Approaches to Gender & Development
## APPROACHES TO GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

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BLOCK 2 APPROACHES TO GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

BLOCK 2 consists of three units namely Trends in Feminism; Women in Development (WID)- Women and Development (WAD)-Gender and Development (GAD), part 1 and Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD), part 11.

Unit 1 discusses Trends in Feminism. This unit introduces to forms of feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism, post modern feminism and black feminism. This unit will be the base for our understanding of feminist movement.

Unit 2 is on Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD), part 1. This unit discusses concepts of development and underdevelopment, Boserup’s Thesis, emergence of Women in Development (WID) approach, Three World Conferences on women, Women and Development (WAD) approach, critique of WID and Gender and Development (GAD) approach.

Unit 3 is the second part which discusses Women in Development (WID); Women and Development (WAD ) and Gender and Development (GAD). It also discusses empowerment, gender mainstreaming, gender planning, gender budgeting and gender auditing.
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UNIT 1  TRENDS IN FEMINISM

Structure
1.1   Introduction
1.2   Liberal Feminism
1.3   Marxist Feminism
1.4   Radical Feminism
1.5   Post Modern Feminism
1.6   Black Feminism
1.7   Let Us Sum Up
1.8   References and Suggested Readings
1.9   Check Your Progress-Possible Answers

1.1   INTRODUCTION
The second half of the twentieth century has seen a new impetus to the women’s movement. There are many factors responsible for this. One of the main factors, however, has been the recognition of a common experience of marginalization between various groups of subjugated people, and the development of various subaltern voices and movements that articulate, analyze and protest against the various forms of oppressive power that have left them outside of the mainstream of culture, tradition and life in each situation. The subaltern has realized that it has been perceived as the other, the different, the deviant. This attitude has been the source of its marginalization, the rationalization that justifies the inhuman treatment of human beings by other human beings. At the initial stages of any subaltern movement, the tendency is to accept the value-systems of the dominant group, the mainstream, even while one recognizes that one has been excluded from that mainstream. At this stage, the values of the oppressor remain the yardstick, the paradigm that is the norm, and the subaltern endeavour is to prove itself of value in those terms. Anything you can do, I can do just as well, might well be the slogan of this stage: the subaltern is struggling at this stage to prove that, despite the difference in colour, race, sex, caste, economic situation etc, there is no essential difference between the oppressor and the oppressed. The same humanness characterizes both groups, and given the same opportunities, both would be equally capable of achievement.

The next stage is, perhaps, a more positive one. The subaltern has reached a stage of being able to look more objectively at both sets of value systems, the dominant and the dominated. At this stage, it is possible for the subaltern to appreciate and value even those facets of its culture and tradition in which it most differs from the dominant. This stage involves, then, a recognition and a celebration of what is viewed as the intrinsic value of the subaltern, on its own terms. This, by challenging the monopoly of the dominant value-system, subtly subverts its authority, creating a space for an alternative weltanschauung, an alternative mode of existence and of relating. From margin to center, Bell Hook’s famous phrase (cited in Warhol and Herndl, 1991: 687) might well be the leitmotif of this stage, for with the legitimizing of the alternatives, the peripheries are now centre-stage, the subaltern is now dictating the terms of political correctness.
Together with other subaltern movements, the women’s movement has moved through these stages. When we think of feminism today, we imply three levels of activity:

1) A description of the oppression and subjugation experienced by women and an analysis of its causes.

2) An action-plan or prescription that suggests ways of transforming the situation, so as to liberate and empower women.

3) A celebration of the strengths and gifts of womanhood and an exploration of the alternative ways of functioning that are part of the modus operandi of women. (This point with its suggestion of essentialism in its understanding of woman is hotly debated by feminists of various schools of thought.)

