Ans to Q No 8:** While Marxist feminism regards capitalism and the class division behind women oppression, socialist feminism, on the other hand, asserts that women are subjected to oppression both by capitalist forces and patriarchal structure.

**Ans to Q No 9:** Patriarchy.

**Ans to Q No 10:** Personal is Political.

**Ans to Q No 11:** Kate Millet.

**Ans to Q No 12:** Brooke Williams.

**Ans to Q No 13:** Francoise d'Eaubonne

**Ans to Q No 14:** Postmodern Feminism rejects universal truth and accepts diversity among women.

**Ans to Q No 15:** Judith Butler.

**Ans to Q No 16:** Third World Women.

**Ans to Q No 17:** The main goal of Multicultural feminism is to increase awareness among women about their commonalities and differences.

**Ans to Q No 18:** Annie Lenox.

**Ans to Q No 19:** International Feminism.



## 3.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** What is the Latin origin of the term 'Feminism'?

**Q. 2 :** Who is the author of “Book of the City of Ladies”?

**Q. 3 :** What are the three waves of Feminism?

**Q. 4 :** Write a brief note on Marxist feminism.

**Q. 5 :** What is the main difference between Radical feminism and Liberal feminism?

**Q. 6 :** Write briefly about Socialist feminism.

**Q. 7 :** Write a short note on Ecofeminism.

**Q. 8 :** Discuss the theories of Liberal, Socialist and Marxist Feminism in detail.

**Q. 9 :** Discuss in detail the theory of Cultural, Multicultural and Postmodern Feminism.

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# UNIT 4: GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND GENDER BUDGETING

## UNIT STRUCTURE


4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Concept of Gender Mainstreaming

4.3.1 Importance of Gender Mainstreaming

4.4 Concept of Gender Budgeting

4.4.1 Importance of Gender Budgeting

4.5 Let Us Sum Up

4.6 Further Reading

4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.8 Possible Questions


## 4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the meaning of Gender Mainstreaming
- discuss the importance of Gender Mainstreaming
- explain the meaning of Gender Budgeting
- discuss the importance of Gender Budgeting.

## 4.2 INTRODUCTION

The concepts of Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Budgeting became prominent since the early 20th century. Gender Budgeting has been considered a powerful element for achieving gender mainstreaming ideas. Gender budgeting process helps in focusing gender dimensions of government as well as non-governmental budget and proceedings. A gender responsive budget can further eliminate gender inequalities with significant enhancement of social and economic indicators across the country. It has intrinsic and instrumental applicability. Gender mainstreaming asks for equal representation and presence of both male

and female while finalising any policy decisions. It further intensifies the value of diversity in decision making.

## 4.3 CONCEPT OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The concept of gender mainstreaming is being generally used in public policy. Gender mainstreaming asks for the assessment of different policy actions including the legislation and other programmes in every level of human life. Generally, gender mainstreaming is associated with the pluralistic dimension. This pluralistic dimension tries to present and value the mosaic culture and diversity among the people of different genders around the globe. If we analyse the history of gender mainstreaming, then it can be traced back to the third World Conference on Women at Nairobi, Kenya in 1985 . The soul institution behind this initiate was United Nations development community. Further, the idea was formerly structured at the fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing, China in 1995 and the action plan started from that period, known as Beijing platform for action.

The UN Economic and Social Council formally defined that gender mainstreaming or mainstreaming a gender perspective is a process of assessment of the implications of planned actions, policies, legislation, etc. on both men and women. This tries to portray both the men and women as the main subject matter of policy making and policy implementation. It also tries to enhance strategies for making both the sections as an integral dimension of the policy designing and implementing at all spheres including political, economic and social. The UN Economic and Social Council has mentioned that the ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality at all levels. Gender mainstreaming takes into account the interests and concerns both women and men. Again in 1998, the Council of Europe defined gender mainstreaming as "the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy process, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies and at all spheres." Women and men have different needs, living conditions, different state of affairs, unequal access

to power structure, resources, etc.; the situations of women and men are different and varies from country to country. Therefore, the aim of gender mainstreaming is to take into account these pluralities while making and implementing policies. It tries to benefit both the sections and to minimise the gender inequality. Hence, it is a tool for achieving gender equality too. Many a times the research works find that public policies have always been based on the needs of the dominant group of the society and runs in accordance with the traditional decision makers (the men). Simultaneously, the women movements have also noticed that the main root of absence of women in all spheres is a result of gendered policy making and decisions. They are of the view that women's absence in decision making, human rights' violation, have their origin in policy making process only. The decisions in public policies and services do not allocate funds in appropriate way and this ultimately lead to inappropriate solutions. Therefore, gender mainstreaming is an inclusive strategy that aims to integrate people. It says that women does not belong to the vulnerable section and they bears the considerable position in society too.

Therefore, the supporters of gender mainstreaming are of the view that gender equality issues need to be mainstreamed at all stages of policy making. They believe that gender analysis and gender impact assessments are the crucial tools in the process of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is a responsibility of all actors for proper implementation of gender justice and quality. It is a long-term strategy that goes along with gender justice. If it is implemented properly then gender mainstreaming can be a transformative approach for social change and development. Therefore, there is a requirement of gender mainstreaming and specific measures for the development of women. And accordingly such dual approach has been implemented in the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. This agenda includes a standalone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women as well as girls (SDG-5). The concept of gender mainstreaming has been acclaimed as an international strategy for gender equality as it embraces

the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, implementation and evaluation of policies. Gender mainstreaming has two dimensions which are required to fulfil its goals. Firstly, inclusion of gender in the policy making and policy implementation. And secondly, the issue of representation of both men and women in the concerned area. The supporters of gender mainstreaming have asked to take these two dimensions seriously during policy making process.

For the proper implementation of gender mainstreaming, certain key elements are needed. Firstly, there has to be a plan for the implementation of gender mainstreaming and secondly, to execute such plan we need sufficient resources. An effective gender mainstreaming requires budgetary ordinances and time frame. And for such matter, resources should be made available. Thirdly, the essential involvement of the stakeholder, as they are the primary actors in the policy process. Fourthly, there has to be some kind of monitoring and evaluation process to examine such policies. Fifthly, building up a knowledge hub is essential to understand the prospects of gender mainstreaming. And lastly, we need gender expertise to evaluate such process. European Union has said that gender mainstreaming is not a policy goal, but it is a means to achieve gender equality. Therefore, since 1996, this institution has committed itself to a "dual approach" for increasing gender equality. At the European level, the EU institutions take the responsibility of gender mainstreaming. At the national level, it is up to the governments of member states. Though it is also the responsibility of every individuals working in that specific area, yet at the governmental level, specific structures should be established with the appointment of responsible person. Gender mainstreaming requires a multi-stage cycle, including defining, planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, etc. This multi stage cycle can be presented into various public policy process. In each stage specific gender mainstreaming methods and cycles should be taken under consideration. This cycle may start from defining, planning, acting and checking. The concept of gender mainstreaming got prominence with the signing of Treaty of Rome in 1957. The treaty incorporated the principle of equal pay

for equal work. In 1996, the European Commission's communication specified on incorporating equal opportunities for women and men in all policies. In 1999, with the treaty of Amsterdam the legal basis got empowered. It substantially strengthened the legal foundation for community policies. Article 2 and 3 of the treaty dealt with the commitment of the community to gender mainstreaming. In 2003, the European Parliament took a resolution on gender mainstreaming. It adhered to timely adoption and implementation of policy plan for gender mainstreaming. During 2006-2010, European Union made a roadmap for equality between men and women. For example, they gave importance on equal representation in decision making, gender violence, stereotypes beliefs etc. In 2006, the first European pact for gender equality was made. In 2007, treaty on the functioning of the European Union presented the legal base on sex, racial discrimination, etc. In 2009, under the treaty of Lisbon, non-discrimination principle and equality between women and men were given preference. Under the strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015) priorities had been given for equal economic independence, equal pay for equal work, etc. The charter of fundamental rights adhered to the principle of non-discrimination based on any ground. The European pact for gender equality (2011-2020) adopted the equality between women and men as the fundamental value of the European Union. In Article 23 of the Charter, it said about gender equality. The strategic engagement for gender equality (2016-2019) has identified five priority areas. These includes equality in decision making process, equal pay for equal work, promoting gender equality, etc. For a successful gender mainstreaming strategy, a concise political commitment, a legal framework and an action plan are required.

**Five Principles of Gender Mainstreaming:**

There are some principles of gender mainstreaming. Broadly it has been divided into five categories:

1) **Use of gender sensitive language:** The first and foremost principle of gender mainstreaming is gender sensitive language. Every text

should refer both women and men and should make both categories equally important.

2) **Proper gender specific data collection and its analysis:** All the data collection processes should be gender specific and a neutral phenomenon should be adopted. From collecting the data to the analysis of those data, it should be presented by both the sections of the society.

3) **Equal access and utilisation of services:** All services and products should be properly assessed so that we can receive the different effects of these services over both men and women.

4) **Decision making process:** In all decision making processes men and women should give equal importance. A balanced gender ration should be taken at all the levels of decision making process.

5) **Equal treatment:** Strategies should be made in each government policies to include quality management and equal treatment of each sections of the society.

Again, there can be three steps for Gender Mainstreaming-

1) **Gender analysis:** Any institution or government / nongovernmental process must always proceed with analysing gender at its core.

2) **How to achieve the goal:** All institutions should work on some relevant areas and must adhere to achieve those goals.

3) **Main steps:** Integrating with everyday policy, targeting the specific groups and engage in dialogue with every group or institution.

### 4.3.1 Importance of Gender Mainstreaming

Gender Mainstreaming is not a goal but a process that deals with the equal representation of both men and women in policy making. It ensures that every policy making and legislative work carries a higher value and relevance in the society. These policies aim to fulfil the needs of every citizen including men and women. Therefore, gender mainstreaming enhances the equality between men and women and

ensures for making every policy more effective and equal. It not only aims to enhance equality but also questions the existing state of affairs and tries to solve the problem. Rather it tries to develop policies which aim to mitigate the inequalities and proceed for development. Again, it helps to understand the needs between men and women. So gender mainstreaming includes those activities which can benefit both men and women. It is a process of assessing the implications of any policies or programmes for women and men. Through assessment, there can be gender-centric analysis in every policy making, designing, implementing and monitoring and evaluating policies in all socio-economic programmes. Gender mainstreaming is, therefore, the way of realising and implementing gender equality. It offers a definite perspective for both men and women in policy making process, by reducing discrimination. Most government institutions and policy implementing bodies are dominated by men and this assessment has been providing a ground for equal treatment of both the two sectors. It also prevents the continuation of inequalities in policy making and policy implementation which can have negative impact on all the members of the political community. It ensures that mostly all the policies are of a higher standard and upholds equality. It makes sure that every policy should respond properly according to the needs of the majority of people rather than just men. Gender mainstreaming is important at all levels of government. It is a critical step in building a more equal world, where everyone has the same opportunity and access to the policies.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** Gender Mainstreaming tries to enhance …… . (Fill in the blank)

**Q.2:** State the component of the UN 2030 Agenda related to women.

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**Q.3:** Why is the Beijing conference considered an important milestone with regard to gender mainstreaming?

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**Q.4:** Mention any two principles of gender mainstreaming.

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## 4.4 CONCEPT OF GENDER BUDGETING

Gender budgeting is the most important issue in the contemporary era. Before studying gender budgeting, we should know what budget is. Budget is a financial plan or estimate for a definite time period that includes revenues and expenses. It allows for allocating the money for a specific purpose. A mature and disciplined budget can transform the economy of a country into a successful one. It is the estimate of income and expenditure for a particular time period.

Gender budget is not a separate budget. Gender budget gives adherence to a gender perspective view while preparing and analysing budgets. It does not signify a separate budget for women, but it allows us to think and analyse the budget from the gender perspective. It does not identify a separate budget for men and women. Rather, it is an approach in planning, executing, observing and analysing the budget within the frame of gender. Gender budget tries to establish gender justice in the society. It is considered as a means to examine whether the budget gives importance to women, whether the authority are ensuring the budgetary goals enriched in the budget or not. It tries to diminish the gender discrimination. It also guarantees to enhance the potency that helps in empowerment of women by analysing

the gender gap and gender injustice. The concept of gender budgeting is known as women's budget, gender responsive budget, gender sensitive budget, etc. It tries to reflect how women and men can positively avail the benefit from a budget. The concept of gender budget started in Australia in 1984. During that time it was known as women's budget. The federal government of Australia conducted a study to understand the impact of provincial budget and local government budget upon women from 1984 to 1996 covering a period of almost 12 years. The study showed that there has been a significant hike in gender budgeting allocation covering different aspects of women. In Australia, gender budgeting has got tremendous significance.

Gender budgeting is an important element for achieving gender mainstreaming. It is an ongoing process helps in the visibility of women in every sector including budget. It is an important part of budgeting that tries to establish the gender impacts and gender commitments in the budgetary process. Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of Assam says that the rationale for gender budgeting arises from recognition of the fact that national budgets impact men and women differently through the pattern of resource allocation. Though women constitute 48% of India's population, but in many sectors they are lagging behind, for example, health, education, economic opportunities, etc. Therefore, budget allocation and gender budgeting has the plausible impact of gender inequalities of resource allocation.

### 4.4.1 Importance of Gender Budgeting

The success of a state depends upon the concept of women empowerment. Women are the backbone of a society. They also constitute human resource. Women empowerment not only defines the strength of a country but it is also important for the self-development of women. Regarding the development of women, there has arisen a huge discrepancy due to the gender biasness. Therefore, gender mainstreaming is a process that tries to diminish

these discrepancies and concentrates more on the development of women as well as men in policy making. Also, it is a tool to strengthen the image, status and equality of the women section. Firstly, gender mainstreaming not only refers to expenditure but suggests how it can be equitable to both men and women. Then only it will help in efficient expenditure of resources. Secondly, this act can enhance the equality of gender in budget making and implementing procedure. Thirdly, to figure out and fulfil necessities of women there should be a preferred expenditure. Fourthly, it can also create transparency in decision making process by involving women. Fifthly, gender budget gives importance to accuracy and sustainability in resource utilisation. Hence, it figures out the odds that hampers in equal distribution of resources and gives effect to accomplish such activity. It is a strategy for achieving gender equality by focussing on fiscal policies. After Australia, many countries around the world has engaged themselves with such activities. It has elevated the status of women and accordingly helps in empowering the women section. In 1995, the South African government borrowed the concept of gender budgeting and included it as the basic element to define their budget. Subsequently, this gender budget was considered the main component for the development of women. It also helped in eradicating racial challenges. Later on, Tanzania and Uganda also opted for gender budgeting in 1997 and 1999 respectively. Through this gender budgeting, SAP policies were taken in Tanzania and Uganda. Today, more than 60 nations give adherence to this concept. Moreover, England, Korea and India have also promised to implement this concept. India adopted a gender- enriched budgeting in the 9th five year plan in 1998-2002. In that plan, gender equality and women were the two most debated concepts; accordingly, gender equality began to achieve prominence. In 2001, the department of women and child development started the NIPFP, that is the "The National Institute of Public Finance and Policy". In 2001, for the first time the economic survey adhered preference to

gender equality, women empowerment, etc. and these were considered as the main aims of budgeting. Again, the finance department formed a special expert group to fulfil these aims which further led to the formation of Gender Budgeting Directorate (GBP) to execute such objectives. In 2005-06, Indian Government took the first gender budgeting and accordingly formed gender budget cell-GBC's. According to the economic survey, the performance of gender budgeting has improved in India since the last fifteen years, but women are far lagging behind men.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.5:** State the meaning of budget.

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**Q.6:** State the meaning of Gender Budgeting.

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**Q.7:** The concept of gender budgeting started in …….. (Fill in the blank)



## 4.5 LET US SUM UP

- In contemporary era, the issue of gender mainstreaming has been found very relevant and essential while discussing the gender context. Without the concept of gender mainstreaming, the development of women is next to impossible. It has provided us a gender-centric policy which can guide for the overall development and empowerment of women as well as of men.

- The concept gender mainstreaming is being generally used in public policy. Gender mainstreaming asks for the assessment of different policy actions including the legislation and other programmes in every level of human life.
- It is a long term strategy that goes along with gender justice. If it is implemented properly then gender mainstreaming can be a reformative approach for social change and development. Therefore, there is a requirement of gender mainstreaming and specific measures for the development of women.
- Gender budget gives adherence to a gender perspective view while preparing and analysing budgets. It does not signify a separate budget for women, but it allows us to think and analyse the budget from a gender- perspective. It does not identify a separate budget for men and women. Rather, it is an approach in planning, executing, observing and analysing the budget within the frame of gender.
- Gender Mainstreaming is a process that tries to diminish the discrepancies and concentrate more on the development of women as well as of men in policy making. Again, it is also a tool to strengthen the image, status and equality of the women section.



## 4.6 FURTHER READING

1) Beauvoir, Simone de. (2015). *The Second Sex*. New Delhi: Vintage Classics, India.
2) John, E. Mary. (2008). *Women's Studies in India, A Reader.* New Delhi: Penguin India.
3) Menon, Nivedita. (2012). *Seeing like a Feminist.* New Delhi: Penguin India.
4) Menon, Nivedita and Nigam, Aditya. (2007). *Power and Contestation.* New Delhi : Zed Books Ltd.
5) Edi. Menon, Nivedita. (2001). *Gender and Politics in India.* New Delhi: OUP India.



## 4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** equality between men and women.

**Ans to Q No 2:** The UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development includes a standalone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women as well as girls.

**Ans to Q No 3:** The Beijing Conference is being considered as an important milestone with regard to gender mainstreaming, because the action plan for gender mainstreaming started from that period.

**Ans to Q No 4:** (i) Use of gender sensitive language: The first and foremost principle of gender mainstreaming is gender sensitive language. Every text should refer both women and men and should make both categories equally important.

(ii) Proper gender specific data collection and its analysis: All the data collection processes should be gender specific and a neutral phenomenon should be adopted. From collecting the data to the analysis of those data, it should be presented by both the sections of the society.

**Ans to Q No 5:** Budget is a financial plan or estimate for a definite time period that include revenues and expenses.

**Ans to Q No 6:** Gender budgeting is a concept that gives adherence to a gender perspective view while preparing and analysing budgets.

**Ans to Q No 7:** Australia in 1984.



## 4.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** Define Gender Mainstreaming.

**Q. 2 :** What is NIPFP?

**Q. 3 :** Mention five principles of Gender Mainstreaming.

**Q. 4 :** What are the three important steps of Gender Mainstreaming? Explain.

**Q. 5 :** Explain the meaning of Gender Budgeting.

**Q. 6 :** Make a note on the importance of Gender Budgeting for women empowerment.

**Q. 7 :** How can Gender Mainstreaming be considered a tool to strengthen the equality of women?

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# UNIT 5: WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

## UNIT STRUCTURE


5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Meaning of Women's Movements

5.4 Women's Movement: Historical Perspective

5.5 Women's Movements in India

5.6 Contemporary Movements

5.7 Women's Issues in South Asia

5.8 Let Us Sum Up

5.9 Further Reading

5.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.11 Possible Questions


## 5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- discuss the meaning of Women's Movements
- explain Women's Movements in India
- discuss various contemporary Women's Movements
- examine some of the important women's issues in South Asia.

## 5.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you studied the "Gender mainstreams and Gender Budgeting" as a political way of gender equality in the governmental policy. In this unit, our attempt is to study the popular women's movement with mass support and its achievements. In this unit we shall also discuss the South-Asian women's issues of movements which are related with the Indian society and shall try to highlight the position of women in contemporary State system in South Asia with special emphasis on Indian society.

## 5.3 MEANING OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

Women's movement is a movement to combat sexual discrimination and to gain full legal, economic, vocational, educational, and social rights and opportunities for women, equal to those of men. The Cambridge dictionary defines the women's movement as- "those people whose social and political aims are to change women's position in society and increase knowledge about women's condition in society."

The women's movement (also known as the women's liberation movement) refers to a series of political campaigns for reforms on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women's suffrage, sexual harassment, and sexual violence, all of which fall under the category of feminism and the feminist movement. The movement's priorities vary among nations and communities, and range from opposition to female genital mutilation in one country to opposition to the glass ceiling in another. The modern women's movement has lobbied for, and brought about a variety of social reforms. Issues of concern have included: pay equity, pension benefits, affirmative action, day care, reproductive rights, domestic and sexual violence, sexism and sex-role stereotyping, matrimonial property rights, and women's representation in government.



**LET US KNOW**

Womanist, a term coined by the writer Alice Walker, refers to the confidence, strength, and wisdom of African-American women based in their cultures and long struggle to support their children and communities and to end racism and all forms of injustice

## 5.4 WOMEN'S MOVEMENT : HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

While discussing the history of women's movement we can trace the genesis of women's movement to the West. The western countries experienced the emergence of women's movement in the late 18th century.

During that time women's movement centered around certain key issues, such as- political rights, reproductive rights, domestic violence, equal pay for equal work etc. The history of women's movement has been divided into three waves, such - first wave, second wave and third wave.

The first wave women's or feminist movement refers to the movement that took place in the 19th and early 20th century. During this period the movement focused on women's right to vote and political equality. In 1848 the first women's rights convention was held in New York. At this Convention the Declaration of Sentiment was signed which outlined agenda for women's rights movement. The period of women's movement between 1960s to 1980s is considered as second wave of women's movement. During this period, the women's movement focused on gender equality in law and culture. One very famous feminist associated with this wave of feminism was Simone de Beauvoir. During this period the movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicised and reflective of a sexist structure of power. A very strong slogan of the second wave of feminism was " Personal is Political". The third wave of women's movement began in the early 1990s. During this period emphasis was given on developing different achievements of women in USA. However, in the initial period development benefited mainly the white women of the middle and upper classes. The World War II brought drastic changes in the women's movement. This War brought many women, specially in USA, into the employment scenario. Thus, the women's movement has passed through various waves and phases and has been successful to a great extent in addressing key issues associated with women.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.1:** Write the meaning of women's movement.

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**Q.2:** What was the main demand of the first wave of feminism?

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## 5.5 WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

The development of women's movement in India is a remarkable event in the Indian society. Women's movements in India focus on the socio-political and religious laws which are discriminatory towards women. In the Indian context, the movement is different in pre-independence period and the post- independence which is discussed in briefly below.

In the pre-independence period it became a reform movement of traditional society and struggle against the colonial power which was gripped by the many socio-political evils about the women like - sati, dowry, child marriage etc. Noted Indian political thinkers and reformers like- Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen, Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Swarnakumari Devi etc. tried to bring reforms the society. Their efforts spanned action to abolish the practice of sati, the custom of child marriage, the custom of disfiguring widows, the ban on the remarriage of widows and a host of other evil practices that affected women. These reformers were also actively engaged in advancing the status of women by promoting their participation in politics and education, by obtaining for them legal rights to property. Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. He fought against the evils of caste system and the oppression of women. Vidyasagar took up the cause of widows, and started a movement in support for remarriage in the 1850s. it resulted in Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act of 1856. Keshab Chandra Sen was greatly interested in social reforms. He basically talked about the status of women and removing the inequalities of caste. The passing of the Brahmo Marriage Bill was the greatest triumph in his career as a social reformer. As a result of this Act, early marriage was abolished, polygamy was made penal offence and it sanctioned widow remarriage and inter-caste marriages. Mahadeva Gobinda Ranade who joined the Parthana Samaj in 1869, worked against social evils such as child marriage, the purdah system and prohibition of widow-remarriage. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who founded Arya Samaj, too opposed child marriage and supported widow remarriage and girl's education. Vivekananda also emphasised on women's education. He

emphaised that women should be taught the value of liberty, self-initiative and heroism. The women social reformer Maharani Tapasvini is reported to have taken part in the Revolt of 1857. She is one of the prominent persons who further the cause of women's education in Bangal. Pandita Ramabai develop a series of "Mahila Samajs" in Bombay Presidency and also speared the women's awareness about the society and social value among the women's group and society to overcome the social evils. She also had begun series of project involving girls schools, orphanages and widow's home. Swarnakumari Devi formed the "Sakhi Samiti' to foster among Indian women an active and enlightened interest in the welfare of the country. Ramabai Rande supported the suffrage movement in India and she had lead a number of meeting with demands for the right to vote. Thus, the movement of pre-independence period was a kind of reform movement.

The first modern organisation, the Women's Indian Association, formed in Madras in 1917 by Mrs. Margaret Cousins under the inspiration and leader of Annie Besant. The Women's India Association, through their campaign for suffrage, had acknowledged the inspiration received from the movement for the right to vote in west. The All India Women Conference (known as the Akhil Hind Mahila Parishad) was established in 1927 to mobilise women for advancing their status through education, social reform and politics. The All India Women's Conference, as an apex women's organisation, played an important role in pressurising the colonial government for giving women political and legal rights and amendments in Hindu laws pertaining to marriage, divorce and property. However, as it was dominated by Hindu women form upper and middle classes and castes, it locked the mass base and refrained from mobilising the rural women or women from the lower rank of society in its campaign against the orthodox Hindu laws and practices. In practice , the dominant section of women's movement during the colonial period shared views of the social reformers and Gandhi on the status of women and did not question patriarchal social relations within the family and society. Although the communist movement was engaged in organising women workers on a small scale since the colonial period, yet its influence on the early women's movement was very limited

because gender issues were subordinated within its broader political agenda of class struggle.

The concept of education as pre-requisite for women's equality was in fact, the first demand of the earlier women's movement that developed during the 1920's and 1930's. The first conference of the All India Women's Conference in 1927 condemned the practice of early marriage as it interfaced with women's education and emphasised the need for legal rights to deal with obstacles to promote education for women. However, women's education was eventually perceived as strengthening their roles within the dominant ideological framework of social reformers and nationalist. The nationalist movement laid the foundation of the principles of women's equality and provided some legal rights in social, economic and political spheres for women.

In the post- independence period, the women's movement raised a number of issues, such as- demand of rights, political participation and sometime ecological to give protection for the livelihood of inhabitants. After independence, Indian women attained the bonafide citizenship of the new nation. The Constitution of India not only provided equal rights and privileges for men and women but also went a step further to make provisions for special measures to be taken by the Government to improve the condition of women by enacting separate laws and forming institutions. For achieving the ideals of the Constitution it also incorporated Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy, more particularly Articles 14-16 to provide equality before law, equal protection of law and equality of opportunity in matters of public employment irrespective of caste, sex or place of birth. Thus, the Constitution had once for all, settled the position of women in society and this recognition of political equality of women was a radical departure from the socio-cultural norms prevailing in traditional India.

After independence a vigorous women's movement had taken place in India. Women from diverse castes, classes and communities participated in the movement along with activists drawn from a variety of political trends, parties and groups belonging to various ideologies making the movement highly heterogeneous. By taking a look at the women's movement in India,

one becomes aware of the enormous variety of positions, ideologies, strategies and mass bases. There are many debates going on around unresolved issues and questions, lending a sort of vibrancy to the women's movement. The positive achievement since independence is an important factor balancing this debate and controversy. There is the need to celebrate diverse strengths of the Indian women's movement especially its ability to meet challenges from different quarters, that is, challenges from communalism, caste movements etc.

## 5.6 CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS

In 21st century the world has been experiencing various movements related to the issues of women. Among all the developing countries, India has one of the most complex forms of patriarchal system. The contemporary women's movement in India is one of the most growing movements in developing countries, challenging caste, class, and gender inequalities. The resurgence of the women's movement in the 1970s in the context of the crisis of the state and the upsurge in social movements against growing inequality marked a significant shift in the analysis and understanding of women's issues and in redefining feminist politics. The proliferation of women's action groups and grassroots organisations since the 1970s reflects the diversity and complexity of the women's movement. The canvas of the contemporary women's movement is very large. It has moved beyond the traditional concerns with legislation, education and social welfare to a wide range of issues, such as access to land and natural resources, environmental degradation, media, reproductive health and population, gender based violence, alcoholism, dowry-murders, rape, eve-teasing, pornographic films, plays and literature on harassment of women at the workplace etc. are the main issues of contemporary women's movements.

## 5.7 WOMEN'S ISSUES IN SOUTH ASIA

South Asia comprises eight different sovereign nations (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan Maldives) with diverse socio-cultural and ethnic populations, a range of religious faiths, legal frames,

economic and political forces, all of which have impact upon the lives of women living in the region. Within these diversities, the region stands together on a number of counts and the women of South Asia too, face similar conditions on various fronts. South Asia is a highly populated, agriculture dependent, income poor and identified as the most deprived region in the World. South Asia has produced important women politicians and heads of states, while also being witness to some very brutal and harsh attacks on women based on caste, ethnicity, language and religion. Resistance to such assault and attack by women is slowly but surely changing the way women see themselves, no longer as helpless victims but as agents of change and empowerment. Further, the increasing role of religion in political mobilisations in South Asia cannot be ignored. The situation of women in South Asia is different and their participation political and social fields is increasing. This assessment is undertaken on the basis of a select set of quantitative indicators regarding their work, survival, health, education and political participation.

- **Women's Work:** The South Asia region as a whole has been witnessing rising levels of women's economic participation over the years. Nevertheless, the characteristics of women's labour, in terms of the nature of tasks undertaken and the wages earned, remains by and large unchanged. Majority of the women are undertaking manual, non-mechanised, low or unpaid tasks. Even among those entering the paid labour market, women face gender discrimination in access to jobs and gender inequalities in payment and job security.
- **Health Concerns:** The overall lower status of women in South Asia influences their health status too. In South Asian countries, marriages are traditionally carried out at early ages with little choice being given to women. The governments of most South Asian countries are actively working towards preventing child marriages and increasing the minimum age of marriage for girls. Bangladesh, India and Bhutan have stipulated the legal minimum age at marriage at 18 years. Yet, many marriages still continue to occur before girls attain the minimum age as legally and statutorily fixed. Early marriage along with young age pregnancies compounded by poor health and economic poverty

lays or adds to undue stress on women's bodies. Maternal mortality rates are quite high in the region (HDSA, 2000). The probability of women not surviving childbirth is further aggravated by a large proportion of them having non-institutional deliveries, unaided by skilled personnel. Only 36 per cent of South Asian babies are born with the assistance of skilled personnel. In Sri Lanka and Maldives, the situation is relatively better compared to other South Asia countries.

- **Education:** The importance of education for Human Development as well as women empowerment as core dimension is well accepted in South Asia too. Sri Lanka and Maldives are among the best performing countries in the region. However, the gender biases at higher educational levels, in professional courses or in non-traditional subjects are visible even among these countries. There is a serious problem regarding illiteracy among women. The governments of South Asian countries have stressed the free and compulsory primary education and tried to place emphasis on enrolment and retention of girls in schools. Various incentive schemes such as scholarships for girls, free school meals and separate schools for girls in each Thana (Bangladesh) have been operational. Efforts have also been made to increase female teachers in schools.

- **Political Participation:** In the South Asian region there are many women leader who have been heads of the nation (Indira Gandhi, Shaikh Hasina, Benazir Bhutto, Srimavo Bandaranaike and Chandrika Kumaratunga). The general level of political participation among the South Asian women does not reflect similar trends. Even in pockets where the political awareness among women may be higher, their actual participation is often limited by the constraints laid on their mobility and roles based on the socio-cultural perceptions. The 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts of the Indian provided for reservation of one-third seats for women in its local governance structures and this generated tremendous interest in the other countries of the region. In 1997, both Nepal and Bangladesh introduced women's reservation in local bodies. While it was 20 percent in Nepal, in the case of

Bangladesh it was one-third seats in all four tiers of local government. In Pakistan also, one-third seats are reserved in local bodies, which is visible in the current figures of women's political participation.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.3:** Brahmo Samaj was founded in which year?

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**Q.4:** Write briefly about various social reform movements that took place in India during the colonial period.

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**Q.5:** Write briefly about women's health scenario in South Asia.

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## 5.8 LET US SUM UP

- Women's movement is a movement to combat sexual discrimination and to gain full legal, economic, vocational, educational, and social rights and opportunities for women, equal to those of men.
- While discussing the history of women's movement we can trace the genesis of women's movement in the West. The western countries experienced the emergence of women's movement in the late 18th century. During that time women's movement centered around certain key issues, such as- political rights, reproductive rights, domestic violence, equal pay for equal work etc. The history of women's movement has been divided into three waves, such - first wave, second wave and third wave.

- In Indian context women's movement is different in pre-independence period and the post-independence period. In the pre-independence period it became a reform movement of traditional society and struggle against the colonial power which was gripped by the many socio-political evils about the women like - sati, dowry, child marriage etc. Noted Indian political thinkers and reformers like- Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen, Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Swarnakumari Devi etc. tried to bring reforms the society. Their efforts spanned action to abolish the practice of sati, the custom of child marriage, the custom of disfiguring widows, the ban on the remarriage of widows and a host of other evil practices that affected women. These reformers were also actively engaged in advancing the status of women by promoting their participation in politics and education, by obtaining for them legal rights to property.
- The first modern organisation, the Women's Indian Association, formed in Madras in 1917 by Mrs. Margaret Cousins under the inspiration and leader of Annie Besant. The Women's India Association, through their campaign for suffrage, had acknowledged the inspiration received from the movement for the right to vote in west. The All India Women Conference (know as the Akhil Hind Mahila Parishad) was established in 1927 to mobilise women for advancing their status through education, social reform and politics.
- In the post- independence period the women's movement raised a number of issues, such as- demand of rights, political participation and sometime ecological to give protection for the livelihood of inhabitants. The Constitution of India has not only provided equal rights and privileges for men and women but also went a step further to make provisions for special measures to be taken by the Government to improve the condition of women by enacting separate laws and forming institutions.
- The canvas of the contemporary women's movement is very large. It has moved beyond the traditional concerns with legislation, education and social welfare to a wide range of issues, such as access to land

and natural resources, environmental degradation, media, reproductive health and population, gender based violence, alcoholism, dowry-murders, rape, eve-teasing, pornographic films, plays and literature on harassment of women at the workplace etc. are the main issues of contemporary women's movements.

- South Asia comprises of eight different sovereign nations (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan Maldives) with diverse socio-cultural and ethnic populations, a range of religious faiths, legal frames, economic and political forces, all of which have an impact upon the lives of women living in the region.



## 5.9 FURTHER READING

1) Altekar, A.S. (1962). *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas.

2) Subbamma, Malladi. (1994). *Women's Movements and Associations*. Hyderabad: Mahilabhyudaya Samastha.

3) UNDP 2019. *Human Development Report.* United Nations Development Programme, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

4) Situation of Women in South Asia: Some Dimensions by Preet Rustagi in pdf Socio-Political Status of Women in India: A Historical Perspective in pdf



## 5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Women's movement is a movement to combat sexual discrimination and to gain full legal, economic, vocational, educational, and social rights and opportunities for women, equal to those of men.

**Ans to Q No 2:** Women's right to vote and political equality.

**Ans to Q No 3:** 1828

**Ans to Q No 4:** During colonial period reform movement took place against many socio-political evils about the women like - sati, dowry, child marriage etc. Noted Indian political thinkers and reformers like- Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen, Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Swarnakumari Devi etc. tried to bring reforms in the society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. He fought against the evils of caste system and the oppression of women. Vidyasagar took up the cause of widows, and started a movement in support for remarriage in the 1850s. it resulted in Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act of 1856. Keshab Chandra Sen was greatly interested in social reforms. He basically talked about the status of women and removing the inequalities of caste. The passing of the Brahmo Marriage Bill was the greatest triumph in his carreer as a social reformer. As a result of this Act, early marriage was abolished, polygamy was made penal offence and it sanctioned widow remarriage and inter-caste marriages. Mahadeva Gobinda Ranade who joined the Parthana Samaj in 1869, worked against social evils such as child marriage, the purdah sysytem and prohibition of widow-remarriage. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who founded Arya Samaj, too opposed child marriage and supported widow remarriage and girl's education. Vivekananda also emphasised on women's education. Pandita Ramabai developed a series of "Mahila Samajs" in Bombay Presidency and also speared women's awareness regarding the society and social value among the women's group and society to overcome social evils. Swarnakumari Devi formed the "Sakhi Samiti' to foster among Indian women an active and enlightened interest in the welfare of the country. Ramabai Rande supported the suffrage movement in India and she had lead a number of meeting with demands for the right to vote.

**Ans to Q No 5:** The overall lower status of women in South Asia influences their health status too. In South Asian countries, marriages are traditionally carried out at early ages with little choice being given to women. The governments of most South Asian countries are actively working towards preventing child marriages and increasing the minimum age of marriage for girls. Bangladesh, India and Bhutan have stipulated the legal minimum age at marriage at 18 years. Yet, many marriages continue to occur before girls attain the minimum age legally and statutorily fixed. Early marriage along with young age pregnancies compounded by poor health and economic poverty places or adds undue stress on women's bodies. Maternal mortality rates are quite high in the region (HDSA, 2000). The probability of women not surviving childbirth is further aggravated by a large proportion of them having non-institutional deliveries, unaided by skilled personnel. Only 36 per cent of South Asian babies are born with the assistance of skilled personnel. In Sri Lanka and Maldives, the situation is relatively better compared to other South Asia countries.



## 5.11 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** Define the women's movement.

**Q. 2 :** Write briefly on the three waves of feminism.

**Q. 3 :** Write briefly on the contemporary women's movement.

**Q. 4 :** Discuss women's movement that took place in India during colonial and post-colonial period.

**Q. 5 :** Evaluate the position of women in South Asia.

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# UNIT 6: WOMEN AND FAMILY

## UNIT STRUCTURE


6.1 Learning Objectives
6.2 Introduction
6.3 Structure of Family
6.4 Power Structure in Family
6.5 Position of Women in Family
6.6 Let Us Sum Up
6.7 Further Reading
6.8 Answers To Check Your Progress
6.9 Possible Questions


## 6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the structure of the family
- discuss the power structure in family
- analyse the position of women in family.

## 6.2 INTRODUCTION

Indian culture attaches great importance to women, comprising half of world's population. According to a report of the Secretary General of the United Nations, women constitute 50% of human resources. Women are the key to sustainable development and quality of life in the family. The varieties of role the women assume in the family are such as the role of mother, wife, leader, administrator, manager of family income etc. In this unit we shall discuss the position of women in a family structure.

## 6.3 STRUCTURE OF FAMILY

Within any society there are more or less common ways of identifying family relationships. There are ways of organising family relationships which are broadly accepted as appropriate and given legitimacy in the respective society.

According to George Murdock, the term 'family' can be defined as, "a social group characterised by common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children own or adopted of sexually cohabiting adults". There are various types of family that exist in today's society, some of the more common family structures are:

- **Nuclear Family:** It usually consists of two generations of family, parents and their child/ children residing in the same household.
- **Extended Family:** It is also known as three generation family consisting of grandparents, their children and grandchildren.
- **Single Parent Family:** It is also known as lone parent family. It consists of one parent and the child/children in the household.
- **Reconstituted Family:** This is a family where one or more parents have been married previously. Here it introduces the concept of step mother, step father etc.
- **Symmetrical Family:** This is a family where the roles of husband and wife or of cohabiting partners have become more alike or equal.
- **Empty Nest Family:** This is a family, where the child/children have moved out of the home and the parents reside together.
- **Patrilineal Family:** In this type of family, property and title inheritance is inherited by the father's side. Here, father is the head of the family.
- **Matrilineal Family:** In this type of family, property and title inheritance passes down through mother's side. Here, mother is the head of the family.

## 6.4 POWER STRUCTURE IN FAMILY

Feminists have been central in criticising gender roles associated with the traditional nuclear family, especially since the 1950s. They have argued the nuclear family has traditionally performed two key functions which oppressed women, such as:

a) Socialising girls to accept subservient roles within the family, while socialising boys to believe they are superior - this happens through children witnessing then recreating the parental relationship.

b) Socialising women into accepting the "housewife" role as the only possible/acceptable role for a woman. Indeed, it was the only way to be feminine or to be a woman. Essentially, feminists viewed the function of the family as a breeding ground where patriarchal values were learned by an individual, which in turn created a patriarchal society.

The three distinct branches of feminism, such as- Liberal Feminists, Marxist Feminists and Radical Feminists differ significantly over the extent to which they believe that the family is still patriarchal and the underlying causes of the existence of patriarchy.

Family power structure plays a critical role in family health functioning. Power has been defined as the ability to control, influence or change another person's behaviour (Friedman, 1998). Power is related to resources. Control over resources (eg. money) infers power. In most families, parents control these resources. There are three types of family power namely chaotic power, symmetrical power and complementary power (Hanson, 2001). Again apart from this many sociologists also examine the concept of family power structure in terms of the familial or marital as well as the factor of decision making.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.1:** State the meaning of empty nest family.

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**Q.2:** The family power structure is …… (Fill in the blank)

**Q.3:** How does George Murdock define the term family?

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**Q.4:** Feminists argue that the nuclear family has traditionally performed two key functions which oppress women. Explain. (within 50 words).

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## 6.5 POSITION OF WOMEN IN FAMILY

From the ancient period in most of the human societies, social differentiation between the sexes, the male and female existed and in majority of them women were assigned an inferior position. In recent times the equality in status has been assigned to women in the socialist societies, however, many are still deprived of the same. Thus, women accounting for nearly one half of the human population, live in perpetual subordination to the other half of men. Women are considered primarily as reproducers although they invented agriculture and produce about fifty percent of world's food. Their role as producers is acknowledged but it is viewed as a transferable role. It seems that, the indispensability of women as reproducers of human societies has turned into an instrument of their own enslavement.

Traditionally, an Indian woman had four fold status or role sequences. These were her role as a daughter, wife, housewife (homemaker), and mother. The woman, whose status and role traditionally was well defined and almost fixed in the society, is now experiencing significant changes. The woman in modern times has entered certain new fields which were earlier unknown to the woman's sphere of role-sets. They actively participate in social, economic, and political activities todays. The women of the present generation have generally received higher education than the women of their preceding generation. There have been far reaching consequences in the economic status of their families.

Apart from the traditionally fixed four fold roles, women, in contemporary time, also play important role in the family as decision maker, manager of income for household expenditure. Women in the family continuously work for mental and physical wellbeing of all the family members. But most of the time women are engaged in unpaid labour within the family. Due recognition is not given to their labour at the domestic level.

**Women's Role in Society:** The modern women are inclined towards the social issues, and trying hard to improve the social status of women at large. Increased awareness and education has inspired women to come out of the four walls of their homes. Many women had actively supported and participated in the nationalist movement and secured eminent positions and offices in administration and public life in free India. Just like their male counterpart, women too are fond of attending social functions and value their social life and status. Previously, men used to discourage women from leaving their households to attend social functions. Now the spread of education, especially that of women, and their changing social attitudes women have changed the order. The modern woman has started caring for her health, cultural needs and interests, academic pursuits, social intercourse, religious activities, recreational needs, etc.

**Woman as a Wife:** Woman as a wife enjoyed ideally a status almost equal to that of her husband and performed both social as well as biological functions. Even today, the Indian girls are still brought up on models portraying selflessness, self-denial, and sacrifice. The desire for mutual affection and love is beginning to appear in their conception of their relationship with their husbands. The husband-wife relationship has become more equal in character and much more compatible. More freedom of choice in marriage is thus an accompaniment to the changes in the family.