This unit gives an overview of feminism and after reading this unit, you will be able to:

• Understand the meaning of classical and new wave liberalism
• Explain Marxist feminism
• Describe radical feminism
• Analyze post modern feminism

1.2 LIBERAL FEMINISM

1.2.1 Liberal Thought

Liberal feminism draws heavily upon the world-view presented by the liberal humanist philosophy. Very simply, liberal philosophy and liberal political thought hold the opinion that human beings are characterized by the use of reason: liberals tend to define the use in either moral or prudential terms. When the moral aspect is emphasized, the focus is on the value of individual autonomy; when reason is perceived as the best means to a desired end, the value of self-fulfillment is highlighted. A just society then is one, which allows individuals to exercise their autonomy and to fulfill themselves: the ideal state maintains and preserves a system of individual rights, which allows each person to pursue his or her own understanding of the desirable good, provided the rights of no other individual are thereby restricted. Within the liberal framework, there is a distinction between the classical liberals and the welfare liberals. The former expect the state to concentrate on protecting the civil liberties of each citizen, and without interfering with the free market, to provide all individuals with an equal opportunity to function within that market. The latter focus more on the need for positive intervention from the state in order to correct situations of gross injustice that are the legacy of past injustice – e.g. reservations for SC/ST students and candidates for jobs. Welfare liberals assert that without such positive intervention from the state, these individuals would not be able to compete on the open market with even a remote semblance of an equal chance.

1.2.2 Classical Liberal Feminism

This extremely simplistic understanding of liberal political thought gives us a framework for our understanding of the workings of liberal feminism. There has been a shift from the classical position of the early liberal feminists of the 19th century to the welfare liberalism of the 20th century liberal feminists, who are
more concerned with equality of opportunity which would then lead to a redistribution of wealth and thus a further equalization of opportunity for all people.

The Classical Liberal Feminist text is, of course, coined in Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). In this truly revolutionary work, Wollstonecraft asserts that much of what is perceived as “feminine” and biologically determined, is rather a social construct, viz. Gender. While Wollstonecraft does not use these terms, she denies that women are by nature more focused on pleasure and less capable of rationality than men.

She reasoned that if men were confined to the same cages women find themselves locked in, they would develop the same characters. If denied the chance to develop their rational powers, to become moral persons who have concerns, causes and commitments beyond personal pleasure, men would become overly “emotional”… (Tong, 1989)

Wollstonecraft is outraged by the trend in 18th century society to trivialize and de-rationalize the life and education of the affluent middle-class woman. She demands that girls and women be given an education that sharpens and focuses the mind, enabling them to develop their rational and moral capacities. She posits this need not just for utilitarian purposes (women need to be equipped to perform their wifely and motherly duties in a sensible and satisfactory manner!) but also because if rationality is what distinguishes human beings from animals, then, as human beings, girls are entitled to an education that would enable them to develop their human potential to the fullest. Contending for the rights of woman, the main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice.

What Wollstonecraft wanted for women was the right to be fully human, fully autonomous persons. She rebelled against a frame of mind that saw women as mere appendages, created as a means to the end of masculine fulfillment, and she spoke out fiercely against both masculine and feminine reinforcement of this perspective. But though she demands an equal education for women, she seems to overlook the fact that the socio-economic condition of women at the time did not afford them the opportunity to exercise that education in any sphere other than the strictly domestic.

Other liberal thinkers, who spoke out against the subjection particularly of the middle-class woman of the 18th and 19th centuries, were John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill. Writing nearly a hundred years after Wollstonecraft, they join her in celebrating reason. Their liberalism is more conditioned by the utilitarian approach to life, however, and they insist that equality between men and women is only possible if women are accorded the same civil liberties and economic opportunities that men enjoy. Though the two wrote several joint essays, notably on the subject of marriage and the divorce laws of the time, they differed on a number of subjects, especially on issues relating to working women. For instance, while Mill believed that full liberation would be visible when women were allowed to enter and leave the workforce at will, Taylor believed that liberation was only possible when all women were actually working, regardless of financial necessity. Where J S Mill emphasized on the need for education and for collegiality in the formation and administration of laws, Taylor frequently stressed on the
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aspect of an equal partnership in the area of productive work; only so can women be the partners rather than the servants of their husbands. Here both Wollstonecraft and Taylor concentrate on the ordinary woman, tending to downplay the exceptional woman, Mill uses the exceptional woman as proof that makes nonsense of the patriarchal claim that all men are more intelligent, rational and capable than all women. At the same time, all three recognize and seek to counter the double standard that has been set up in society. It is interesting to note that of the three it is Mill who, in The Subjection of Women (1869) makes the most radical claims for woman’s intellect and gifts (attention to detail, use of concrete examples, intuitiveness). It is Mill who makes the most revolutionary assertions about the effects of education and social conditioning on the development of women in psychological and moral terms. It is Mill who analysed in clear-sighted terms, the position of the wife under English law. Yet, oddly, it is Mill who believed that given the possibility of choice, given every opportunity, both educational and economic that would make the choice a viable one, liberated women would still opt to make a career of being a wife and mothering:

Like a man when he chooses a profession, so, when a woman marries, it may in general be understood that she makes choice of the management of a household, and the bringing up of a family, as the first call upon her exertions, during as many years of her life as may be required for the purpose; and that she renounces, not all other objects and occupations, but all which are not consistent with the requirements of this. (Mill, 1982)

The arguments of Wollstonecraft, Taylor and Mill shaped and oriented the women’s movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The suffragette movement, the struggle for women’s education, the efforts to change the legal system in order to achieve a greater equality between men and women, all speak eloquently of the impact of liberal humanism on the women’s movement.

1.2.3 Second Wave Liberal Feminism

The second wave of liberal feminism prevailed during 1950s and 1960s. Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own (1957) with its uncompromising demand for a room, a space that a woman can call her own, in which she can choose to do whatever she wants, and her belief that real creativity can only take place away from the domestic preoccupations that seem a woman’s lot, expressed something of a sense of dissatisfaction with the achievements won so far. This dissatisfaction is underlined by the caustic comparison between the austerity of Fernham (the fictional women’s college described in the essay) and the almost sybaritic luxury of the neighbouring Cantabrigian colleges for men.

In The Feminine Mystique (1963), Betty Friedan points out that the assumption that women can find fulfillment exclusively in the traditional roles/functions of wife and mother is fallacious, leaving middle-class urban housewives with an inner wasteland of emptiness and frustration. This inner misery will inevitably affect their relationships with their husbands and children, creating either resentment and rebellion or an excessive and unhealthy dependence.

Friedan insists that the only way out of this bind is for all women to be equipped with educational and professional qualifications that will enable them to find some meaningful work outside of the home, even if it is only part-time: this is necessary for the physical and emotional health of the women themselves as well
as for their families. While Friedan is not asking women to give up marriage and families of their own in favour of careers, she is combating the assumption that all “normal” women, all “good” women, would choose marriage and motherhood over a career. It is, according to Friedan, possible to combine a commitment to both marriage and motherhood and to a career. Indeed, for many women, both commitments exercise an equal attraction.

This concept she stresses in her book *The Second Stage* (1981):

> In our reaction against the feminine mystique, which defined women solely in terms of their relation to men as wives, mothers and homemakers, we sometimes seemed to fall into a feminist mystique which denied that core of women’s personhood that is fulfilled through love, nurture, home. (Friedan, 1981)

In recommending that women can and should opt for both family and career, she recommends that concepts like flexi time be introduced in the workplace. At the same time, however, she still continues to perceive the tasks of homemaking and childrearing as being the responsibility of women. Like her predecessors, Friedan too had sent women out into the public sphere before an adequate sharing out of domestic responsibilities between men and women. This tendency she tries to correct in her second book by balancing “women’s assimilation into the workplace with a counter assimilation of men into the family” (Tong, 1989). Liberal feminists today occupy various positions, ranging from the classical liberal to the welfare liberal, both of which rely heavily on legal interventions and remedies to redress the inequalities between sexes/genders.

**1.2.4 Limitations of the Liberal Approach**

One criticism leveled against the liberal feminists is that all too often their interiorization of masculine ideals and value-systems has resulted in their substituting masculine for human. By insisting that women are just as capable of rationality and efficiency as men, they are reinforcing a value-system that valorizes these qualities over and above the so-called feminine qualities of sensitivity, nurturing and tenderness. The liberals seem to believe that women want to be like men. Instead, claim other feminists, there is a value and powers to the “roles” of mother and wife that transcend the patriarchal attempt to institutionalize them and thus control the exercise of these functions and identities.