**Women's Role in Politics:** Education of women has not only helped them become aware of the political problems, but they are gradually becoming active participants in the political life. Some are enrolling themselves as members of political parties, attending party meetings, conventions, and carrying out political programs. Many women have attained influential political stature of their own and have become instrumental in shaping the public opinions for the betterment of women's conditions in society.

**Participation of Women in Socio-economic Activities:** Women in modern times are entering into certain new fields that were unknown to the woman's sphere of role-sets. These are the woman's participation in economic, political, and social life. The modern woman keenly desires to enter into a work career because of the pressing economic needs of the family. In middle

class families, much emphasis is given to the maintenance of high standards of living. To fulfill the economic needs of the family and to achieve higher standard of living the woman participates in economic activities.

**Women Equality is not Universal:** Women's equality in terms of education, employment, and power is still an individual rather than a universal achievement. The majority of our women are still content to accept an inferior status. This is by and large due to the fact that, although legally women have equal rights with men, there are not enough jobs for women and working women are not adequately protected from exploitation.

**Unaware of their Legal Status:** Women are generally not aware of the provisions related to the improvement of their own position. Even if they know about some of the provisions related to their rights of succession, marriage, or family, they do not desire to invoke them. Traditional dominance of the authority of the male parents, husband, and other elder members of the family often tend to restrict the legal rights of women. The materialisation of these problems still depends largely on the attitudinal changes of the society.

**Rural women:** According to Gandhiji's vision women must play an equal and important role in national development. However, the movement for raising the socio-economic status of women had generally involved the middle-class educated women in major urban centers while the great mass of rural women are yet to enjoy the rights and privileges as enshrined in the Constitution. The scenario of rural women in India is not so encouraging. The literacy rate of rural women is less than their male counterpart. Attitude of the family towards education of girl child is negative. Rural women are the worst victims of poverty. Besides economic poverty, rural women are also victims of information poverty.

**Role of Women Welfare Organisations:** In the present time a number of women welfare organisations exit both at the national and international level. The main objective of such organisations is to achieve maximum welfare for women and to establish a gender just society. In India some of such organisations are- Young Women Christian Association, All India Women's Conference, National Council of Women, Inner Wheel (Women's section of

the Rotary International). In many cities, local organisations exist such as Mahila Mandal, Mahila Samiti, and Recreation Clubs, etc. Likewise, at the international level too, a number of women organisations, such as- Women's Environment and Development Organisation, United Nations Development Fund for Women, Women for Women International, Women's International Democratic Federation- are working for greater welfare of women in general.

Educated women are just on the threshold of transition from tradition to modernity. The women themselves desire that their status and position in society should rise higher. Though a proper climate for such a change is still wanting, yet there have been many structural and statutory innovations for the improvement of their position. The traditional status and role sets of women are breaking up and new role-sets based on achievement, independence and equality are gradually coming up.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.5:** Traditionally, an Indian woman had four fold status-role sequences. (True/False)

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**Q.6:** Mention Gandhi's views on rural women.

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**Q.7:** Name some national level women organisations in India.

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**Q.8:** Write briefly about the role of women in Politics.

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## 6.6 LET US SUM UP

- Indian culture attaches great importance to women, comprising half of world's population. According to a report of secretary general of United

Nations, women constitute 50% of human resources, the greatest human resource next only to man having great potentiality.

- Family is a social group characterised by common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children own or adopted of sexually cohabiting adults.
- The position of women in ancient India has been a very complicated one because of the paradoxical statements in different religious scriptures and sometimes in the same text at different places. Some have described their status as 'equals to men', while others have held not only in disrespect but even in positive hatred. This is why it has presented many problems to the scholars while evaluating women's status in India.
- The cultural history of India reveals that theoretically women enjoyed the status of devi (goddess) as described in many religious texts of Hindus, the majority community in India.
- Though woman enjoyed the theoretical importance which these texts outline for the wife who was defined ardhangini (better-half), but in practice she had a subservient position than man with no rights.
- It was generally seen and believed that women had lower status with reference to power and influence than men in all spheres of life-family, community, religion and politics.
- There are different structures of families like- Nuclear family, Extended, Single parent family, Reconstituted family, Symmetrical family, Empty nest family, patrilineal family and matrilineal family.
- Feminists have been central in criticising gender roles associated with the traditional nuclear family, especially since the 1950s.
- Various branches of feminism differ significantly over the extent to which they believe that the family is still patriarchal and in what the underlying causes of the existence of patriarchy.



## 6.7 FURTHER READING

1) Prata, Ndola. Fraser, Ashiley. and Upadhya, Ushma. (2017). *Women's Empowerment and Family Planning: A Review of Literature.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2) Tilly, Louise. Scott, W Joan. (1989). *Women, Work, and Family.* UK: Psychology Press.

3) Seymour. Susan, Mukhopadhyay, Chapnick Carol. (1994). *Women, Education and Family Structure in India.* Cambridge: US: Westview Press.



## 6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Empty nest family is a family, where the child/children have moved out of the home and the parents reside together.

**Ans to Q No 2:** not fixed.

**Ans to Q No 3:** According to George Murdock, the term 'family' can be defined as, "a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children own or adopted of sexually cohabiting adults".

**Ans to Q No 4:** Feminism argued the nuclear family has traditionally performed two key functions which oppressed women. These two functions are-

a) Socialising girls to accept subservient roles within the family, while socialising boys to believe they are superior - this happens through children witnessing then recreating the parental relationship.

b) Socialising women into accepting the "housewife" role as the only possible/acceptable role for a woman. Indeed, it was the

only way to be feminine or to be a woman. Essentially, feminists viewed the function of the family as a breeding ground where patriarchal values were learned by an individual, which in turn created a patriarchal society.

**Ans to Q No 5:** True.

**Ans to Q No 6:** According to Gandhiji's vision women must play an equal and important role in national development. However, the movement for raising the socio-economic status of women had generally involved the middle-class educated women in major urban centers while the great mass of rural women are yet to enjoy the rights and privileges as enshrined in the Constitution.

**Ans to Q No 7:** Young Women Christian Association, All India Women's Conference, National Council of Women.

**Ans to Q No 8:** Education of women has not only helped them become aware of the political problems, but they are gradually becoming active participants in the political life. Some are enrolling themselves as members of political parties, attending party meetings, conventions, and carrying out political programs. Many women have attained influential political stature of their own and have become instrumental in shaping the public opinions for the betterment of women's conditions in society.



## 6.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** What is Matrilineal Family?

**Q. 2 :** How George Murdock defines family?

**Q. 3 :** Mention the position of the women in the family.

**Q. 4 :** What is single parent family?

**Q. 5 :** What are the feminist views on equality of women in power structure?

**Q. 6 :** Analyse the role of housewife in the society.

**Q. 7 :** Discuss the role of women in the society.

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# UNIT 7: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## UNIT STRUCTURE


7.1 Learning Objectives
7.2 Introduction
7.3 Causes of Violence against Women
7.4 Forms of Violence
7.5 Sexual Harassment at Workplace
7.6 Women Trafficking
7.7 Let Us Sum Up
7.8 Further Reading
7.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
7.10 Possible Questions


## 7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- examine the meaning of violence against women
- discuss the causes and forms of violence against women
- examine the problems of sexual harassment at workplace and female trafficking.

## 7.2 INTRODUCTION

In most of the societies, women are treated as second class citizens. Women are subject to various forms of abuses and violence, such as child-marriage, female infanticide, sexual harassment, dowry and so on. Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. The patriarchal nature of the society is mainly responsible for this. The patriarchal value and belief system always justify superior position of men in comparison to women which results in deprivations for women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation,

coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions. These expressions of violence take place in a man-woman relationship within the family, state and society. Cultural and social factors are interlinked with the development and propagation of violent behaviour. In this unit we shall discuss various causes and forms of violence against women. We shall also examine the problems of sexual harassment at the workplace and women trafficking.

## 7.3 CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is not a new phenomenon. The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or, is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Women have to bear the burdens of domestic, public, physical as well as emotional and mental violence against them, which affects their status in the society to a larger extent. The statistics of increasing crimes against women is shocking, where women are subjected to violence attacks i.e. foeticide, infanticide, medical neglect, child marriages, bride burning, sexual abuse of girl child, forced marriages, rape, prostitution, sexual harassment at home as well as work places etc. In all the above cases women is considered as aggrieved person.

While we examine the problem of violence against women, we can identify a number of causes for this problem. Some of these causes are:

- **Patriarchal structure of the society:** The patriarchal values of the society are the main reasons behind all forms of violence against women. Patriarchal system of belief always places women in a subordinate position in the society which perpetuates violence against them.
- **Dowry:** In India demand of dowry is one of the main causes of violence against women. In 1961, the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act, declaring the dowry demands in wedding arrangements illegal. However, many cases of dowry-related domestic violence, suicides and murders have been reported.

- **Child Marriage:** Child marriage has been traditionally prevalent in India and continues to this day. Traditionally, young girls would live with their parents till they reached puberty. Earlier child widows were condemned to a life of great agony and compulsions such as having clean shaved heads, living in isolation conforming to restrictions and often being mistreated by society. Although child marriage was outlawed in 1860, yet it continues in some areas of India.
- **Female Infanticides and Sex Selective Abortions:** Many countries of the world including India have a highly masculine sex ratio, the chief reason being that many women die before reaching adulthood. It is therefore suggested by many experts, that the highly masculine sex ratio can be attributed to female infanticides and sex-selective abortions. The abuse of the dowry tradition has been one of the main reasons for sex-selective abortions and female infanticides in India.
- **Domestic Violence:** The incidents of domestic violence occurs in many families regardless of high or lower socio economic status. Domestic violence against women in many cases result in severe physical and emotional injuries of women. Domestic violence includes harassment, maltreatment, brutality or cruelty and even the threat of assault-intimidation etc.
- **Trafficking:** The problem of female trafficking is very serious all across the world. These women are either forced into prostitution, domestic work, or child labour. In India to eliminate this problem, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act was passed in 1956.
- **Eve- Teasing:** Eve teasing is an act of terror that violates a woman's body, space and self-respect. It is one of the many ways through which a woman is systematically made to feel inferior, week and afraid. Whether it is an obscene word whispered into a woman's ear; offensive remarks on her appearance; an intrusive way of touching any part of a woman's body; a gesture which is perceived and intended to be vulgar; all these acts represent a violation of a woman's person, her bodily integrity.

- **Rape:** Crimes such as rape as a form of sexual violence against women are reported to be on the increase. Around the world, one in five women has been found to be victims of rape in their lifetime. Many rapes go unreported because of the stigma and trauma associated with them and the lack of sympathetic treatment from legal systems. The insecurity outside the household is today the greatest obstacle in the path of women.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** What are the forms of abuse against women?

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**Q.2:** In India, the Dowry Prohibition Act was passed in the year …… (Fill in the blank)

**Q.3:** Write a short note on Domestic Violence. (Within 50 words).

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**Q.4:** Write briefly about any two causes of violence against women.

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## 7.4 FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Violence against women and girls has many manifestations, including forms that may be more common in specific settings, countries and regions. Violence against women manifests itself as physical, sexual, emotional and economic.

The most universally common forms include domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence (including rape), sexual harassment, and emotional/psychological violence. Sexual violence as a tactic of warfare and in the aftermath of emergencies is also common in the respective countries and areas affected. Other widespread forms of violence against women around the globe include: sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, women

killing and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, forced and child marriage etc. Less documented forms of violence against women include- crimes committed in the name of honour, foeticide, prenatal sex selection, female infanticide, economic abuse, political violence, elder abuse, dowry-related violence and acid-throwing. Particular groups of women and girls, such as members of racial, ethnic and sexual minorities, HIV-positive women, migrants and undocumented workers, women with disabilities, women in detention and women affected by armed conflict or in emergency settings may be more vulnerable to violence and may experience multiple forms of violence on account of compounded forms of discrimination and socio-economic exclusion. The perpetrators of violence may include the State and its agents, family members (including husbands), friends, intimate partners or other familiar individuals, and strangers.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.5:** Violence against women manifests itself as physical, sexual, emotional and economic. (True/ False)

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**Q.6:** Mention various forms of violence against women.

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## 7.5 SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE

Sexual harassment includes such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or through implication) as:

(a) physical contact and advances

(b) a demand or request for sexual favours

(c) sexually coloured remarks

(d) showing pornography

(e) any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.

When any of these above mentioned acts are committed in circumstances where the victim has a reasonable apprehension that in relation to the victim's employment or work whether she is drawing salary, or honorarium or voluntary, whether in government, public or private enterprise, such conduct can be humiliating and may constitute a health and safety problem, it amounts to sexual harassment. It is discriminatory for instance when the woman has reasonable grounds to believe that her objection would prove to be a disadvantage for her in connection with her employment or work including recruitment or promotion or when it creates a hostile work environment. Adverse consequences might be visited if the victim does not consent to the conduct in question or raises any objection thereto.

Examples of sexual harassment in many forms, including- unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours, deliberate touching or physical contact, sharing sexually inappropriate images or videos with co-workers, sending emails, letters, or telephone calls, or text messages of a sexual nature etc.

- **Steps to be taken by the employers**

All Employers or persons in charge of work place whether in public or private sector should take appropriate steps to prevent sexual harassment. Without prejudice to the generality of this obligation they should take the following steps:

(a) Express prohibition of sexual harassment as defined above at the work place should be notified, published and circulated in appropriate ways.

(b) The Rules/Regulations of Government and Public Sector bodies relating to conduct and discipline should include rules / regulations prohibiting sexual harassment and provide for appropriate penalties in such rules against the offender.

(c) As regards private employers steps should be taken to include the aforesaid prohibitions in the standing orders under the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1940.

In India to prohibit the crime of sexual violence at the workplace, the Parliament of India has passed the Sexual Harassment of Women at

Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The Act came into force from 9 December 2013. This Act provides that all employers must form a grievance redressal mechanism for the cases for sexual harassment at the workplace.

## 7.6 WOMEN TRAFFICKING

The trafficking of women for sexual exploitation is an international, organised, criminal phenomenon that has grave consequences for the safety, welfare and human rights of its victims. The United Nations defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by improper means (such as force, abduction, fraud or coercion) for an improper purpose including forced labour or sexual exploitation. Trafficking of women is a criminal phenomenon that violates basic human rights, and totally destroying victims' lives. Countries are affected by this problem in various ways. Some see their young women being lured to leave their home and ending up in the sex industry abroad or in her own country. Other countries act mainly as transit countries, while several other receive foreign women who become victims of sexual exploitation.

**Trafficking of Women across the world**

The United Nations estimates that 4 million people are trafficked each year, resulting in $7 billion in profits to criminal groups. Many countries have weak, unenforced or no laws against trafficking in human beings, often making it less risky and more profitable to criminal groups than drug or arms trafficking. With increased economic globalisation, trafficking in women from poor to wealthier countries appears to be on the rise. Trafficking networks may recruit and transport women legally or illegally for slavery-like work, including forced prostitution, sweatshop labour and exploitative domestic servitude. In case of India, women and girls from Nepal and Bangladesh trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. They are forced to work as sex workers undergoing severe exploitation and abuse.

Trafficked women are the most vulnerable group in contracting HIV infection. Due to unrelenting poverty and lack of unemployment opportunities there is an increase in the voluntary entry of women into sex work. Trafficking

both for commercial sexual exploitation and for non-sex based exploitation is a transnational and complex challenge as it is an organised criminal activity, an extreme form of human rights violation and an issue of economic empowerment and social justice. The trafficking of women and children causes untold miseries as it violates the rights and dignity of the individual in several ways. It violates individual's rights to life, dignity, security, privacy, health, education and redressal of grievances.

The following are reasons for increased of women trafficking across the world:

- Forced Marriage: Girls and women are not only trafficked for prostitution but also bought and sold like commodity in many regions of the world where female ratio is less as compared to male due to female infanticide. These are then forced to marry.
- Bonded Labour: According to the International Labour Organisation there are more than 11.7 million people working as a forced labour in the Asia-Pacific region. People running out of cash generally sell their kids as debt labour in exchange for cash. Both boys and girls are sold for this purpose and generally not paid for years. Victims of human trafficking have great chances of suffering from issues like mental disorders, depression and anxiety. Women forced into sexual trafficking have at higher risk of getting affected from HIV and other STDs.

Poverty and illiteracy are the main elements constituting the main elements responsible for trafficking. The number of non-governmental organisations working in the field has increased enormously during the last few years. However, the vast majority of them are located in urban centres and very few have grassroots connections. Women trafficking touch every country and countless industries worldwide, and while there are many individuals and organisations working globally to combat this problem, it may take time before it is fully realised just how huge this issue is.

The situation of female trafficking presents a picture of lack of cohesion and coordination. Whether it is intra-state trafficking, inter-state trafficking or trans-border trafficking, the agencies involved in rescue do not seem to have any coordination with the agencies concerned with rehabilitation. The

issue of missing women and children has been seen in isolation and was never seen in correlation with trafficking. There is no common platform linking up prevention strategies between source and destination areas. The absence of a national coordinating/monitoring agency has been a serious impediment in justice delivery and protection of human rights. Therefore, in order to ensure the best interests of the victims, to bring about effective coordination at the national level and to coordinate preventive strategies, programmes and policies, there is also a need for a national nodal agency to combat trafficking.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.7:** Mention any two reasons responsible for the increase of women trafficking.

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**Q.8:** What does the word "Sexual Harassment" imply?

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## 7.7 LET US SUM UP

- In most of the societies, women are considered as second class citizens. Women are subject to various forms of abuses and violence, such as child-marriage, female infanticide, sexual harassment, dowry and so on.
- Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation,

coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions.

- Some of the causes responsible for violence against women are- patriarchal structure of the society, dowry, child marriage, female infanticides and sex selective abortions, domestic violence, trafficking, eve- teasing, rape etc.
- The most universally common forms of violence against women include domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence (including rape), sexual harassment, and emotional/psychological violence. Sexual violence as a tactic of warfare and in the aftermath of emergencies is also common in the respective countries and areas affected. Other widespread forms around the globe include: sexual exploitation, sexual trafficking, and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), forced and child marriage. Less documented forms, include: crimes committed in the name of honour, foeticide, prenatal sex selection, female infanticide, economic abuse, political violence, elder abuse, dowry-related violence and acid-throwing.
- Sexual harassment at the workplace and trafficking are two very serious problems that the women are experiencing across the world. In India to prohibit the crime of sexual violence at the workplace the Parliament of India has passed the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The Act came into force from 9 December 2013. This Act provides that all employers must form a grievance redressal mechanism for the cases for sexual harassment at the workplace.



## 7.8 FURTHER READING

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2) Mohanty, Bedabati. (2005). *Violence Against Women*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.

3) Naidu, Y. Gurappa. (2011). *Violence Against Women in India*. New Delhi: Serials Publications.

## 7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Women are abused in the form of child-marriage, female infanticide, sexual harassment both at home and workplace, dowry, rape, domestic violence, acid attack and so on.

**Ans to Q No 2:** 1961

**Ans to Q No 3:** The incidents of domestic violence occur in many families regardless of high or lower socio- economic status. Domestic violence against women in many cases result in severe physical and emotional injuries of women. Domestic violence includes harassment, maltreatment, brutality or cruelty and even the threat of assault-intimidation etc.

**Ans to Q No 4:** (i) Patriarchal structure of the society: The patriarchal values of the society are the main reasons behind all forms of violence against women. Patriarchal system of belief always places women in a subordinate position in the society which perpetuates violence against them.

(ii) Dowry: In India demand of dowry is one of the main causes of violence against women. In 1961, the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act, declaring the dowry demands in wedding arrangements illegal. However, many cases of dowry-related domestic violence, suicides and murders have been reported.

**Ans to Q No 5:** True

**Ans to Q No 6:** Various forms of violence against women include domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence (including rape), sexual harassment, and emotional/psychological violence, sexual exploitation, sexual trafficking, and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, forced and child marriage, crimes committed in the name of honour, foeticide, prenatal sex

selection, female infanticide, economic abuse, political violence, elder abuse, dowry-related violence and acid-throwing.

**Ans to Q No 7:** (i) Forced marriage: Girls and women are not only trafficked for prostitution but also bought and sold like commodity in many regions of the world where female ratio is less as compared to male due to female infanticide. These are then forced to marry.

(ii) Bonded labour: According to the International Labour Organisation there are more than 11.7 million people working as a forced labour in the Asia-Pacific region. People running out of cash generally sell their kids as debt labour in exchange for cash. Both boys and girls are sold for this purpose and generally not paid for years. Victims of human trafficking have great chances of suffering from issues like mental disorders, depression and anxiety. Women forced into sexual trafficking have at higher risk of getting affected from HIV and other STDs.

**Ans to Q No 8:** Sexual harassment is a type of harassment that relates to a sexual nature and the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favours. Sexual harassment includes a range of actions from mild transgressions to sexual abuse or assault. Harassment can occur in many different social settings such as the workplace, the home, school, religious places, etc.



## 7.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** What are the manifestations of violence against women?

**Q. 2 :** What is Bonded labour?

**Q. 3 :** Write about various forms of violence.

**Q. 4 :** Explain various causes responsible for violence against women.

**Q. 5 :** Examine the problems of sexual harassment at the workplace and women trafficking.

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# UNIT 8: POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

## UNIT STRUCTURE


8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Concept of Empowerment

8.4 Concept of Gender Empowerment

8.5 Political Empowerment of Women

8.6 Role and Position of Women in Electoral Politics: Global Perspective

8.7 Let Us Sum Up

8.8 Further Reading

8.9 Answers To Check Your Progress

8.10 Possible Questions


## 8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to -

- explain the concept of empowerment
- explain the concept of gender empowerment
- describe the initiatives taken at the global level for political empowerment of women
- discuss the role and position of women in the electoral politics.

## 8.2 INTRODUCTION

The concept of empowerment refers to the process of improving one's capabilities for developing herself or himself in various aspects of life. So far as the concept of gender empowerment is concerned, it refers to the empowerment of people of any gender, and not directly refers to empowerment of women as such. As women are marginalised in most of the societies of the world, so gender empowerment conventionally refers to empowerment of women. Gender empowerment is closely related to

Human Resource Development of a state. It refers to providing adequate opportunities to women to develop their capabilities in order to make them equal partners in the progress of the society and the state. Political empowerment of women is an important aspect for ensuring gender empowerment. In this unit we shall discuss the concept of political empowerment of women from a global perspective.

## 8.3 CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT

The concept of empowerment refers to the process of strengthening oneself to be more powerful and have the potential to guide himself or herself for a good life and to claim his or her rights to lead a good life. If empowerment is understood as an action, then it refers to the process of making oneself confident to overcome obstacles and to achieve success in life, socially, politically and economically.

The different definitions of empowerment range from defining it as a largely individual process of taking control of the responsibility for one's own life and situation to a political process of granting human rights and social justice to disadvantaged groups of the society. To be practical, empowerment includes both individual capacity to be able to develop himself and at the same time, political support to overcome the incapabilities which hinder individual development definitely at the societal level.

The term, "empowerment" refers to the process of making one powerful who is lacking in power. It refers to the change of power relationship in the society at different levels - individual, community as well as societal level. It is a multi-dimensional process involving sociological, psychological, cultural, economic and political changes in the status quo.

## 8.4 CONCEPT OF GENDER EMPOWERMENT

The concept of empowerment of women is related to gender equality. It is found that women have not been able to enjoy equality in different spheres of their life. Socially discriminated, economically exploited, politically subjugated, women have not been able to enjoy their rights equally with

that of men. Due to various kinds of discriminations faced by women in the society right from their birth to unequal treatment, demands arose for the promotion and protection of their rights. This had become a worldwide movement with the United Nations at the forefront which assured protection of human rights and fundamental freedom to all in its Charter.

In 1946, the United Nations established the Commission on the Status of Women to look after women's issues. Though the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights contain certain human rights provisions yet, they were not considered sufficient enough. Therefore, women specific measures were felt necessary. To deal with the rights of women in a more comprehensive manner, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women was adopted by the General Assembly on 7th November, 1967. In order to implement the principles of the Declaration, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on 18th December, 1979. On 20th December, 1993, another important measure was taken by the UN namely the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women which directed the state parties to condemn violence against women and not to invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligation with respect to elimination of violence against women.

The United Nations has also been organising World Conferences emphasising particularly on women so that they can have their due share of rights in the society. The First World Conference was held in Mexico City in 1975 which highlighted the themes of "Equality, Development, and Peace". The UN observed the decade 1975-85 as the International Women's Decade. The themes of the Mexico Conference were further developed during the International Women's Decade. The Second World Conference was held in Copenhagen in 1980 which added three sub-themes, "Education, Employment, Health" to the themes already adopted at Mexico City. The Third Conference was held in Nairobi in 1985 and the Fourth one was held in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing Conference adopted a platform for action

concentrating on key issues identified as obstacles, such as, poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflicts, economic disparity and power sharing for the advancement of women throughout the world.

According to the UN Development Fund for Women, the following factors are included in defining women empowerment: (i) acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be changed; (ii) developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life; (iii) giving the ability to generate choice and exercise bargain power.

To ensure women empowerment, equality must be established between men and women. Education at all levels must be assured so that they can take part in the decision making process both at the individual and social life. Economic security in terms of employment with adequate wages and social security in terms protection from violence and atrocities should also be assured. Empowerment of women entails equal access to resources of the society, equal opportunities for development, economic independence, equal political participation, participation in the decision making processes at all levels, freedom of thought and choice to list the least.



**LET US KNOW**

The Constitution of India has made various provisions for protecting women's rights and ensure them equality. Articles 14, 15(1),15(3),16 and 23 of the Fundamental Rights, Articles 39 and 42 of the Directive Principles and Article 51(a)(e) are special in this regard.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** What is meant by empowerment?

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**Q.2:** What is gender empowerment?

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**Q.3:** State the name of any two documents adopted by the UN to protect rights of women.

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## 8.5 POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Political empowerment of women is an important aspect to ensure gender empowerment. Political empowerment of women refers to ensuring equal and active participation of women in the political process of the state. Women must be provided with all political rights in equal terms with that of men. Right to vote, right to contest in elections, right to hold public office, right to express political views, right to criticise the government are some of the important political rights and these rights must be enjoyed by all without any discrimination on the basis of class, creed, religion, language, sex, etc. The guarantee of the political rights is important for political empowerment of women. Unless women are politically aware they cannot take part in the political process. Without their involvement in the political process, they will not be able to take part in the decision making process- the most essential factor to change women's status in the society.

Women had to fight for their political rights. Many states of the world guaranteed the right to vote to women much later since the adoption of their democratic constitutions. However, with the coming of the UN, equality in matters of rights of all, irrespective of men and women, has been established universally and the constitutions of almost all the states of the world have granted social, political and economic rights to both men and women.

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 31st March, 1953. The first three Articles of

the Convention assert the rights of women to vote, to be eligible for election and to hold public office, with each Article ending with the specification- "all on equal terms with men, without any discrimination."

The political empowerment of women entails the following measures:

- The legal-judicial system should be made such that they are more responsive to the needs and requirements of women. Laws must protect women in case of violence and personal assault. Changes should be made in the personal laws in matters like marriage, divorce, maintenance, guardianship, etc. in order to eliminate discrimination against women.
- Developmental processes should be gender sensitive in order to minimise the gap of men and women in different spheres of life. The programmes and policies should be enacted to bring women in the developmental process as catalysts, participants and the recipients.
- Equal access must be provided to guarantee women's participation in the decision making process at different levels including legislative, executive, judicial bodies at central, state and local levels.



**ACTIVITY 8.1**

Try to find out in which of the states of the world women are holding the posts of the head of the state.

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## 8.6 ROLE AND POSITION OF WOMEN IN ELECTORAL POLITICS: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Political participation has always been considered a secondary activity for women. Motherhood is regarded as the major role of women. Women's political participation and access to positions of power are restricted for several reasons, e.g., women's mobility is restricted, they have fewer

opportunities to mix up with those in power, they have the sole responsibility for household maintenance and childcare activities and they face political nepotism which favours men. Women face two major obstacles while entering in the political process - one is lack of support from family and friends and the aggressive and very competitive political atmosphere. To add to this, women are not treated as a political constituency to be wooed and won, much less as political actor on their own right. Political parties also show reluctance in giving a justified share to women in decision making process. The 17th Lok Sabha election saw a good number of women M.P.s with 78 women being elected to the House. This, however, constitutes only 14% of the 543 elected member House. This is much lower in a large democratic country like India where more than 48% of the population is women. The 18th Lok Sabha have 74 women MPs. According to the Economic Survey, 2017-18, which was placed in the Parliament of India, there are developing countries like Rwanda which has more than 60% women representatives in the Central Legislature in 2017. Countries like Egypt, Brazil, Malaysia, Japan, Sri Lanka and Thailand have less than 15% representation of women in the Legislature. The survey maintained that as of 2017, the Lok Sabha had 64 (11.8%) and Rajya Sabha had 27 (11%) women M.P.s. As on October, 2016, out of total 4118 M.L.A.s across the country, only 9% were women. It also mentioned that there were 13.72 lakh elected women representatives in the Panchayati Raj Institutions which constitute 44.2% of the total elected representatives as on December, 2017. This definitely reflects that reservation of seats is an essential factor to encourage more women to participate in the electoral process. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, a total of 724 women contested from across the country out of 8049 candidates who were in the fray, which is only 9% ( the Assam Tribune, May 25, 2019). In India, the gap between male and female voters turning out to vote is narrowing since 2009. In 2009, the gap was 9%, which went down to 1.4% in 2014. In 2019, it stands at 0.4%. In the 17th Lok Sabha elections in 2019, the total voter turnout was 67.47% which itself was the highest in history. In this election, women voters outnumbered men voters in 13 states out of 29 states of the country. This is definitely a positive sign.

In the UK, which is regarded as the mother of parliamentary governments, there were 211 women in the House of Commons in 2019. This constituted 32% of the total members. There were 207 female peers- 27% of the members of the House of Lords. In the European Parliament, 41% of the members are women. At 32%, the UK is in 39th position in proportion of women in the lower House of the Parliaments of the world. Rwanda has over 61% along with Cuba and Bolivia having a majority of women in Parliament (www.parliament.uk). In the 116th Congress of the US, there were 127 women representatives which constituted 23.7% of the total members.

Women should actively participate in the political process. They should act as the real leaders and decision makers. In those capacities, their activities should not only be women-centric rather their activities should be broad enough to include all issues related to socio-economic development of the society, then only real empowerment of women is possible.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.4:** How can political empowerment of women be ensured?

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**Q.5:** Mention the obstacles which women mainly find in participating in the political process.

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## 8.7 LET US SUM UP

- The concept of empowerment refers to the process of strengthening oneself to be more powerful and have the potential to guide himself for a good life and to claim his rights to lead a good life. If empowerment is understood as an action, then it refers to the process of making oneself confident to overcome obstacles and to achieve success in life - socially, politically and economically.
- So far as the concept of gender empowerment is concerned, it refers to the empowerment of people of any gender, and not directly refers to empowerment of women as such. As women are marginalised in most of the societies of the world, so gender empowerment conventionally refers to empowerment of women.
- " The role of the United Nations in ensuring equal rights and position to women is very important. It has adopted a number of documents in this regard.
- Political empowerment of women is an important aspect to ensure gender empowerment. Political empowerment of women refers to ensuring equal and active participation of women in the political process of the state. They must be provided with all political rights in equal terms with that of men. Right to vote, right to stand in elections, right to hold public office, right to express political views, right to criticise the government, etc. are some of the important political rights and these rights must be enjoyed by all without any discrimination on the basis of class, creed, religion, language, gender, etc.
- Women have to face a number of obstacles in the way of political participation.
- Women should actively participate in the political process. They should act as the real leaders and decision makers. In those capacities, their activities should not only be women-centric rather their activities should be broad enough to include all issues related to socio-economic

development of the society, then only real empowerment of women is possible.



## 8.8 FURTHER READING


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## 8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** The concept of empowerment refers to the process of strengthening oneself to be more powerful and have the potential to guide himself or herself for a good life and to claim his or her rights to lead a good life. The different definitions of empowerment range from defining it as a largely individual process of taking control of the responsibility for one's own life and situation to a political process of granting human rights and social justice to disadvantaged groups of the society. To be practical, empowerment includes both individual capacity to be able to develop himself and at the same time, political support to overcome the incapabilities which hinder individual development definitely at the societal level.

**Ans to Q No 2:** The concept of gender empowerment refers to the empowerment of people of any gender and not directly refers to empowerment of women as such. As women are marginalised

sections in most of the societies of the world, so gender empowerment conventionally refers to empowerment of women.

**Ans to Q No 3:** Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

**Ans to Q No 4:** Political empowerment of women can be achieved by adopting following measures:

(a) The legal-judicial system should be made such that they are more responsive to the needs and requirement of women. Laws must be to protect women in case of violence and personal assault. Changes should be made in the personal laws in matters like marriage, divorce, maintenance, guardianship, etc. order to eliminate discrimination against women.

(b) Developmental processes should be gender sensitive in order to minimise the gap of men and women in different spheres of life. The programmes and policies should be enacted to bring women in the developmental process as catalysts, participants and the recipients.

(c) Equal access must be provided to guarantee women participation in the decision making process at different levels including legislative, executive, judicial bodies at central, state and local levels.

**Ans to Q No 5:** Women's political participation and access to positions of power are restricted for several reasons, e.g., women's mobility is restricted, they have fewer opportunities to mix up with those in power, they have the sole responsibility for household maintenance and childcare activities and they face political nepotism which favours men. Women face two major obstacles while entering in the political process - one is lack of support from family and friends and the aggressive and very competitive political atmosphere. To add to this, women are not treated as a political constituency to be wooed and won, much less as political actor on their own right. Political parties also show reluctance in giving a justified share to women in decision making process.



## 8.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** State the definition of women empowerment provided by the UN Development Fund for Women.

**Q. 2 :** Discuss the necessity for women empowerment.

**Q. 3 :** Discuss the efforts of the United Nations to promote rights of women.

**Q. 4 :** Examine the various obstacles in the way of political empowerment of women.

**Q. 5 :** Discuss the political participation of women in India.

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# UNIT 9: POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

## UNIT STRUCTURE


9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Factors that affect Political Participation of Women

9.4 Measures Adopted in India for Political Empowerment of Women

9.5 Role and Position of Women in the Indian Parliament

9.6 Role and Position of Women in Assam Legislature

9.7 Let Us Sum Up

9.8 Further Reading

9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.10 Possible Questions


## 9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to -

- examine the factors that influence political participation of women
- explain the measures adopted in India for political empowerment of women
- discuss the role and position of women in the Indian Parliament and Assam Legislative Assembly.

## 9.2 INTRODUCTION

Political empowerment is one of the important ways through which the position of women can be uplifted in the society. Political empowerment of women can be achieved through political participation. Political participation is normally associated with the modern form of democracy. In this political system, participation of individual in political activity is considered as a virtue, a sign of political health and the best method of ensuring one's

interests. Participation gives an opportunity to express one's own point of view and secure the greatest good for the greatest number. It provides citizens a sense of dignity and value, provides a sense of their duties and responsibilities and facilitates broader political understanding. By involving people in the affairs of the state, participation promotes stability and order in the system. Political participation makes citizens politically empowered. Participation of both men and women in the political affairs of the state is very important. However, in many cases we tend to notice lower level of political participation of women in the political sphere which results in lack of political empowerment of women. In this unit, we shall discuss various aspects associated with the political empowerment of women with special reference to India and Assam.

## 9.3 FACTORS THAT AFFECT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Political empowerment of women can be achieved when women are involved in the political affairs of the state in the real sense. Effective political participation is very important for political empowerment of women. A number of factors influences the level of political participation of women. Some of them are mentioned in the following:

- **Poverty:** Women do not have enough resources to enable them to effectively participate in politics. Majority of them are involved in economic activities that do not generate enough resources. Very few women have the economic power to finance themselves, they have to depend on their husbands or close family relatives to sponsor them. These people in cases do not encourage them because they see politics as a waste of time and resources.
- **Religion and other Socio-cultural Factors:** Religious belief and other socio-cultural factors are also used as strategy to exclude women from politics. In many third world nations, women are excluded and not allowed to participate in any public matters. Some culture has separate roles for men and women. The sphere of women's wok

is within the home and family (private sphere) while that of men is in the public sphere which has in many ways affected the nations building. Many societies restrict women only to the household activities and women's participation in politics is regarded as a hindered by the family and domestic obligations.

- **Level of Education:** The level of education also effects political participation of women. In many societies women do not have equal educational opportunities along with their male counterparts. However, there are some women that are more talented and progressive than some men, if given the opportunity they will contribute their quarter towards nation building.
- **Lack of Interest by Women:** In many cases women lack interest to actively participate in the political process of their country. Some time, lack of interest by women in politics is borne out of their socialisation and the belief that politics and leadership are not for women.

## 9.4 MEASURES ADOPTED IN INDIA FOR POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

In India a number of constitutional and legislative measures have been adopted for political empowerment of women. Through these measures the Government of India has aimed to strengthen the overall processes that promote all round development of women. The Constitution of India has guaranteed equality and freedom to all citizens. Articles 325 and 326 of the Indian Constitution that guarantee political equality and equal rights to participate in political activities as well as the right to vote respectively.

The government of India has adopted a number of strategies of coordinating women's welfare and socio-economic development programs across ministries and departments. It aims to provide service for all programs run by the Government for women under the aegis of various Central Ministries implying a vision for holistic empowerment of women. The Government of India has adopted a number of schemes with the purpose of providing educational facilities to the women. As education plays

a very important role when it comes to any sort of empowerment and specially women empowerment that will help them to take part in politics as well. Apart from this the Government of India has also adopted other schemes for empowerment of vulnerable and marginalised groups and women in difficult circumstances, such as- Schemes of National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC), Integrated Child Development Scheme, Integrated Child Protection Scheme, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) etc. These schemes provide supportive institutional framework for women victims of difficult circumstances so that they could lead their life with dignity and conviction.

The Parliament of India has enacted a number of laws for making women politically empowered. The Parliament has passed the 73rd Amendment Act in 1992 which provided for reservation of 33% of seat for women in Panchayati Raj Institution. It has also passed the 74th Amendment Act in 1992 which provided reservation of 33% of seat for women in the Municipalities. Through these amendments Article 243D and 243T women are provided reservation of seats for women in Panchayats and Municipalities. These Acts have fostered more and more women participants and leaders at the grass root levels.

Apart from this the Indian Parliament has also enacted the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (PREVENTION, PROHIBITION and REDRESSAL) Act, 2013 which also contribute towards political empowerment of women indirectly. This Act provides protection against sexual harassment of women at work place and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It is applicable and enacted whereas sexual harassment results in violation of the fundamental rights of a woman to equality under article 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India and her right to life and to live with dignity under article 21 of the Constitution and right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business which includes a right to safe environment, free from sexual harassment.

Again the Women's Reservation Bill (The Constitution 108th Amendment Bill) proposes to amend the Constitution of India to reserve one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. The Act was passed in the year 2023. This will be helpful in increasing the political participation of women.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** What is the full form of MGNREGA?

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**Q.2:** State the meaning of political participation.

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**Q.3:** Mention one provision of the 73rd Amendment Act.

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**Q.4:** Write briefly about any two factors that affect the political participation of women.

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## 9.5 ROLE AND POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT

A new dimension of women in politics has emerged in recent years all over the world. More and more women have now been entering into politics. In India, reform movements before and after independence has helped women to gain considerable power in politics also. After independence they have achieved an unprecedented political break-through with the reservation of seats for them in panchayats and other public bodies.

It is heartening to note that Indian women were among the earliest to get their political rights (right to vote) without any political movement like in the United States and many Western countries. Indian women have a distinction to become UNO Secretary (Vijay Laxmi Pandit), President (Pratibha Patil), Prime Minister (Indira Gandhi), Chief Minister (Sucheta Kriplani, Jayalalitha, Uma Bharati, Mayawati and Vasundhara Raje). However, it does not imply high level of political empowerment of women in India. If we take women's participation in politics as one of the measurements of their empowerment, we find at present their number is very low in comparison to men in the Parliament. It is about 11 percent only (26 women in upper house-Rajya Sabha consisting of 245 members and 59 women in lower House-Lok Sabha consisting of 543 members. There were only 8 women ministers from a total of 75 in the government of Dr Manmohan Singh). The 17th Lok Sabha has a total of 78 women members. Again the Rajya Sabha has 24 female members at present. The 18$^{th}$ Lok Sabha has 74 Women MPs.

Many studies conducted in India and elsewhere (in so-called developed countries) revealed that though the number of women voters has increased over the years, the number of women as holder of public offices is not very encouraging. One of the reasons for this is that equal sharing of housework is still a nightmare for women. Working women find that housework and care of children is still largely considered their task, as on an average working wives/mothers are compelled to work at least 14 hours a day or even more. This prohibits many women come to participate in active politics.

## 9.6 ROLE AND POSITION OF WOMEN IN ASSAM LEGISLATURE

Assam has a glorious history about women's role in politics. Princesses Amritprabha and Rajyamati from ancient Assam exercised their influence in the administration and politics. Queen Sadhani took active part in politics and acted as an advisor to her husband in the Chutiya Kingdom of Sadiya. During the Ahom reign, women had a remarkable position in politics. The chief queen of the Ahom King Tao-Khamthi (1380-89); Chao-

Ching, a very accomplished consort of the Ahom King Suklenmung (1539-52) and ngbakla Gabharu, the wife of Tao-mung Bargohain played important roles in politics. Bar- raja Phuleswari, the chief consort of the Ahom King Siva Singha (1714-44) was the first queen of Assam to govern the kingdom directly. Phuleswari's successor Ambika and Sarbeswari governed the kingdom one after another. Women like Mula Gabharu, Ramani Gabharu, Jaymati, Rangili and Padumi were politically conscious women and sacrificed their lives for the cause of the kingdom.

During the British period, many prominent Assamese women leaders came forward. Women leaders like Hemanta Kumari Devi Bardoloi, poet Linibala Devi, Bijut Phookan, Sumitra Bhattacharya, Kiranmayee Agarwalla, Snehalata Devi Baruah, Chandra Prabha Saikiani, Shrijuta Rajabala Das, Swarlata Barua, Raj Kumari Mohini Gohain, Basantalata Hazarika etc., along with other Assamese women played remarkable roles in the India's struggle for freedom. Assamese women like Kanaklata Barua, Bhogeswari Phukani, Rabati Lahon, Golapi Chutiyani, etc., sacrificed their lives during the Quit India Movement. Assamese women took active participation in Assam Movement also.