Mothering is *not* a “role” on par with being a file clerk, a scientist, or a member of the Air Force. Mothering is a complicated, rich, ambivalent, vexing, joyous activity which is biological, natural, social, symbolic and emotional. It carries profoundly resonant emotional and sexual imperatives. A tendency to downplay the differences that pertain between, say, mothering and holding a job, not only drains our private relations of much of their significance, but also over-simplifies what can or should be done to alter things for women, who are frequently urged to change roles in order to solve their problems. (Elshtain, 1981)

The socialist feminists level yet another criticism against the liberals. Not only have liberal feminists been too ready to accept and own masculine values, their very idea of the self as an autonomous, rational agent is a fundamentally male concept. Other ways of perceiving and defining the human person could use the framework of relationships and kinship, could valorize qualities other than rationality, could stress “being” rather than “agency” as the key condition of humanness.
Western liberal thought has accepted a dualistic view of the world, which creates a problem for feminists, since this tends to devalue activities and functions related to the body, at the expense of those related to the mind. (The former are usually associated with women, where the latter are associated with men.) At the same time, the liberal view of the world can lead to two questionable assumptions:

- The rational, autonomous person is seen as being isolated, with needs and interests separate from, and even in opposition to, those of every other individual.
- By placing such a premium on human liberty and the individual’s rights, the liberals seem to believe that there is no common answer to the fundamental questions of political philosophy.

Socialist feminists assert that all persons are in community and it is the network of relatedness in these communities that shape the individual.

1.2.5 Contribution to the Women’s Movement

However, in spite of its limitations, liberal feminism has contributed much to the women’s movement. It was the liberal feminists who agitated for and won educational and legal reforms that have changed life so drastically for women, who enabled women to attain a professional and occupational stature within the workplace. That there is more to feminism is undeniable, but we cannot afford to trivialize their efforts, or even to relegate them to the past, for the struggle to ensure that all women benefit from educational, legal and professional reforms, still continues.

In this section you studied liberal feminism. Now, you should be able to answer some questions relating to this section given in Check Your Progress 1.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Answer the following questions in about 50 words.

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by liberal feminism?

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2) What is the contribution of liberal feminism to women’s movement?

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1.3 MARXIST FEMINISM

1.3.1 Foundations of Marxist Feminism

The parallels between Marxism and feminism are immediately apparent. Where Marxism offers the working-classes or the proletariat, first, the tools for analysis of the causes of and reasons for their oppression, and second, the means whereby they can redress these inequalities and exploitation, feminism offers women a similar agenda: analysis, followed by strategies for empowerment. In its articulation of “historical materialism”, Marxism fosters the development of a “class consciousness” that draws together similarly situated people with the same needs, problems and aspirations, through an arduous process of shared reflection and struggle. The class consciousness enables workers to recognize that their interests, concerns and problems are shared by all their fellow-workers, and the best interests of all would be served by mutual support and solidarity, rather than by competing against each other. Feminism, too, makes evident that, while patriarchy is not a monolith (its manifestations vary from society to society, from community to community), yet all women experience subjugation and oppression in one form or another, and our best interests will be served by sisterhood and solidarity rather than by rivalry and antagonism inspired and reinforced by patriarchal structures.

Though Marxists in general treat women’s oppression as part of and secondary to their primary concern – the oppression of the worker – Engels addressed the problem of why women are oppressed in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). He traces the origins of the family and its subsequent development through complex and highly cohesive clan and joint family systems to the splintered nuclear family of his time (and of the present day). He ascribes the movement from one stage to the next to changes in the mode of production. From the earliest and most primitive form of subsistence, when the work of each member of the tribe was essential for the survival of all, and gender relations were characterized by what he calls “promiscuous intercourse”, the human race moved to a state of pairing-for-life, or marriage, because of the biological need to exclude the possibility of intercourse with various kinds of blood relatives and the subsequent reduction in the number of women available to each man. In the earlier stages, this pairing-for-life meant that the man would go into the woman’s house and live there with her: societies at this stage, Engels suggests, tend to be matrilineal and even matriarchal in organization, with much economic, social and political power invested in women.

With the domestication of animals and the breeding of herds, the site of production shifted from the household to outside. New wealth was generated, this time controlled by men, and women lost much of the power they once had. As the work of men gained in economic importance and prestige, there was a concomitant decrease in the value and importance ascribed to women’s work. More important, with the generation of an actual surplus controlled by men, they suddenly wanted to ensure that their wealth was transmitted to *their* children. As Engels put it, “mother-right had to be overthrown, and overthrown it was”.