Despite having a glorious history, the participation of women in the politics of Assam today is very low. Although as voters, women of Assam showed a remarkable progress, however their participation in the active politics is negligible. Women constitute 48.82% of the entire population of the state (Census 2011), but their representation in the politics of Assam hardly reflects their percentage in population. When representation and participation of women in Assam politics itself is made a big issue, the issue of participation by Muslim women, tea garden women and tribal women are another dimension of the issue. The state with a considerable percentage of Muslim population (34.2%, Census 2011), tea garden population and tribal population has little women's representation in active politics. Today, the 33% reservation at the Panchayat level has increased Assamese women's representation in the local bodies, however due to the low political participation and representation of women in Assam in the last general elections reflects a low representation in both houses of the Parliament

and State Assembly. Though the average percentage of women's representation in the Parliament, Assemblies and Council of Ministers taken together has been around 15% in India, but it is lesser in case of Assamese women. In the present Lok Sabha, out of 14 MPs from Assam, there are only 1 female MP out of seven MPs from Assam in the Rajya Sabha, at present there is no female MP and out of 126 MLAs in the present State Assembly , there are only 06 female MLAs. However, as compared to its neghbouring States, Assam is still in a good position in terms of women's representation in politics. The participation of Assamese women in the Rajya Sabha elections is also very minimal. Since its first election, only a few have received the opportunity to represent in the Rajya Sabha. In the elections of 1994 and 1996, there was only one female member in the Rajya Sabha. Assam has 126 Assembly constituencies but the participation of women in the State Assembly compared to its male counterpart is also very low. Late Usha Barthakur was the first woman MLA and woman minister of Assam, who won Assembly election in 1952. In 1980, Syeda Anwara Taimur created history by becoming the only female Chief Minister of the state from December 6, 1980 to June 30, 1981.

The lack of importance of the political parties, negative attitude of political leaders, lack of opportunity, low female literacy, low level of information, economic inequality, burden of domestic work, female insecurity, lack of confidence, lack of ability to communicate with public, lack of empowerment among women and lack of proper training barred an Assamese woman to take active part in mainstream politics despite having interest in it. Assamese women have been unable to occupy major positions in the political parties, except one or two. Most of the parties do not groom women towards taking up powerful positions and responsibilities. The space has been limited to family connections rather than convictions and commitment. Women are allowed only if there is no alternative choice. They are considered only if there is a mandatory provision like reservation. The number of successful female politicians in the State also clearly reflects that common people are not in favour of bringing women in power. Student politics is an important feature in the politics of Assam. The major student's

organisations produce about 50% of the future political leaders. Even these bodies pay little attention in women's participation in politics.

Less involvement of the Assamese women in the election process has kept them marginalised in power politics. They should be in a greater number in power politics so that they can address the issues concerning women. The Indian Constitution ensures people's right to participate in politics without any difference or distinction. The channels to enter into the Parliament or Assembly are same for both men and women. The election is instrumental for the people in a democratic country through which they can participate in the decision making process of its government. With active participation in the elections as competitors or voters, Assamese women can enter into power politics and bring fair and equal treatment towards all.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.5:** The 17th Lok Sabha has a total of ..... women members. (Fill in the blank)

**Q.6:** Mention names of any two women Assamese leaders who took active part in the Freedom Movement of India.

.....

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**Q.7:** What are the factors responsible for lower participation of women in politics?

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## 9.7 LET US SUM UP

- Political empowerment is one of the important ways through which the position of women can be uplifted in the society. Political empowerment of women can be achieved through political participation.

- Political participation is normally associated with the modern form of democracy. Participation gives an opportunity to express one's own point of view and secure the greatest good for the greatest number. It provides citizens a sense of dignity and value, provides understanding of their duties and responsibilities and facilitates broader political understanding.
- Political participation makes citizens politically empowered. Participation of both men and women in the political affairs of the state is very important. However, in many cases we can notice lower level of political participation of women in the political sphere which results in lack of political empowerment of women.
- A number of factors affect political participation of women. Some of these factors are- poverty, religion and other socio-cultural factors, level of education, lack of interest by the women etc.
- In India a number of constitutional and legislative measures have been adopted for political empowerment of women.
- However despite the existence of various measures, the participation of women in active politics is very low in India and in Assam as well.



## 9.8 FURTHER READING

1) Carmichael, Sarah; Dilli, Selin; Rijpma, Auke. (2016). Women in the Global Economic History. in Baten, Jörg (ed.), *A History of the Global Economy: from 1500 to the Present*. Cambridge New York: Cambridge University Press.
2) MacIvor, Heather. (1996). *Women's Participation in Politics*. in MacIvor, Heather (ed.), *Women and Politics in Canada: an Introductory text*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.
3) Tadros, Mariz. (2015). *Women in Politics: Gender, Power and Development* (ed), Canada: Zed Books.

## 9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

**Ans to Q No 2:** Political participation is normally associated with the modern form of democracy. Participation gives an opportunity to express one's own point of view and secure the greatest good for the greatest number. It provides citizens a sense of dignity and value, provides understanding about their duties and responsibilities and facilitates broader political under-standing. By involving people in the affairs of the state, participation promotes stability and order in the system. Political participation makes citizens politically empowered.

**Ans to Q No 3:** The 73rd Amendment Act provided for reservation of 33% of seat for women in Panchayati Raj Institution.

**Ans to Q No 4:** (i) Poverty: Women do not have enough resources that may enable them participate effectively in politics. Majority of them are involved in economic activities that do not generate enough resources. Very few women have the economic power to finance themselves, they have to depend on their husbands or close family relatives to sponsor them. These people in cases do not encourage them because they see politics as waste of time and resources.

(ii) Religion and other socio cultural factors: Religious belief and other socio-cultural factors are also used as strategy to exclude women from politics. In many third world nations, women are excluded and not allowed to participate in any public matters. Some culture has separate roles for men and women. The sphere of women's wok is within the home and family (private sphere) while that of men is in the public sphere which has in many ways affected the nations building. Many societies restrict women only to the household activities and women's participation

in politics is regarded as a hindered by the family and domestic obligations.

**Ans to Q No 5:** 78

**Ans to Q No 6:** Kanaklata Barua, Bhogeswari Phukani.

**Ans to Q No 7:** The lack of importance of the political parties, negative attitude of political leaders, lack of opportunity, low female literacy, low level of information, economic inequality, burden of domestic work, female insecurity, lack of confidence, lack of ability to communicate with public, lack of empowerment among the women and lack of proper training are responsible for lower political participation of women.



## 9.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** In which year was the 73rd Amendment Act passed by the Indian Parliament?

**Q. 2 :** Write briefly about the provisions incorporated in the Indian Constitution for political empowerment of women.

**Q. 3 :** Examine various factors that affect political participation of women.

**Q. 4 :** Explain the measures adopted by the Indian Parliament for political empowerment of women.

**Q. 5 :** Examine the role and position of women in the Indian Parliament.

**Q. 6 :** Discuss the role and position of women in the Assam Legislative Assembly.

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# UNIT 10: ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

## UNIT STRUCTURE


10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Empowerment of Women in India

10.4 Stridhan

10.5 Personal Law and Women

10.6 Initiative Taken by SAFP for Women Empowerment

10.7 Let Us Sum Up

10.8 Further Reading

10.9 Answers To Check Your Progress

10.10 Possible Questions


## 10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to --

- explain the concept of Stridhan
- discuss the various provisions of personal law related to women
- describe various initiatives taken by SAFP for women empowerment.

## 10.2 INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a continuous process of realising the goals of equality, human liberation and freedom. Women empowerment implies equality of opportunity and equality between the genders of ethnic groups, social classes and age groups, collective participation in different spheres of life etc. Women empowerment is a process through which women can effectively take part in the decision making process that has tremendous impact on their lives. In this unit, we shall discuss various aspect associated with economic empowerment of women in India.

## 10.3 EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA

Empowerment as a concept was first introduced at the International Women Conference at Nairobi in 1985 and was defined as a redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. It was a general opinion that empowered women who then became agents of their own development, able to exercise choices to set their own agenda and be strong enough to challenge and change their position in the society. Empowerment is self-governance, self-sufficiency and self-maintenance and above all it is economic independence through information, knowledge and necessary skills. In India, the major land mark in the field of women empowerment was bought about by 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India in the first half of the 90's in which 33% reservation to the women in the panchayats and municipalities was made mandatory.

In India, the National Policy for Empowerment of Women was adopted in 2001. The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The year 2001 was celebrated as "Women Empowerment Year". Awareness regarding this policy was widely disseminated to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals. Some of the objectives of this Policy are :

i) To create an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women which will enable them to realise their full potential.

ii) Enabling all women to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedom on equal basis with men in all spheres- political, economic, social, cultural and civil.

iii) Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation.

iv) Equal access to women to health care, quality education at levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.

v) Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

vi) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.

vii) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.

viii) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child.

ix) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organisations.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** State the meaning of empowerment.

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**Q.2:** Mention any two objectives of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001.

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## 10.4 STRIDHAN

Stridhan is the exclusive property of the wife and its entrustment to her in-laws amounts to the creation of a trust and they are bound to return the same when a married woman makes a demand. A criminal proceeding for its misappropriation against husband or her in-laws is maintainable. In Soma Devi Veena Kumari the Court held that "Stridhan" is covered by the expression "dowry".

Manu, the ancient Indian Philosopher, enumerates six kinds of Stridhan, such as:

i) Gifts made before the nuptial fire, explained by katyayana to mean gifts made at the time of marriage before the fire which is the witness of the nuptial.

ii) Gifts made at the bridal procession, that is, says Katyayana, while the bride is being led from residence of her parents to that of her husband.

iii) Gifts made in token of love, that is, says Katyayana, those made through affection by her father-in-law and mother-in-law ( Pritidatta), and those made at the time of her making obeisance at the feet of elders (Padavandanika),

iv) Gifts made by the father

v) Gifts made by the mother

vi) Gifts made by the brothers.

Stridhan property belongs to the wife not only in the matrimonial home or even after her separation from it. The husband is mere custodian of stridhan and he cannot refuse to return it to his wife. Dishonesty or misappropriation or conversion to use stridhan property by husband would constitute offence under section 406 of the Indian Penal Code.

## 10.5 PERSONAL LAW AND WOMEN

The Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights to both sexes and does not discriminate on the basis of caste, colour and creed. The concept of social security is essentially related to high ideas of human dignity and social justice. The Act passed by the Government for the benefit and empowerment of women, her social security and welfare are numerous. Some of them are-

(a) **Personal Law :** Hindu Laws were codified after independence, which brought out radical reforms to improve condition of women. Though Hindu women occupied a high position during Vedic times, later on they were subjected to various social discrimination. Hindu women become subservient. They were never considered an equal partner in life. To uplift the position of women many Acts were passed, such as:

**(i) Hindu Marriage Act, 1955:** Under Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 provisions have been made to prohibit Bigamy and by this Act, divorce can be given by the wife, subject to fulfillment of certain conditions.

**(ii) Hindu Marriage Act, 1956:** By this Act, women have been given the right of enjoyment of property rights and other entitlements.

The 1956 Act gave absolute share to the widow as well as daughters in the self acquired property of the husband and father respectively.

**(iii) The Law of Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956:** This Act provides provisions for maintenance of wife, widow, minor children and poor parents. Through this Act Hindu women has the right to adopt a child. A woman who is unmarried or widow may adopt a child.

**(iv) Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 and Amendment Act, 1986:** Among all the social evils, the dowry system is the most serious evil and to prohibit this evil, the Parliament enacted the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, which was amended in 1986 for making its provision more stringent and effective. By this Act, a new offence of "Dowry death" was included in I.P.C. and necessary amendment have been made in Cr. P.C. and Indian Evidence Act. The offence relating to dowry are now cognizable, non bailable and not compoundable. The burden of proof of innocence rests on the accused.

**(v) Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989:** This Act makes provision for safeguarding the women of weaker section, belonging to SC & ST classes. By this Act, assault or using force on women is punishable for not less than 6 months and upto a maximum of five years with fine.

**(vi) National Commission for Women Act, 1990:** The National Commission for Women Act, 1990 was enacted to facilitate redressal of grievances and for the setting up of an agency. The main function of the Commission is to look into the matters of constitutional and legal safeguard provided for women and to review the existing laws and suggest amendments, if necessary. The Commission also has executive cum judicial function to look into the complaints and take suo moto notice of cases relating to women's rights.

Equal rights for women has been recognised under the Article 15 (3) of the Indian Constitution and it allows the state to take special measures for women and girls to guarantee the right to equality. Despite the different gender specific laws in place, women's status in society continues to be devalued. Gender based violence and discrimination faced by women are manifestations of the devalued status of women. In order to find a solution to the gender based violence, laws impacting women's equality rights have to be assessed and strictly implemented. The laws prohibiting the gender discrimination based in the home and in the public sphere have to be evolved and implemented. The problem of gender based violence requires immediate attention. The efforts to improve women's status through the use of laws will also be undertaken at the grassroots level.

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, has been concerned with the legislative aspects of the following Acts :

**Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986:** A proposal to amend the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 was considered by the Government of India, in order to widen its scope and make its implementation more effective. It has been directed for wider consultations to be held for the Amendment Act. National Commission for Women, after holding wide ranging consultations at Regional and National levels, has recommended enactment of a comprehensive legislation to replace the existing Act.

**The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** National Commission for Women has suggested number of amendments to the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 to make its implementation more effective. Recommendations have been considered in the Ministry and therefore, discussed by an Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) constituted for this purpose. The proposed Amendments to the Act are currently with the Ministry of Law and Justice for their views.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 is a comprehensive legislation to protect women from all forms of domestic violence. This Act also covers women who have been in a relationship with the abuser and are subjected

to violence of any kind- physical, sexual, mental, verbal or emotional. This Act has come into force with effect from 26. 10. 2006.

Ministry of Women and Child Development has notified the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Rules for implementation of the Act. Both the Act and Rules have been circulated to the states/Union territories to appoint Protection Officers, register service providers, notify medical and shelter facilities and give wide publicity to the Act for creating awareness of it provisions among the public. The State Governments and Union Territory Administrations have also been advised to send quarterly reports on the implementation of the Act.

**Bill for Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment at Work Place:** A Bill seeking to provide women the right to protection against sexual harassment at work place has been drafted in consultation with the National Commission for Women and prominent women, civil society organisations working in the area. The proposed new legislation seeks to cover women working in the unorganised, organised, formal and informal sectors and would have all essential provisions about the employers obligation to prevent and redress sexual harassment at the work place. The Indian Parliament passed the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The Act came into force from 9 December 2013. This Act ensures that all employers must form a grievance redressal mechanism for the cases for sexual harassment at the workplace.

Prevention of Trafficking of Women and Children for Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Trafficking in human being is an organised crime violating all basic human rights. India has emerged as a source transit and destination country. It is estimated that there are three million sex workers in India, of which 40 percent constitute children. Most often these victims are trafficked through means like duping, luring, fake marriage, abducting, kidnapping and manipulating social and economic vulnerabilities. The issue of trafficking in the country is a matter of serious concern. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has adopted a multi-pronged approach to prevent and combat trafficking which includes legislative measures for prevention of trafficking of commercial and sexual exploitation, programmes/schemes for prevention,

rescue and rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation of victims of trafficking, training capacity building and awareness generation.

**The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956:** The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA) is the premier legislation for prevention of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. Certain Amendments are being proposed to Immoral Traffic (prevention) Act, 1956 to widen its scope to make the implementation more effective by providing stringent punishment to the traffickers and other perpetrators of the crime and by preventing re-victimisation of the victims. Indian Penal Code also provides provision for prevention of crimes related to trafficking. India is also signatory to various International and Regional Conventions such as United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime with its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person specially Women and Children. Apart from this, India has ratified some of the major Conventions related to trafficking, such as- SACRC Convention of Preventing and Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in Prostitution, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 23 of the Constitution of India also prohibits trafficking in human beings and beggars.

Some other laws enacted by the Indian Parliament to protect women are- Legal Practitioners (Women) Act, 1923; Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; Pre-conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act. 1994; Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971; Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006; Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1987; Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986; Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987; Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013.

- **Violence Against Women**

The deep rooted ideologies of gender discrimination, the confinement of women to the private domestic realm, restrictions on their mobility and exclusion from the society, public, political sphere continue to discourage the majority and the entitlements and public services, which constitute the poor women 's life line, do not reach appropriately to women. Violence

against a woman affects the women's sense of self-esteem. Violence against women demolishes her self-confidence. It is often used as a potent tool of subjugation and disempowerment of women.

National Family Health Survey (2005-06) reported that one-third of women aged 15 to 49 had experienced physical violence and approximately one in ten had been victim sexual violence. National Crime Record Bureau indicated that, there is an increasing incidence of crimes against women. Total number of crimes against women has increased by 29. 6 percent between 2006-2010. It has been observed that the conviction rate for violence against women remained low, reflecting inter alia, that many of these cases are not being prosecuted properly and inadequate proof is tendered before the courts. Child marriage is another area of concern which makes women more vulnerable to domestic violence.

The consequences of gender discrimination especially violence against women led to declining female sex ratio. The Census of India, data has revealed that the worst child sex ratio has been found and it continues to suffer from adverse sex ratio due to persisting gender discrimination. The declining child sex ratio is a salient demographic disaster which has adverse implications on women in the form of increased trafficking for sexual exploitation, honour killing, rapes, etc.

Trafficking of women and children is another gross form of human rights violation. It has deprived them from their rights and fundamental freedom. Trafficked women and children have a greater tendency to face risk with fewer opportunities to avoid abusive conditions with a marginalised access to justice and other redressal resources. Trafficking is often hidden in the view of migration and therefore the abuse of rights is very difficult to identify. The forced/bonded labour, domestic servitude are among other major consequences of trafficking. It has been estimated that during 2004 around 2. 8 million women were victims of trafficking out of which 36 percent were children.

Discrimination against women and gender based violence continue to be a pervasive feature of our society. Unequal social, political and economic status of women is an outcome of patriarchy and deeply

entrenched socio- economic, cultural stereotypes about women and it is sometimes perpetuated by laws, regulations, and policy which do not sufficiently address the sub-ordinate status of the women. Thus, it is necessary that the laws which are gender biased or gender blind are recognised and amended and wherever necessary, new legislations be enacted to protect and safeguard the rights of women. It is important that the existing laws are implemented and enforced effectively.

## 10.6 INITIATIVE TAKEN BY SAFP FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women are the one of the important agent of sustainable development. They are the best upholders of environmental, ecological and social balances yet a victim of man-dominated patriarchal system, neglected in their day to day life, neither considered equal to man in wage or social status. Empowerment is a process that helps and assists women realise their identity, capacity, capability, strengths and power and its application in day to day life in various spheres. It enables them to have access to resources, greater say in decision making, more ability to plan their time and family size and also free them from irrelevant customs, traditions, practice and prejudices.

Empowerment is multi-dimensional process. This enables women to realise their identity and hidden power and creates a desire to achieve and express. Generally, development is expected to generate the focus that leads to empowerment and raises the status of women. Power is not a commonly acquired priviledge which could be purchased or handed over. This has to be understood, acquired, exercised, sustained and preserved both by women themselves, their families and communities. The process of empowerment helps women to understand and realise their own unique potential, express what they desire, suffer, feel, respecting themselves and understanding own needs, explaining own distinct growth and development.

Empowerment of women can be achieved through education and training, better health care and management, higher age at marriage, control on family spacing and number, higher work participation in organised sector,

financial and service support, advancement into higher positions of power, better consciousness of rights and responsibilities. Women need support, counseling, guidance and training in order to become empowered persons. They need to be empowered through the process of realisation of capacity and potential, develop independent critical thinking and perceptions, think authentically and act with their own convictions and feeling and learn respecting themselves and their decisions.

Save A Family Plan (SAFP) is committed to the empowerment of the poor and marginalised people of India. SAFP is a Canadian-based international non-government organisation. It is founded by Monsignor Augustine Kandathil in India in 1965. SAFP is a family development programme which works for social change and justice by assisting poor families and communities in India. It recognises value and dignity of each person. SAFP uses two main programs that work to teach families how to support themselves and build a better future for their communities. Activities of SAFP is supported by a large network of volunteers in Canada and India.

SAFP has been working for the betterment of women across the country. It has done extensive work in the field of human trafficking and violence against women. It also works for the betterment of household particularly female headed household. It has particularly contributed in the process of empowerment of women by placing emphasis on education, health awareness etc. In the year 2017-18, a total number of 1,437 families received training in marketing and entrepreneurship to give them the tools required to start a small business (https://safp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SAFP-Annual-Report-2017-18-draft-4.pdf).



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.3:** State the meaning of Stridhan.

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**Q.4:** Mention the names of any four Acts enacted by the Indian Parliament to protect the rights of women.

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**Q.5:** Write briefly about the meaning of women empowerment.

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## 10.7 LET US SUM UP

- Empowerment as a concept was first introduced at the International Women Conference at Nairobi in 1995 and was defined as a redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. It was a general opinion that empowered women to become agent of their own development, enabling themselves to exercise choices, to set their own agenda and be strong enough to challenge and change their position in the society. Empowerment is self-governance, self-sufficiency and self-maintenance and above all it is economic independence through information, knowledge and necessary skills.
- In India, the major landmark in the field of women empowerment was bought about by 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India in the first half of the 90's in which 33% reservation to the women in the panchayats and municipalities was made mandatory.
- In India the National Policy for Empowerment of Women was adopted in 2001. The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

- Stridhan is the exclusive property of the wife and its entrustment to her in-laws amounts to the creation of a trust and they are bound to return the same when a married woman makes a demand.
- The Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights to both sexes and does not discriminate on the basis of caste, colour and creed. The Parliament of India has enacted a number of Acts for the protection and upliftment of women.
- Save A Family Plan (SAFP) is committed to the empowerment of the poor and marginalised people of India. SAFP is a Canadian-based international non-government organisation. It is founded by Monsignor Augustine Kandathil in India in 1965.



## 10.8 FURTHER READING

1) Biju, M. R. (2006). *Women's Empowerment: Politics and Policies*. New Delhi: Mittal Publication.
2) Sarkar, I. (2008). *Women in Changing Society*. New Delhi: Serials Publication.
3) Srivastav, V.P. (2005). *Handbook on Crime against Women*. Indian Publication.
4) Yadav, Hridari R. (2015). *Women Empowerment: History, Policy and Legislation Volume I*, New Delhi: Concept Publication.



## 10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Empowerment is self-governance, self-sufficiency and self-maintenance and above all it is economic independence through information, knowledge and necessary skill.

**Ans to Q No 2:** (i) Enabling all women to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedom on equal basis with men in all spheres-political, economic, social, cultural and civil.

(ii) Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation.

**Ans to Q No 3:** Stridhan is the exclusive property of the wife and its entrustment to her in-laws amounts to the creation of a trust and they are bound to return the same when a married woman makes a demand. A criminal proceeding for its misappropriation against husband or her in-laws is maintainable. In Soma Devi Veena Kumari the Court held that "Stridhan" is covered by the expression "dowry".

**Ans to Q No 4:** Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1987.

**Ans to Q No 5:** Empowerment is multi-dimensional process. This enables women to realise their identity and hidden power and creates a desire to achieve and express. Generally, development is expected to generate the focus that leads to empowerment and raise status of women. Power is not a commonly acquired priviledge which could be purchased or handed over. This has to be understood, acquired, exercised, sustained and preserved both by women themselves, their families and communities. Empowerment process helps women to understand and realise their own unique potential, express their desires, sufferings, feelings, respecting themselves and understanding their own distinct growth and development.



## 10.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** Write briefly about the meaning of empowerment.

**Q. 2 :** Write a short note on Stridhan.

**Q. 3 :** Explain the goals and objectives of National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001.

**Q. 4 :** Discuss the role of the SAFP in the empowerment of women.

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# UNIT 11: ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

## UNIT STRUCTURE


11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Economic Empowerment

11.3.1 Importance of Economic Empowerment

11.4 Importance of Skill Development

11.5 Economic Issues and Challenges Experienced by Women

11.6 National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

11.7 Let Us Sum up

11.8 Further Reading

11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.10 Possible Questions


## 11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the meaning and importance of economic empowerment
- examine the importance of skill development
- discuss various economic issues and challenges faced by women
- explain objectives of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001.

## 11.2 INTRODUCTION

"Empowerment of women" is the central issue pervading the development debate since the 80s. Improving their status and empowering them would go a long way in accomplishing egalitarian gender relations in the society. Women who are hitherto constrained by their social structure for their self-expression constitute the target of most of the development programmes, which aim at bringing them into the mainstream of the development. Empowerment of women is the most important way to

establish equality in the society. In this unit we shall discuss various issues associated with economic empowerment of women.

## 11.3 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Economic empowerment refers to ability of one person to involve in the process of decision making related to allocation of finances and resources. The fact is that women though largely absent from the formal workplace and hence from official labor statistic, are nevertheless heavily engaged in subsistence agricultural and informal sector of economy. There is a constant effort to put women's income in bracket in order to consolidate the position that women are only reproducers and not producers. This idea needs to be changed. Women's economic right is definitely an important indicator for enhancement of their status. Therefore, women labour needs to be recognised. Education, more employment avenues, political awareness etc. would all lead to women's economic emancipation.

Empowered women can play an important role in linking other women and girls to their entitlements such as access to nutritious food and supplements, equality in participation of women in government programs such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), PM Aawas Yojna (PMAY), and Crehes for women at working sites etc. They can also play an important role in bringing about a mindset change towards the value of girl child by actively associating themselves with programmes such as 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' (BBBP), 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' etc.

**Table : Women's Economic Empowerment**

| Macro Level<br>↓<br>Policy Level<br>↓ | Macro Level<br>↓<br>Community Level<br>↓ | Micro Level<br>↓<br>Household Level<br>↓ |
|---|---|---|
| Better remuneration and job representation of women's interest in the Macro-Economic Policies at National and State Level | Ownership of assets, land, access to credit representation in Local Bodies and access to markets. | Women's control over income, relative contribution to family support access to control of family resources. |

The process of empowering women is a continuous process. The need of the hour is to make women realise their potential, make them aware of the bright future that awaits them, guide them and nurture them

Women have now taken up professional roles in order to create a new space for themselves. The traditional role of a house wife has gradually changed into working women and house wife. Some of the factors are responsible for this change. These are better education, changing socio cultural values and need for supplementary income.

Early 70's marked the beginning of consciousness about the women rights in India. There is greater need to accept their role in society and economy. It aims at increasing women's power in terms of their self-reliance and internal strength to determine choices in life. There are two ways in which education and employment improve women power-

(i) By importing skill

(ii) By raising the capability through greater discipline, responsiveness to challenges and conscientiousness.

In the era of globalization, technical education is the key to empower women and use their resources for regional and national development.

Women in India are victims of a multiple socio-economic and cultural factors. Emancipation of women is a pre-requisite for nation's economic development and social upliftment. The role of women and the need to empower them are central to human development programmes, including poverty alleviation. In spite of safeguards provided in many of the poverty alleviation programmes, it was observed that women in rural areas, especially from poor families could be not benefited. The self-help group (SHG) is a viable organised setup to disburse micro-credit to the rural women for the purpose of making them enterprising and encouraging to enter into entrepreneurial activities. The formation of SHGs is not ultimately a micro-credit project but an empowerment process.

### 11.3.1 Importance of Economic Empowerment

Women are the key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic,

environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. However, limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change. Empowering them is essential, not only for the well-being of individuals, families and communities, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural and industrial workforce worldwide.

To achieve rightful and dignified status of women, empowerment programmes need to be initiated to provide a solid foundation to nurture the inner strength and self-esteem for women. Education is a potent tool to progress in life serving as a catalyst that has unsettled centuries of restrictions and given women the much deserved platform to set themselves free and rise as equals.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** State the name of any one scheme adopted by the Government of India with regard to girl child.

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**Q.2:** State the meaning of economic empowerment.

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## 11.4 IMPORTANCE OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Skill development refers to the process of identification of skill gap and increasing and developing persons' existing skill which will enable them to achieve their goals. Skill development efforts in India needs to be accelerated and aligned with the overall development of the economy so that the country's resources are efficiently utilised in creating skills that the market demands.

India's spectacular growth performance in recent years has attracted the attention of researchers, analysts and policy makers around the globe.

It is projected that with consistently high growth rates, India would emerge as one of the largest economies of the world. While growth projections appear encouraging, the major challenge for India would be to meet the emerging human resource requirements of an expanding economy. Despite its population of more than 100 billion, India suffers from workforce deficiency, mainly due to absence of required skills among the vast majority of its workforce. This gets reflected in the fact that about 80% of the workforce in rural and urban areas do not possess any identifiable marketable skills (NSS 61st Round on Employment and Unemployment).

Vocational training plays a crucial role in transforming the unskilled people into skilled human resources and Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) are key components of the vocational training system in the country. Vocational training being a concurrent subject, the responsibility is shared by both Central and State Governments. Director General, Employment and Training (DGE & T), Ministry of Labour, Govt. of India formulates policies, lays down standards and conducts trade testing & certification for both public and private ITIs. The State Governments are responsible for managing the ITIs.

Though in India ITIs have grown in size, they have fallen short in fulfilling the skill requirements of the country. First, the ITIs are not able to match the realities of the employment scenario. Training offered by them mainly cater to the needs of the organised manufacturing sector, whereas over 90% of India's workforce is actually engaged in the unorganised sector. Secondly, ITIs have been slow in adapting to rapid changes in the economy, more particularly in the post reform period. As a result, the trade and the number of share in each trade are not decided on the basis of dynamic market needs, thus creating a demand-supply mismatch almost in every trade sector. Thirdly, weak institute and industry interaction lead to a gap between course curriculum and industry's requirement. Fourthly, physical infrastructure facilities in most of the ITIs are poor and their laboratories are not equipped with modern equipment and testing facilities. The competence and motivational levels of the trainers/instructors are also below par in many cases. Finally, the ITIs, more particularly the government run institutes, lack

autonomy in matters like administration, finance, academics and internal management etc. In contrast, the private institutes, though have autonomy, do not attach due importance to meet the quality standards in vocational training.

The Eleventh Five Year Plan of India proposes a mission mode approach for skill development by launching a "Skill Development Mission". In the Indian context, initiatives for skill development have been taken up at various levels, both government and private. Some of these initiatives are discussed in the following paragraphs.

**Initiatives taken by the Government of India**

Coordinated Action on Skill Development is the major initiative of the Government of India for achieving 11th Plan objective of inclusive growth through coordination and harmonisation of skill development initiatives of different players. The action aims at creation of a pool of skilled persons with adequate skills that meet the employment requirement across various sectors of the national economy. The institutional structure put in place for the purpose includes the PM's Council on Skill Development, the National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB) chaired by Deputy Chairperson, Planning Commission and the National Skill Development Corporation under Ministry of Finance.

**(i) PM's National Council on Skill Development**

PM's Council on National Skill Development has Union Ministers of key ministries like Finance, Human Resource Development, Micro Small Medium Enterprises, Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Rural Development, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation Labour. The main function of the Council are :

i. To lay down over all policy objectives, financing and governance models and strategies relating to skill development.

ii. To review the progresses of schemes, and guide on midcourse corrections, additions and closure of parts or whole of any particular programme / scheme.

iii. Coordinate Public Sector/ Private Sector Initiatives in a framework of a collaborative action.

The Council has set a target of creating 500 million skilled persons by 2022 with emphasis on inclusion so as to deal with divides of gender, rural/ urban, organised/unorganised employment, traditional and contemporary work place. Some of the key governance principles it has laid down include designing of programmes under which the leaner can pay the skill provider directly; skills are fungible and bankable, individuals are enabled to convert their knowledge and skills through adequate testing and Certification into higher diplomas and degrees. The emphasis is on promoting multiple models of delivery that can respond to different situations in various states and to utilise existing available infrastructure of educational institutions for skill development after school hours without affecting formal education.

**(ii) National Skill Development Coordination Board**

The National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB) is entrusted with the coordination and harmonisation of the Government's initiatives for skill development spread across the seventeen Central Ministries and State Governments with the initiatives of the National Skill Development Corporation. It has twelve members which include Secretaries of Central Ministries of Labour & Employment, Rural Development, and Finance, Higher Education. The main functions of the Board include :

(a) Enumerating strategies to implement the decisions of the Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development.

(b) Developing suitable operational guidelines and instructions to achieve the objectives of skill development.

(c) Initiating solutions and strategies to address the problems of regional imbalance in skill development infrastructure, socio-economic, rural-urban and gender divide; quality teachers; ensuring effective utilisation of investment; integrating varying existing regulatory institutions; involving private sector to develop skills for wage/self employment and promoting apprenticeship/

on the-job training for creation of skilled personnel to address both unemployability and unemployment.

(d) Encouraging the State governments to put in place similar institutional structures.

(e) Establishment of National Skill Inventory and National Database for Skill Deficiency Mapping on National Web Portal to facilitate exchange of Information between prospective employers and job seekers.

(f) Coordinating and facilitating the repositioning of Employment Exchange as outreach points for storing and providing information on employment and skill development.

(g) Monitoring, evaluating and analysing the outcomes of the various schemes and programmes and apprising the Apex Council.

**(iii) National Skill Development Corporation :**

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), a non-profit company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, has been set up under the Ministry of Finance. The Corporation has a two tier structures viz. a 15 Member Board and a National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) as a 100% government owned trust to facilitate its mandate of coordinating and stimulating private sector initiative in the area of skill development with enhanced flexibility and effectiveness. Some of its main functions are as follows :

(a) It will make periodic as well as an annual report of its plans and activities and put them in the public domain.

(b) Establishing a Trainee Placement and Tracking System for effective evaluation and future policy planning.

## 11.5 ECONOMIC ISSUES AND CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN

In India there are various obstacles that come in the way of economic empowerment of women. Some key challenges faced by women in India include -

- **Lack of Access to Education:** One major issue faced by women in India is their low level of educational attainment. Lack of education impedes their participation in other development processes of the country. Poor knowledge on legal rights hampers the social and political empowerment of women. Illiteracy also impedes their access to skill upgradation and capacity building programs, access to credit, access to subsidies on inputs provided by government programs, access to technologies and related training modules offered by the agriculture extension system and their decision making power. For example, women are engaged in all types of farm activities and do more work as compared to male workers, but their participation in decision making related to farm and income generating activities is low. They do not enjoy autonomy in decision making in the family or matters relating to children's education in spite of their significant contribution to economic activities. Poor access to safe spaces in rural areas specifically due to lack of good roads, transport and lighting facilities at night also hampers their access to education despite the presence of schools/colleges.
- **Digital Illiteracy :** Poor access to Information Technology (IT) by many women intensifies existing inequalities between women and men and also creates new forms of inequalities in education and health. This also leads to emergence of new forms of violence against women and widen the existing gender digital divide. Digital literacy has the capacity to empower women by raising social and political awareness, improving educational and employment opportunities.
- **Poor access to technologies :** Access to women friendly technologies/implements and services by the government schemes/ agricultural extension is poor. The studies carried out so far in the field of agriculture indicate that despite the key role of women in crop husbandry, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry and post-harvest technology, those in charge of formulating packages of technologies, services and public policies for rural areas often tends to neglect the productive role of women. There is inadequate development with respect to technologies particularly tailored to women-specific

occupations. Besides, involvement of women in technology development and transfer has also received poor attention from both scientific and administrative wings of the government.

- **Poor Livelihoods opportunities outside Agriculture :** Agriculture is seen as subsistence strategy for rural women's livelihoods. With agriculture becoming a non-profitable proposition for economic sustenance of rural households, importance of non-farm activities for income generation activities is growing. Women are rarely involved in the backward and forward production linkages with agriculture. Poor linkages between the non-farm activities and farm activities further hampers opportunities for value addition & market linkages for economic empowerment/ livelihoods promotion of women. Though women's participation in agricultural production is consistently expanding, they lack access to input supplies, extension advice, credit and the most important agricultural resource-land. They continue to face constraints, which could be social, legal, and cultural in nature. Their poor access to all these resources hampers their decisions on various agricultural aspects.
- **Lack of Skills :** While a large number of women are involved in micro/ small enterprises or manufacturing, most training programmes hardly have any female participation. There is often less involvement of women in opportunities related to construction, trade, transport, storage, and services due to lack of skills.
- **Vulnerability to Climate Change :** Women are affected differently and often more severely by climate change and its associated natural disasters such as floods, droughts, cyclones and storms. The effect of climate change drives women into dangerous situations/risks and vulnerabilities.

## 11.6 NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, 2001

The issue of women empowerment is a subject of serious discussion. In India a number of policies are adopted by the Government in this regard.

A National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) was drafted advocating a holistic approach for the development of women. The National Nutritional Policy, the National Policy on Education, the National Population Policy have significant component for women aimed at their empowerment. Some of the strategies of the Government to uplift the position of women are-

(a) The Government has adopted legislative measure of reservation of not less than one-third seats for women in the Parliament and in state Legislative Assemblies to ensure adequate representation of women in decision-making .

(b) The Government has adopted an integrated approach towards empowering women through effective convergence of existing services, resources, infrastructure and manpower in both women-specific and women-related sectors.

(c) It has adopted a special strategy of "Women's component Plan" to ensure that no less than 30 per cent of funds/benefits flow to women from other developmental sectors.

(d) It has organised women into self-help groups and thus mark the beginning of a major process of empowering women.

(e) The Government ensures easy and equal access to education to women and girls.

(f) The Government has equipped women with necessary skills in the modern trades which could make them economically self reliant.

(g) It has facilitated increasing access to credit through setting up of a" Development Bank for Women Entrepreneurs" in small sectors.

The year of 2001 was declared as "Women Empowerment Year" by the Government of India. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was evolved in the same year. The Policy recognises the causes of gender inequality which are related to social and economic structures. The policy underlines the need for mainstreaming gender perspective in the development process. The objectives of the National Policy for the Empowerment of women include :

(1) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realise their full potential.

(2) The de-jure and de facto enjoyment of all human rights by women on equal basis with men in all spheres - political, economic, social, cultural and civil.

(3) Equal access to anticipation and decision-making in social, political and economic life of the nation.

(4) Equal access to healthcare, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment and equal remuneration.

(5) Strengthening of legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

(6) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.

(7) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.

(8) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child.

(9) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organisations.

It was envisioned that affirmative actions such as reservations, quotas including higher legislative bodies, will be considered whenever necessary on a time-bound basis. Women-friendly personnel policies will also be drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in the developmental process. Besides empowering women to participate in decision making process, the policy also visualised the means of economic and social empowerment of women.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.3:** What does skill development refer to?

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**Q.4:** Mention any two functions of the PM's Council on National Skill Development.

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**Q.5:** Mention any two objectives of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001.

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**Q.6:** Write briefly about any two challenges faced by women in the way of economic empowerment.

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## 11.7 LET US SUM UP

- Economic empowerment refers to ability of one person to involve in the process of decision making related to allocation of finances and resources.
- Women are the key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. Empowering them is essential, not only for the well-being of individuals, families and communities, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural and industrial workforce worldwide.
- Skill development refers to the process of identification of skill gap and increasing and developing persons' existing skill which will enable them to achieve their goals. Skill development efforts in India needs to be accelerated and aligned with the overall development of the economy so that the country's resources are efficiently utilised in creating skills that the market demands. The Government of India has adopted a

number of measures regarding skill development process in India.

- In India, women are facing various obstacles in the way of economic empowerment. Some of these obstacles are- poor education, digital illiteracy, lack of skill, poor access to technologies, effect of climate change etc.
- The year of 2001 was declared as "Women Empowerment Year" by the Government of India. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was evolved in the same year. The Policy recognises the causes of gender inequality which are related to social and economic structures. The policy underlines the need for mainstreaming gender perspective in the development process.



## 11.8 FURTHER READING


1) *Kurukshetra*, VOL – 66, January, 2018
2) *Kurukshetra*, December, 2008
3) *Kurukshetra*, VOL - 61, Aug, 2013
4) Biju, M. R. (2006). *Women's Empowerment: Politics and Policies*. New Delhi: Mittal Publication
5) Sarkar, I. (2008). *Women in Changing Society*. New Delhi: Serials Publication.
6) Thakur, Anil Kumar and Rahman, R. (2009). *Women Entrepreneurship*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publication.




## 11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao'

**Ans to Q No 2:** Economic empowerment refers to ability of one person to involve in the process of decision making related to allocation of finances and resources.

**Ans to Q No 3:** Skill development refers to the process of identification of skill gap and increasing and developing persons' existing skill which will enable them to achieve their goals.

**Ans to Q No 4:** (i) To lay down over all policy objectives, financing and governance models and strategies relating to skill development.

(ii) To review the progresses of schemes, and guide on midcourse corrections, additions and closure of parts or whole of any particular programme / scheme.

**Ans to Q No 5:** (1) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realise their full potential.

(2) Equal access to anticipation and decision-making in social, political and economic life of 'the nation.

**Ans to Q No 6:** (i) Lack of Access to Education: One major issues faced by women in India is their low level of educational attainment. Lack of education impedes their participation in other development processes of the country. Poor knowledge on legal rights hampers the social and political empowerment of women. Illiteracy also impedes their access to skill up-gradation and capacity building programs, access to credit, access to subsidies on inputs provided by government programs, access to technologies and related training modules offered by the agriculture extension system and their decision making power.

(ii) Digital Illiteracy : Poor access to Information Technology (IT) by many women intensifies existing inequalities between women and men and also creates new forms of inequalities in education and health. This also leads to emergence of new forms of violence against women and widen the existing gender digital divide. Digital literacy has the capacity to empower women by raising social and political awareness, improving educational and employment opportunities.



## 11.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** Which year was observed as the Women's Empowerment Year?

**Q. 2 :** Write about the importance of economic empowerment of women.

**Q. 3 :** What is meant by skill development?

**Q. 4 :** Examine the role of the Government of India in expanding skill development process in the country.

**Q. 5 :** Explain the objectives of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001.

**Q. 6 :** Discuss various challenges faced by women in the process of economic empowerment.

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# UNIT 12: WOMEN AND SELF-HELP GROUPS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

## UNIT STRUCTURE


12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Development of Self Help Groups in India

12.4 Aims, Objectives and Features of Self Help Groups

12.5 Development of Self Help Groups in Assam

12.6 Role played by the Self-Help Groups in Enhancing Capacity of Women

12.7 Let Us Sum Up

12.8 Further Reading

12.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.10 Possible Questions


## 12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to -

- explain the development of Self Help Groups in India and in Assam
- describe the aims, objectives and features of Self Help Groups
- examine the role played by the Self-Help Groups in the empowerment of Women.

## 12.2 INTRODUCTION

Self-Help Group or in-short SHGs is now a well-known concept. It is now more than two-decade old. It is reported that the SHGs have a role in accelerating country's economic development. SHGs have now evolved as movement. Mainly, members of the SHGs are women. Consequently, participation of women in the country's economic development is increasing. They also play an important role in elevating the economic status of their families. This has led boost to the process of women's empowerment. SHGs are now gaining acceptance as an alternative system credit delivery

for meeting the credit needs especially to the people who are the poorest of poor generally comprising small/marginal farmers and landless agricultural labours. The concept of Self Help Groups has been evolved to organise the rural poor to meet their productive and consumption needs out of their savings. In India, SHGs have provided significant contribution towards economic empowerment of women. In this unit, we shall discuss the role of the SHGs in enhancing women's capability specially in Assam.

## 12.3 DEVELOPMENT OF SELF HELP GROUPS IN INDIA

Self Help Groups are voluntary association of people to attain certain collective goals, both economic and social goals. Self Help Groups are normally formed by the economically weaker section of the society, coming from rural or semi-urban areas. Each group consists of 10 to 20 members of small and marginal farmers, landless agriculture labourers, rural artisans, women folk, and micro-entrepreneurs. A group could be exclusively male or female, or even mixed. However, majority Self Help Groups are female groups.

A Self Help Group is an association of the poor people specially women who belong to the same social & economic background. The SHGs are usually informal groups of a locality area, whose members have a common need and importance towards collective action. These groups normally consist of 10 to 20 members of the group meet regularly, make their share of contribution.

The SHG promotes small saving among its members, which are then kept in a bank. SHGs have been generally formed for specific issues. The main purpose of SHGs is to mobilise savings among their members and utilised resources to meet the emergent credit needs of the members of the group. SHGs generally work according to the local requirement.

The group voluntarily decide to collect a fixed amount of savings at a fixed interval of time from all of its members. This amount may range from Rs. 10 to Rs. 200. This money is collected by the treasurer and kept partially in a Bank and partially among the group. The group opens a bank account in

the nearest bank branch. The bank has to maintain only one account for the group as a single entry. The group can be thus treated as a single customer by the bank and the hassles of treating 20 micro-accounts of each member can be done away with. The group members meet once in a week or fortnight or month. They decide how to work on different accumulated savings and how to work on different socioeconomic issues that confront them. Members make small regular savings contributions over a few months until there is enough money in the group to begin lending. Funds may then be lent back to the members or to others in the village for any purpose. In India, many SHGs are 'linked' to banks for the delivery of micro-credit.

The origin of self-help group can be traced is from Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, which was founded by Mohamed Yunus. SGHs were started and formed in 1975. In India NABARD initiated in 1986-1987. The absence of institutional credits available in the rural area has led to the establishment of SHGs.

It can be mentioned here the microfinance sector started in India in 1970s with the emergence of informal Self-Help Groups (SHG) to provide access to much-needed savings and credit services. The sector witnessed strong growth following the liberalisation of the Indian economy in 1991, since private sector organisations increasingly extended credit to microfinance companies. During 2005-2010, the microfinance sector reported strong growth supported by strong demand for loans from borrowers neglected by the banking system and investors eager to invest funds in the high growth industry. However, in 2010, the sector was severely impacted by the Andhra Pradesh crisis and the State Government promulgating an ordinance to curb the activities of microfinance companies. The crisis triggered a strong response from the RBI and in the years that followed, the sector has registered a turn around and has evolved into a more mature market. Moreover, the Government as well as the RBI has tried to create a conducive policy and regulatory environment for MFIs to expand the financial inclusion agenda in India.

From 1970 to 2014 a good numbers of microfinance institutions come

up throughout the country. As another move towards expanding access to financial services in rural and semi-urban areas, in the year 2015, The RBI has given license of small finance bank to ten institutions out of which eight were MFIs.

## 12.4 AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND FEATURES OF SELF HELP GROUPS

The objectives of SHG can be listed as bellow-

1. To inculcate the savings and banking habits among members.
2. To secure them from financial, technical and moral strengths.
3. To enable availing of loan for productive purposes.
4. To gain economic prosperity through loan/credit.
5. To gain from collective wisdom in organising and managing their own finance and distributing the benefits among themselves.
6. To sensitise women of target area for the need of SHG and its relevance in their empowerment.
7. To create a sense of group feeling among women.
8. To enhance the confidence and capabilities of women.
9. To develop collective decision making among women.
10. To encourage habit of saving amongst women and to facilitate the accumulation of their own capital resource base.
11. To motivate women taking up social responsibilities particularly related to women development.
12. To create a platform for the members to provide space and support to each other.

The salient features of SHGs are:

**1. Identical Interest, Common Occupation and Identity**

The people in SHG are having identical interest in terms of group functioning. Adopting common things is a highlighting features of the SHGs. Varied ideas and interest do not foster proper groups functioning.

**2. Flexible and Responsible**

The members have flexible thinking, decision- making and implementing the plan enables and group to have a border framework of mechanism and operation. Shared sense of responsibility in turn would promote flexibility in the group.

**3. Simple Documentation**

SHGs required simple documentation of the records and the registers. The documents are maintained in such a way that it can be referred and used by all the members.

**4. Collective Leadership**

The members in SHG believe in a collective leadership because collective leadership promotes group cohesion as it is through collective leadership that the members interact. Leadership is responsible for effective integration of goals and communication in the group in order to develop a climate of trust.

**5. Mutual Decision - making**

In the SHG the members take a mutual decision because group sustainability depends to a larger extent on how the members involve in mutual decision - making. Hence, collective decision - making is an important feature of SHGs.

**6. Group Solidarity and Self Help**

Group solidarity gives an impulse towards collective action and articulation, whereas the idea of self help provides larger scope for integrated mechanism of group functioning.

**7. Awareness and Socio - Economic Empowerment**

Awareness is a crucial feature of the self-help group, since women are exposed to various components of the social sphere. This feature gives a forward thrust for the effective group functioning.

**8. Mutual Trust and Confidence**

The successful functioning of the group for a prolonged period relies on the mutual trust and confidence of group members.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** Write the meaning of SHGs.

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**Q.2:** Mention two objectives of SHGs.

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**Q.3:** Write briefly about any two features of SHGs.

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## 12.5 DEVELOPMENT OF SELF HELP GROUPS IN ASSAM

In some parts of Assam, the women groups in the form of vigilance committees work at village level for supervising the execution and monitoring of the rural development activities. Thus, women groups shape as social activities in implementation of different development schemes. These women groups have also involved in prohibition of elicit liquor, afforestation, creating awareness of development schemes.

A. N. Sarkar (2001) says that majority of the economically weaker section came into SHG that resulted in increase of the value of assets owned, employment, average income of the members due to the SHGs. The SHG strategy has made positive impact on the empowerment of women in terms of increasing their economic capacity. The total numbers of SHGs was 29,2071 in Assam in the year 2015. The saving amount of SHGs with bank was Rs. 9,943 lakhs in Assam in the year 2015.

## 12.6 ROLE PLAYED BY THE SELF HELP GROUPS IN ENHANCING CAPACITY OF WOMEN

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are usually informal groups whose members have a common perception of need and importance towards collective action. These groups promote savings among members and use the pooled resources to meet the emergent needs of their members, including the consumption needs. The number of members in SHGs is normally ranged from 10 to 20. It is expected that, within the group, there should be true democratic culture in which all the members must participate actively in the decision making process. Collective work, leadership with fixed tenure, mutual trust and cooperative philosophy are the driving forces for SHGs. The basic objective of Self-Help Groups is to develop saving capability among the poorest sections of the society, which in turn reduce dependence on financial institutions and develop self-reliance. The SHGs can play pivotal role in creating economic self-reliance of rural poor by meeting consumption and production credit needs as and when they arise. This will prevent exploitation of the poorer sections from non-institutional credit sources. SHGs also help in the development of group dynamics, building leadership quality to realise their potentiality and self-belief. SHGs also help the banks in recovery of credit by motivating members for prompt repayment of loans. These groups also contribute towards procurement of high cost inputs that could not be bought individually. These Groups are also beneficial in terms of providing training to the members regarding the use of extension services and Government support.

In the recent years the Government of India has assigned a special role to SHG in the implementation of its poverty alleviation programmes and on the whole rural development. SHGs as a strategy for implementing poverty alleviation programmes, the focus is on Rural Development. Credit is important in the lives of the rural poor in a developing economy. As the distribution of land in the countryside remains skewed, the majority of the rural population is left with an inadequate resource base for production. Faced with a weak social security system to fall back upon, this section of landless or near landless rural population is forced to depend upon credit for its livelihood. It

was this understanding that led various developing countries to make credit an integral part of their poverty alleviation programmes. The conception and implementation of such programmes were often based on the broad principles of social banking in several developing countries including India. SHGs/Micro-finance (i.e. Credit, Saving and Insurance) programs can help smooth consumption of poor households during an adverse shock. Providing affordable credit to the rural population has long been a prime component of development strategy. Governments and donors have sponsored and supported supply-led rural finance institutions both to improve growth and equity and to neutralise or mitigate urban-based macro-economic policies. However, only to because of high risks, heavy transaction costs, and mounting loan losses, many of the programs have drained state resources to little purpose, reaching only a small part of the rural population and making little progress toward self-sustainability.

The Self Help Groups have been playing a very important role in the process of empowerment of women. Empowerment of women covers three aspects - economic empowerment, capacity building and social empowerment. Economic empowerment means greatest access to financial resources, reducing vulnerability of poor women in crisis situation like flood, death and accidents in the family and significant increase in women's own income. Economic empowerment gives women the power to retain income and use it at her discretion. The success of women development however, depends on capacity building. The capacity building depends on better condition of health, education, environment, communication skills and better leadership skills. Women empowerment is incomplete without social empowerment. Social empowerment means equal status, participation and power of decision-making at the household level and also at the community level. Social empowerment enables women to participate in the decision making process in democratic institutions.

The Self Help Group programme mainly focuses on empowerment of rural women and making them financially, socially and politically capable. One of the major objectives of initiating SHGs for women, especially the poor women is to help them to take up and manage on their own productive activities which could supplement their household employment and income

leading to improved living standards. These income generating activities are also expected to serve as instruments which could bring about economic awareness and empowerment among the women members. SHGs have the power to create a socio-economic revolution in the rural areas of our country. SHGs have not only produced tangible assets and improved living conditions of the members, but also helped in changing much of their social outlook and attitudes.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.4:** Write the meaning of economic empowerment of women.

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**Q.5:** Write briefly about the role of SHGs in the empowerment of women.

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## 12.7 LET US SUM UP

- Self Help Groups are voluntary association of people to attain certain collective goals, both economic and social goals. Self Help Groups are normally formed by the economically weaker section of the society, coming from rural or semi-urban areas. Each group consists of 10 to 20 members of small and marginal farmers, landless agriculture labourers, rural artisans, women folk, and micro-entrepreneurs. A group could be exclusively male or female, or even mixed. However, majority Self Help Groups are female groups.
- A Self Help Group is an association of the poor people specially women who belong to the same social and economic background. The SHGs

are usually informal groups of a locality area, whose members have a common need and importance towards collective action.

- The SHG promotes small saving among its members, which are then kept with a bank. SHGs have been generally formed for specific issues. The main purpose of SHGs is to mobilise savings among their members and used resources to meet the emergent credit needs of the members of the group. SHGs generally work according to the local requirement.
- Some of the objectives of SHGs are- to inculcate the savings and banking habits among members, to secure them from financial, technical and moral strengths, to enable availing of loan for productive purposes, to gain economic prosperity through loan/credit, to gain from collective wisdom in organising and managing their own finance and distributing the benefits among themselves, to sensitise women of target area for the need of SHG and its relevance in their empowerment, to enhance the confidence and capabilities of women, to encourage habit of saving among women and facilitate the accumulation of their own capital resource base etc.
- Some salient features of Self Help Groups are- identical interest, common occupation and identity; flexible and responsible; simple documentation; collective leadership; mutual decision - making; group solidarity and self help; awareness and socio - economic empowerment; mutual trust and confidence.
- The Self Help Group programme mainly focuses on empowerment of rural women and making them financially, socially and politically capable. One of the major objectives of initiating SHGs for women, especially the poor women is to help them to take up and manage on their own productive activities which could supplement their household employment and income leading to improved living standards. These income generating activities are also expected to serve as instruments which could bring about economic awareness and empowerment among the women members. SHGs have the power to create a socio-economic revolution in the rural areas of our country.



## 12.8 FURTHER READING

1) Biju, M. R.(2006). *Women's Empowerment : Politics and Policies*. New Delhi: Mittal Publication,

2) Rengaraja, Dr. V. (2013). *Microfinance-Principles and Approaches*. Notion Press.

3) Thakur, Anil Kumar. & Rahman, R. (2009). *Women Entrepreneurship*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publication.



## 12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Self Help Groups are voluntary association of people to attain certain collective goals, both economic and social goals. Self Help Group are normally formed by the economically weaker section of the society, coming from rural or semi-urban areas. Each group consists of 10 to 20 members of small and marginal farmers, landless agriculture labourers, rural artisans, women folk, and micro-entrepreneurs. A group could be exclusively male or female, or even mixed. However, majority Self Help Groups are female groups. A Self Help Group is an association of the poor people specially women who belong to the same social and economic background. The SHGs are usually informal groups of a locality area, whose members have a common need and importance towards collective action.

**Ans to Q No 2:** (i) To inculcate the savings and banking habits among members.

(ii) To enable availing of loan for productive purposes.

**Ans to Q No 3:** (i) **Identical Interest, Common Occupation and Identity:** The people in SHG have or share identical interest in terms of group functioning. Adopting common things is a highlighting features of the SHGs. Varied ideas and interest do not foster proper groups functioning.

(ii) **Flexible and Responsible:** The members have flexible thinking, decision- making and implementing the plan enables and group to have a border framework of mechanism and operation. Shared sense of responsibility in turn would promote flexibility in the group.

**Ans to Q No 4:** Economic empowerment means greatest access to financial resources, reducing vulnerability of poor women in crisis situation like flood, death and accidents in the family and significant increase in women's own income. Economic empowerment gives women the power to retain income and use it at her discretion.

**Ans to Q No 5:** The Self Help Group programme mainly focuses on empowerment of rural women and making them financially, socially and politically capable. One of the major objectives of initiating SHGs for women, especially the poor women, is to help them to take up and manage on their own productive activities which could supplement their household employment and income leading to improved living standards. These income generating activities are also expected to serve as instruments which could bring about economic awareness and empowerment among the women members. SHGs have the power to create a socio-economic revolution in the rural areas of our country. SHGs have not only produced tangible assets and improved living conditions of the members, but also helped in changing much of their social outlook and attitudes.



## 12.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** State the meaning of Self Help Groups.

**Q. 2 :** Write about the development of Self Help Groups in India.

**Q. 3 :** Explain the objectives and salient features of Self Help Groups.

**Q. 4 :** Examine the role of the Self Help Groups in the empowerment and capacity building of women.

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# UNIT 13: ENVIRONMENT AND WOMEN

## UNIT STRUCTURE


13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Impact of Environmental Issues on Women

13.3.1 Suggestions to Mitigate the Impact of Environmental Degradation on Women

13.4 Let Us Sum Up

13.5 Further Reading

13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.7 Possible Questions


## 13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- describe the relationship women and environment
- discuss the impact of environmental issues on women.

## 13.2 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between environment and human being is interlinked. Human society does not exist in vacuum, but it exists within the environment only. So any major or minor change in the environment, will definitely affect human beings. Accordingly, the relationship between the environment and the women is very close. Women play a critical role in managing natural resources on family and community levels and are most affected by environmental degradation. In communities around the world, women manage water, sources for fuel, and food, as well as both forests and agricultural terrain. The relationship women and environment is also recognised by various international documents and conferences. The problem of environmental degradation has now begun to pose threats to women in various ways. In this unit, we shall discuss the impact of environmental degradation on women.

## 13.3 IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ON WOMEN

Environment has profound impact on the lives of women. In the early 1960s, an interest in women and their connection with the environment was sparked, largely by a book written by Ester Boserup entitled "*Woman's Role in Economic Development*". Starting in the 1980s, policy makers and governments became more mindful of the connection between the environment and gender issues. Changes began to be made regarding natural resources and environmental management with the specific role of women in mind. According to the World Bank in 1991, "Women play an essential role in the management of natural resources, including soil, water, forests and energy...and often have a profound traditional and contemporary knowledge of the natural world around them". Whereas women were previously neglected or ignored, there was increasing attention paid to the impact of women on the natural environment and, in return, the effects the environment has on the health and well-being of women". The gender-environment relations have valuable ramifications with regard to the understanding of nature between men and women, the management and distribution of resources, responsibilities and day-to-day life as well as the well being of people.

Globally, women provide livelihood for their families and simultaneously manage the environment. However, due to gender power relations, their knowledge is often overlooked and they are not counted as agents of change. Therefore, a gender analysis of environmental management is necessary, looking at gender aspects of the use of natural resources (water, forests, land, etc), consumption of services and goods (transport, food, etc) and experiences of environmental degradation (pollution, chemicals, loss of biodiversity, etc). Women and men should be agents in environmental management, including equal participation in decision making and the policy implementation processes.

When addressing gender in the context of the environment, it is important to recognise that women and men are not homogenous

categories. Where women and men live, their age, social class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and other variables, interact in shaping the links between gender and the environment. This complexity must be accounted for participation and it requires analysis and programme design. The impact of environmental degradation on women can be discussed as follows:

- **Chemicals and pollution**: Women exposures to toxic chemicals depend on the division of labour in the private and public arenas. For example, women are disproportionately exposed to pesticides used in non-waged agricultural activities. Women's responsibilities in household work mean that they are more exposed to toxic chemicals found in products used for cleaning, personal care, and pest control, and to pesticides and house building materials stored at home. Another risk is pesticide containers recycled for other uses, which may have severe health consequences. In rural areas indoor pollution affects women more than men, as they are more exposed to smoke from burning fuels. In urban areas, risk factors include exposures to chemicals and indoor air pollution from household solid fuel. These hazards play a role in more than 80 per cent of the diseases regularly reported by the WHO. Inefficient burning of biomass in unventilated homes releases high levels of black carbon, causing approximately 2 million deaths per year, mainly amongst women and children in the poorest communities.
- **Water**: Both women and girls play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of freshwater as a natural resource, and they are often responsible for sanitation and for maintaining a hygienic home. Water is also a prerequisite for gardening, raising livestock and agriculture. Women and girls bear disproportionate burden of deteriorating water quality and availability in rural and urban areas. A gender analysis is relevant in the management of water as a natural resource, in the planning and design of sustainable water technologies and their application to local conditions. Today, 2.8 billion people - approximately 40 percent of the world's population - live in river basins impacted by water scarcity. Lack of access to

water decreases women's contributions to agricultural production and their business opportunities. Droughts also bring health hazards through lack of water for drinking, cooking and hygiene, as well as food insecurity. Other health consequences are nutritional deficiencies and burdens associated with travelling to collect water and this adversely affects women.

- **Energy**: Rural societies in developing countries rely predominantly on natural resources, such as wood, charcoal and agricultural wastes as primary energy sources. The use of these is seldom sustainable and often has negative impacts on the environment. In many countries women bear the main responsibility for providing energy to the household, and often lack technologies like efficient stoves, grinders and pumps that could ease their burdens. Women are affected by the lack of access to modern energy services also when growing food, maintaining the household, and in opportunities for education and employment. In the male dominated energy sector a challenge lies in raising awareness and promoting gender policies in institutions and organisations.
- **Livelihoods, Agriculture and Fishing**: Women and girl's responsibilities as food growers, fuel gatherers and caregivers connect them closely to the surrounding environment and natural resources, and equip them with distinct knowledge, such as crop varieties suitable for different soils and weather conditions. However, women have less access to land than men and are therefore noticeably less productive than men. In coastal areas, men work predominantly with fishing and fish farming, while up to 90% of secondary sector workers are women. Women are also heavily involved in the small-scale fishery sector. Increasing the productivity of women farming and fishing is crucial for women's economic empowerment. However, producing more is not enough – and may harm the environment. Women's empowerment can be increased through productivity combined with the conservation and improvement of natural resources.

- **Forestry:** The gender division of labour in forest management differs and depends on many aspects. Men often collect firewood by felling and processing trees, while women use fallen branches and thus have a less damaging impact on the environment. To a larger extent than men, women use products such as berries, herbs and honey. Yet, women have less land rights and access to forests, and participate less in forest management.
- **Waste Management**: The global environmental consequences of waste disposal are alarming. This is particularly true in the developing world's urban areas, where for example dumpsites have severe environmental and health effects. Women and men have different ways of handling wastes, in private and public. Household waste management is often the unpaid work of women, but when it is mechanised - for example by the use of carts or delivery tricycles - and at the same time paid for, men often take over this work. In other words, in large proportion of waste management works women are involved yet men gain the benefits not women.

Moreover, environmental effects have an impact on female fertility, from nutrition, weight and physical health to psychological stress and use of medications. One key influence that women increasingly need to take into account is the environment in which they live. In short, environmental factors have been strongly linked to women's ability and their day to day life.

### 13.3.1 Suggestions to Mitigate the Impact of Environmental Degradation on Women

To mitigate the impact of environmental degradation on women some measures should be taken on an urgent basis. Some of the suggested measures in this regard are-

a. There is an urgent need of development of gender action plans in all environmental organisations and ensure that gender action plans are used in dialogue with other donors.
b. Inclusion of women in decision making processes at all levels is very important.

c. Use of targeted approaches, that address women and girls' specific interests, vulnerabilities and needs, will also be fruitful in this context.

d. Information should be spread about financing women for doing environmental work. This will encourage more and more women to come forward and engage themselves in environmental issues.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q.1:** Who was the author of the book entitled "Woman's Role in *Economic Development*"?

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**Q.2:** Write briefly about any two environmental issues that have profound impact on women.

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**Q.3:** Mention any two suggestions to mitigate the impact of environmental degradation on women.

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## 13.4 LET US SUM UP

- The relationship between the environment and the women is very close and interlinked. Women play a critical role in managing natural resources at the family and community levels and are most affected by environmental degradation. In communities around the world, women manage water, sources for fuel, food, as well as both forests and agricultural terrain. The relationship women and environment is also

recognised by various international documents and conferences.

- The environment has profound impact in the lives of women. In the early 1960s, an interest in women and their connection with the environment was sparked, largely by a book written by Ester Boserup entitled *"Woman's Role in Economic Development*". Changes began to be made regarding natural resource and environmental management with the specific role of women in mind. The World Bank has also recognised the important role of women in resource management.
- Globally, women provide a livelihood for their families and simultaneously manage the environment. However, due to gender power relations, their knowledge is often overlooked and they are not counted as agents of change. Therefore, a gender analysis of environmental management is necessary, looking at gender aspects of the use of natural resources. Women and men should be agents in environmental management, including equal participation in decision making and policy implementation processes.
- Various environmental problems have a negative impact in the lives of women. Environmental problems have an impact on female fertility, from nutrition, weight and physical health to psychological stress and use of medications.
- To mitigate the impact of environmental degradation on women, some measures should be taken on an urgent basis. Some of the suggested measures in this regard are- there is an urgent need of development of gender action plans in all environmental organisations and to ensure that gender action plans are used in dialogue with other donors. Also inclusion of women in decision making processes at all levels is very important. The use of targeted approaches, that address women and girls' specific interests, vulnerabilities and needs, will also be fruitful in this context, information should be widely disseminated with regard to financing women in taking up Environmental work.



## 13.5 FURTHER READING

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2) Panda, P. & Agarwal, B. (2005). *"Marital Violence, Human Development and Women's Property Status in India".* World Development. Vol. 33(5)

3) United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2017). Gender, the Environment and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. United Nations ESCAP.

4) Wolfgang, Lutza (November 1, 2017). "How Population Growth Relates to Climate Change". Sustainability Science, Economic Sciences: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America – via JSTOR.



## 13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Ester Boserup

**Ans to Q No 2:** (i) **Chemicals and pollution:** Women exposures to toxic chemicals depend on the division of labour in the private and public arenas. For example women are disproportionately exposed to pesticides used in non-waged agricultural activities. Women's responsibilities in household work mean that they are more exposed to toxic chemicals found in products used for cleaning, personal care, and pest control, and to pesticides and house building materials stored at home. Another risk is pesticide containers recycled for other uses, which may have severe health consequences. In rural areas, indoor pollution affects women more than men, as they are more exposed to smoke from burning fuels. In urban areas, risk factors include exposures to chemicals

and indoor air pollution from household solid fuel. These hazards play a role in more than 80 per cent of the diseases regularly reported by the WHO. Inefficient burning of biomass in unventilated homes releases high levels of black carbon, causing approximately 2 million deaths per year, mainly of women and children in the poorest communities.

(ii) **Water:** Both women and girls play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of freshwater as a natural resource, and they are often responsible for sanitation and for maintaining a hygienic home. Water is also a prerequisite for gardening, raising livestock and agriculture. Women and girls bear disproportional the burden of deteriorating water quality and availability in rural and urban areas. A gender analysis is relevant in the management of water as a natural resource, in the planning and design of sustainable water technologies and their application to local conditions. Today 2.8 billion people - approximately 40 percent of the world's population - live in river basins impacted by water scarcity. Lack of access to water decreases women's contributions to agricultural production and their business opportunities. Droughts also bring health hazards through lack of water for drinking, cooking and hygiene, as well as food insecurity. Other health consequences are nutritional deficiencies and burdens associated with travelling to collect water and this adversely affects women.

**Ans to Q No 3:** (i) There is an urgent need of development of gender action plans in all environmental organisations and ensure that gender action plans are used in dialogue with other donors.

(ii) Inclusion of women in decision making processes at all levels is very important.



## 13.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** Write briefly about the relationship between environment and gender.

**Q. 2 :** Discuss the impact of environmental degradation on the lives of women.

**Q. 3 :** Examine how degradation of environment is related to disempowerment of women.

**Q. 4 :** Provide suggestions to mitigate the impact of environmental problems on women.

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# UNIT 14: PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN VARIOUS SOCIO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN ASSAM

## UNIT STRUCTURE


14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Participation of Women in the Assam Movement

14.4 Participation of Women in the Bodoland Movement

14.5 Let Us Sum Up

14.6 Further Reading

14.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.8 Possible Questions


## 14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to -

- discuss the role of women in politics
- discuss the participation of women in the Assam Movement
- describe the participation of women in the Bodoland Movement.

## 14.2 INTRODUCTION

Participation of women in socio-political movement is not a new phenomenon. Women continue to be a part of the resistance movement throughout the world. The foundation of political participation of women in India was laid during the Freedom Movement. The selfless participation of large number of women had strengthened the movement. However, gender equality was nowhere the agenda of Indian National movement. It was not the main thrust of the national movement. Either directly or indirectly large number of women participated in the freedom struggle. The contribution of women in getting freedom is noteworthy. They proved that women are capable of strengthening the political movement. The participation of women in freedom struggle had its impact on the society and family and on women themselves.

In the Non-cooperation Movement which can be considered as the first potent milestone in India's liberation struggle, women in Assam made a significant presence. It must be mentioned here that Gandhiji's call to women had an immediate liberating effect and he was able to draw large number of women into the movement. In the beginning, a small number of women participated in the Movement, like Bidyutprova Devi, Girija Devi, Hemanta Kumari Devi, Dharmada Devi, Nalinibala Devi, Pushpalata Das, Guneshwari Nath and Chandraprova Saikiani. They organised meetings both at the rural and the urban level to disseminate the message and intent of "non-cooperation, swadeshi and constructive work". Gandhiji's visit to Assam in 1921 provided boost to their activities. The Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam too saw a vibrant participation of women. In 1930, Pushpalata Das along with Sarla Saxena, Punyaprava Barua and Jyotsna Majumdar, established the "*Mukti Sangha*" to mobilise girls in the national movement. Their fiery spirited speeches encouraged many young minds to fight for Poorna Swaraj. It is during this movement that at various places of Assam, "*Nari Bahinis*" or women squads were formed for carrying out programmes of picketing. Anti-opium campaign was very strongly carried out by women during this phase. With a large number of men behind bars, women came out in thousands breaking the law to show their support to the programme of Salt Satyagraha. In the Quit India Movement women in Assam came out in large numbers. It was in 1940's that women wings were made an integral part of the Indian National Congress at both national and provincial level. In Assam, the women's wing was set up in September 1940 with Pushpalata Das and Amolprava Das as joint secretaries. The following year, the All Assam Girl Students' Committee was formed in Shillong. In the face of unprecedented police repression and with large numbers of men in prison, prominent women leaders took upon themselves the task of coordinating the activities. Chandraprova Saikiani was one of the main guiding forces among women. In 1942, the *Mrityu Bahini* or Suicide Squad was formed to carry out subversive activities in a more organised manner. The Quit India phase showcased the rise of a novel wave of female militancy. Kanaklata, Ratnabala Phukan, Buddheshwari Hazarika, Khahuli Nath and

Damayanti Bora were active members of the Mrityu Bahini and were acclaimed as fearless radical women nationalists. Besides them, common women of the Assamese society made immense contributions via means like facilitation of hiding weapons, using their domestic role to support subversive and revolutionary activities.

Thus, Assam is a land where women took part in every aspect of society - be it administration, cultural aspects since the ancient time. In this unit, we shall discuss participation of women in two very significant movements that occurred in Assam, namely- the Assam Movement and the Bodoland Movement.

## 14.3 PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE ASSAM MOVEMENT

In the case of Assam Movement which had at its core, the demands of locating and expelling illegal migrants from Assam, economic development of the state, safeguarding larger Assamese linguistic and cultural identity, infrastructural development of the state; the participation of women was as widespread as that of men. The participation of women from different class, caste and the communal background is one of the most important features of the anti-foreigners' agitation of 1979-85. Women were spontaneous participants and they took part in all activities, be it *satyagraha*, picketing or procession. The agitation was primarily a student-led movement with the student community, both boys and girls participating in large proportions. One of the important roles played by the women in this movement was the act of fundraising for the sustenance of the movement. The numerous Mahila Samiti (Women's Association) that came up during the agitation contributed money to All Assam Students' Union (AASU) to carry on the agitation and this process lasted until the end of the agitation. Assam Women Writers Association supported the cause of the agitation and pleaded the government not to hold election without correcting voters list which allegedly comprised a large number of names of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

In almost every corner of every locality, a women's association was formed and these women were not merely supporting the agitation but they were creating new avenues for self-employment and self-dependence. They used handloom as their traditional companion and instrument to carry their fights against the 'other'. The newspaper reports were full of their offer to help victims of violence, to provide food and aid to those who were picketing, themselves being engaged in picketing and at the same time, weaving cloths, which was the main source of earning for many families. Another notable women's organisation that played a crucial role in the movement is Assam Jagrata Mahila Parishad . It provided crucial assistance in the political mobilisation of women. They symbolised women as mother and their inspiration as a source of strength to carry on the agitation in the face of hardships. An important outcome of the anti-foreigner's agitation in Assam was the emergence of women leaders at the time of the movement. Students involved in the AASU led movement gave girl students the opportunity to lead from the front. An example of such leadership was Rekha Rani Bodo, a tribal leader. She was elected as president of All Assam Tribal Women's Association in 1982 and was a part of AASU.

Another important contribution of women towards the Assam agitation was through their role as "Peacekeepers". During the anti-foreigners' agitation in Assam, thousands of women poured into the streets in support of the agitation and many of them were victims of violence. In such situation, many women's organisations came up who urged for peace. Several Matribahinis (Mother Force) were created to assist those who suffered during the agitation. Samajsewi Matribahini (Social Worker Mother Force) was one such organisation who offered material help to those women who were either molested by Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) *jawans* or lost family members, by granting them handlooms to become self-dependent financially. Purbanchaliya Mahila Sanstha (Northeastern Women's Association) was another organisation involved in helping those who suffered due to the agitation. The women involved in this organisation went from place to place, to offer medical and material support to those injured in conflicts that broke out between the protesters and security forces.

By 1981, there was many women's organisation involved in maintaining peace in society. They were protesting against the army and police torture on agitators.

Finally, if we look at the entire period of the agitation, women's participation was not of equal intensity. At the beginning, the middle-class women living in urban areas were supporters of the agitation. They spontaneously came out of home for processions and picketing. Old ladies and young girls in rural areas supported the agitation and took to the streets. But once the agitation became more intense, women of different ethnic groups too started participating in the agitation. The common perception was that, as the 'Mother Assam' (Aai Axomi) is in danger and everyone should come out of home to save her from 'intruders'.

A positive change brought by the Assam Movement on women's lives was their growing political consciousness. This led to a blossoming of a multitude of women's organisations and women clubs. Some of them were- Mula Gabhoru Santha, Sanjukta Mahila Sangha (United Women's Association), Satya Sandhya Mahila Sangha (Satya Sandhya Women's Association), Sankari Samaj Mahila Samiti (Sankari Society Women's Committee) etc. Although many of these were dissolved after the agitation, yet a large number of these associations continued operating. It gave women a sense of unity, togetherness and strength to stand together against issues, such as domestic violence and social disturbances caused by drunkards. After the agitation was over, many of these women's associations continue working as self-help groups and organisations for social and political empowerment of women.

Although, in the Assam movement millions of Assamese women came out on the street and participated in the different programmes of the movement, yet their role in the success of the movement did not bear any fruitful result for the women with respect of electoral politics. In 1985 the Assam Accord was signed between the Central Government and the leaders of the Assam Movement. The leaders of the movement formed Asom Gana Parishad, (AGP) - a new regional political party in 1985 and took part in the election to the Assam Legislative Assembly held in the same year. It was

ironical that only two women had received the opportunity to file nomination as candidates of AGP in that election despite millions of Assamese girl students and women participating in the Assam Movement. Although it proved that in the mass movement the participation of women was considered very essential, yet they were virtually kept aloof from the electoral politics. Other national political parties were also reluctant to induct women into the electoral politics of the state.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.1:** Mention the names of any two women's association involved in the Assam Movement.

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**Q.2:** What were the demands raised during the Assam Movement?

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**Q.3:** Write briefly about the role of women as Peacekeeper during the Assam Movement.

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## 14.4 PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE BODOLAND MOVEMENT

The Bodoland Movement has been the most significant tribal movement in contemporary Assam. This movement is rooted in the colonial times but intensified into a radical political, cultural and extremist assertion in the 1980s. Some of the reasons for the emergence of the Bodoland Movement are- feeling of discrimination, deprivation and injustice

experienced by the Bodo community in Assam. During the campaign in order to protect political, economic and cultural identity, the leaders of the Bodoland Movement emphasised that the Bodo people are ethnically different from rest of the people of Assam and hence entitled to political representation in the form of a separate state-Bodoland.

The Bodoland Movement marked the beginning of a political awakening among the Bodo women. With the establishment of the All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Federation (AATWWF) in 1986 later known All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) in 1993, large number of women from villages to towns had joined this organisation as members. Prior to the formation of the AATWWF there were hardly any women in leadership. The AATWWF was the first organisation in which a large number of women participated. The AATWWF was formed under the direct initiative of the leaders like Upendranath Bramha, Sansuma Khungur Bwismithiary, Subhas Basumatary, and Deora Dekhereb Basumatary, of the ABSU. Pramila Rani Brahma was elected as the first president of AATWWF. With the establishment of this federation, it started to function as the women wing to ABSU, aiding the principal actor in taking forward the Bodoland Movement.

Prior to 1994 women's participation in the ABSU movement was negligible. It was more intense only after the movement for implementation of the Roman Script launched in 1994. Alo (pseudo name), one of the prominent AATWWF members, was a close associate of Upendranath Brahma and took active part in mobilising people on the issues of the Movement.

The Bodoland Movement exhibited-two contradictory trends very clearly: non-violent protests through organising mass rallies, processions, protest rallies, hunger strike, road blockade, etc. and the other trend was violent in nature. The ABSU established a military wing (ABSU Volunteer Force) to conduct armed struggle. Dr. Phukan Chandra Bodo and, later Premsingh Brahma, were in-charge of this wing and were designated as 'chairmen'. They were both former executive members of the ABSU. The Bodo Volunteer Force actively participated in the movement from the

beginning. It worked as an underground wing of the ABSU. Its protests were violent in nature. Its volunteers worked as soldiers for the Bodos during the movement. In 1989, the ABSU and the VF leaders expressed the desire to train the women in arms. The women too wanted to join arms training and they did it. This Force required messengers to carry secret messages. Many AATWWF members of different village councils and district committees were involved in this activity. Carrying money for ABSU was also a part of their job. Thus, from 1989 onwards, women joined the Volunteer Force but they were not involved in 'direct action'. They were taught to use the rifle for their own safety. The aim of such training was to provide some measures for their safety. There was no plan to bring them to armed action. But they were told that if situation so demanded they would be called in. They were trained to carry messages and other necessary articles. Bodo leader Upendra Nath Brahma drew large number of women into the freedom struggle. Brahma believed that a society cannot progress without the progress of women. In response to Upendra Nath Brahma's call a large number of women joined in the movement.

The All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation played a very significant role in promoting political as well as cultural consciousness among the Bodo women and performed an even greater role in the political mobilisation of women during the Movement. The Bodo women under the banner of this organisation collectively performed a wide range of activities to support and sustain the Movement. They participated extensively in protests, dharna, gheraos and processions against police and army brutality and state atrocities. A section of women of the organisation also provided indirect support to the Movement by facilitating the active members with food, nursing and healthcare. Therefore, women participation in the Bodoland Movement reflected the diversity of roles that Bodo women could adapt to. Then again, there was this other section of enlightened and educated Bodo women, equipped with managerial and leadership skills, who assisted in disseminating Bodo sub-nationalist values through fiery speeches and skillful mobilisation. Many Bodo women received training in nursing and healthcare by doctors in Primary Healthcare Centres as a part of the larger strategy of

the Movement. These women were to provide nursing and immediate medical aid to the injured activists. Additionally, there was also an emission of literary activities among Bodo women during the Movement. *Songdan*, the first magazine of Bodo women by Bodo women and for Bodo women, was published in 1991 by the AATWWF. The magazine called *Raikhrnuthi* was published in the same year. These magazines were published once in a year and women related issues were of primary concern to them though they also published other writings of women. The editorial board members were women though the writers were not necessarily women. Many renowned Bodo intellectuals, poets, ABSU activists, etc. wrote on women related issues in those magazines. Those articles discussed the contribution of women to the upliftment of the Bodos, involvement of the Bodo women in politics, women's contribution to the development of Bodo society etc.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q.4:** What is the full form of AATWWF?

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**Q.5:** Who was elected as the first president of AATWWF?

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**Q.6:** Write briefly about the role played by the All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation in the Bodoland Movement.

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## 14.5 LET US SUM UP

- The foundation of political participation of women in India was laid during the Freedom Movement. The selfless participation of large number of

women had strengthened the movement. Either directly or indirectly large number of women participated in the freedom struggle. The contribution of women in getting freedom is noteworthy. They proved that women are capable of strengthening the political movement. The participation of women in freedom struggle had its impact on the society and family and on women themselves.

- In Assam too, women participated in large manner in various socio-political movements. Two major movements that occurred in Assam in post-independent period are- the Assam movement and the Bodoland movement. In these two movements participation of women was very encouraging.
- The main demands of the Assam Movement (1979-85) were the demands of locating and expelling illegal migrants from Assam, economic development of the state, safeguarding larger Assamese linguistic and cultural identity, infrastructural development of the state etc. The participation of women from different class, caste and the communal background is one of the most important features of the anti-foreigners' agitation of 1979-85.
- Women were spontaneous participants and they took part in all activities of the Assam Movement, be it *satyagraha*, picketing or procession. One of the important roles played by the women in this movement was the act of fundraising for the sustenance of the movement. Assam Women Writers Association supported the cause of the agitation and pleaded the government not to hold election without correcting voters list which was alleged to comprise of a large number of names of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.
- A number of women's organisations were formed during the Assam Movement, such as Mula Gabhoru Santha, Sanjukta Mahila Sangha (United Women's Association), Satya Sandhya Mahila Sangha (Satya Sandhya Women's Association), Sankari Samaj Mahila Samiti (Sankari Society Women's Committee) etc.

- Another important contribution of women towards the Assam agitation was through their role of "Peacekeepers". During the anti-foreigners' agitation in Assam, thousands of women poured into the streets in support of the agitation and many of them were victims of violence.
- A positive change brought by the Assam Movement on women's lives was their growing political consciousness. Although in the Assam movement millions of Assamese women came out on the street and participated in the different programmes of the movement, yet their role in the success of the movement did not bear any fruitful result for the women in respect of electoral politics.
- The Bodoland Movement marked the beginning of a political awakening among the Bodo women. With the establishment of the All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Federation (AATWWF) in 1986 later known All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) in 1993, large number of women from villages to towns had joined this organisation as members. Pramila Rani Brahma was elected as the first president of AATWWF. With the establishment of this federation, it started to function as the women wing to ABSU, aiding the principal factor in taking forward the Bodoland Movement.
- The ABSU established a military wing (ABSU Volunteer Force) to conduct armed struggle. In 1989, the ABSU and the VF leaders expressed the desire to train the women in arms. This Force required messengers to carry secret messages. Many AATWWF members of different village councils and district committees were involved in this activity. Therefore, from 1989 onwards, women joined the Volunteer Force but they were not involved in 'direct action'. They were taught to use the rifle for their own safety. The aim of such training was to provide some measures for their safety.
- The All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation played a very significant role in promoting political as well as cultural consciousness among the Bodo women and performed an even greater role in the political mobilisation of women during the Movement. The Bodo women under the banner of this organisation collectively performed a wide range of

activities to support and sustain the Movement. They participated extensively in protests, dharna, gheraos and processions against police and army brutality and state atrocities. They also provided food, nursing and healthcare services.



## 14.6 FURTHER READING


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## 14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Mula Gabhoru Santha, Sanjukta Mahila Sangha

**Ans to Q No 2:** The demands raised during the Assam Movement were- the locating and expelling illegal migrants from Assam, economic development of the state, safeguarding larger Assamese linguistic and cultural identity, infrastructural development of the state etc.

**Ans to Q No 3:** One important contribution of women towards the Assam Movement was through their role of "Peacekeepers". During the anti-foreigners' agitation in Assam, thousands of women poured into the streets in support of the agitation and many of them were victims of violence. In such situation, many women's organisations came up who urged for peace. Several Matribahinis (Mother Force) were created to assist those who suffered during the agitation. Samajsewi Matribahini (Social Worker Mother Force) was one such organisation who offered material help to those women who were either molested by Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) *jawans* or lost family members, by granting them hand looms to become self-dependent financially. Purbanchaliya Mahila Sanstha (Northeastern Women's Association) was another organisation involved in helping those who suffered due to the agitation. The women involved in this organisation went from place to place, to offer medical and material support to those injured in conflicts that broke out between the protesters and security forces. By 1981, there was many women's organisation involved in maintaining peace in society. They were protesting against the army and police torture on agitators.

**Ans to Q No 4:** All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Federation

**Ans to Q No 5:** Pramila Rani Brahma

**Ans to Q No 6:** The All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation played a very significant role in promoting political as well as cultural consciousness among the Bodo women and performed an even greater role in the political mobilisation of women during the Movement. The Bodo women under the banner of this organisation collectively performed a wide range of activities to support and sustain the Movement. They participated extensively in protests, dharna, gheraos and processions against police and army brutality and state atrocities. A section of women of the organisation also provided indirect support to the Movement

by facilitating the active members with food, nursing and healthcare.



## 14.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Q. 1 :** In which year was the All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Federation formed?

**Q. 2 :** Mention the name of the military wing of the ABSU.

**Q. 3 :** Mention names of three women's associations formed during the period of the Assam Movement.

**Q. 4 :** Examine the participation of women in the Assam Movement.

**Q. 5 :** Discuss the role of women in the Bodoland Movement.

*** ***** ***



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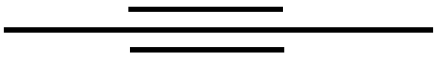
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2) Please give your opinions (by ✓ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

| Sl. No. | Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I) | The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit | | | | | |
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1) Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

.....

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