This move was pivotal and constituted “the world-historic defeat of the female sex”, according to Engels. Man took charge of the household by virtue of his economic power: “he is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat”.

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Further, since biologically, motherhood is easily proved, while paternity – until the days of DNA testing – remained a belief, it was necessary to curtail and control women’s sexuality, so that men could ensure that only their own children would inherit their wealth. So sprang up an ideological superstructure, with many accretions of mythic prescriptions and scriptural dicta through the centuries: a superstructure that valorized chastity and fidelity, equating these with virtue among women.

As societies move from the pastoral/nomadic to slave societies and thence to the feudal system, as wealth is concentrated more and more in the hands of men, as ideological and institutional superstructures continue to buttress men’s power, women’s inferior position is reinforced, and over the years, internalized and transmitted to future generations by women themselves. However, as Engels points out, while societies remained agrarian, women’s work was still of direct economic value and they retained a degree of importance in the community. It is only with industrialization and capitalism that the devaluation of women is complete. Once workplace and home are separated, once women’s work no longer brings in direct economic advantage to family and community, women are reduced to nonentities. Interestingly, Engels holds that this devaluation is more acute among bourgeois women than among proletarian women, whose labour is visibly necessary for the survival of the family. In fact, he compares the bourgeois marriage to “the crassest prostitution” in which the wife “sells her body into slavery once and for all”.

Tracing much of the evil of women’s position to the institution of private property and the consequent development of the monogamous marriage, Engels argues that women’s liberation can only take place with the abolition of private property, and with women gaining economic independence from men. He posits the need for, first, the reintroduction of women into public industry and, second, the socialization of housework and child-rearing.

### 1.3.2 Other Key Elements in Marxist Feminism

Other key elements in the Marxist concepts are also crucial in shaping the Marxist feminists understanding of the oppressive forces at work in patriarchy. Marxists believe that the supremely humanizing activity is work, i.e. the transformation of our environment in order to produce our means of subsistence. Men and women through their work create a society that then shapes them. Not consciousness but material existence determines our perceptions and patterns of living. The forces of production and the relations of production generate a superstructure that in turn supports and sanctions the mode of production that has generated it. This concept is taken up and emphasized by Marxist feminists who point out that the nature of woman’s work and her role both in family and at workplace reinforce her social and economic subordination to men.

According to Marxist theory, capitalism is not a system of voluntary exchange relations, as the Liberal view has it. Rather, it is a system of exploitative power relations. The employers’ monopoly over the means of production enables them to exploit the workers. The surplus value generated by the worker, i.e. the difference between the wage he is paid and the value that is actually created by his work, forms the capitalists profit. Workers may be free in that there is no overt coercion forcing them to work at a particular job (as there would be in slavery). But is the worker really free? If the choice is between accepting the job offered by the capitalist or starving, what becomes of the freedom?
Apart from the monopoly capitalists exercise over the means of production, they also exercise another tactic to bolster their exploitation of the workers. By presenting the view that all life is a colossal network of exchange relations, capitalist ideologues lead workers and employers to accept what Marx termed “the fetishism of commodities” as one of the imponderable givens in life. Thus the exercise of power that underlies the surface exchange transaction is obscured. Marxist feminists claim that even as this fetishism of commodities deludes the worker, it provides a theoretical underpinning for the easy acquiescence of society in such relations as prostitution and surrogate motherhood, seeing them as being an exercise in free choice. How free is the woman who “decides” to sell her sexual or reproductive services only because she has nothing else to offer in the marketplace?

Marxist class analysis, too, has enabled feminists to understand their own oppression better, while at the same time raising the pertinent question of whether women in themselves constitute a class. There is, assert Marxist feminists, a vertical division of gender that cuts across the horizontal stratification of class; an oppression and a marginalization experienced by all women regardless of their economic condition (or rather, the economic condition of father, husband, son). Though the ways in which this is experienced may differ, the fact of its existence is universal. It is this that enables women to perceive themselves as a class. The feminist struggle, both for equal wages and in campaigns like the one for “Wages for Housework” has helped women move towards a class consciousness that rejects as consciousness all attempts to convince them that wifely and motherly duties cannot be recompensed as work because they are undertaken out of love. Marxist feminists also point out that though women’s work under capitalism is trivialized and women seen primarily as consumers rather than producers, they are in fact primarily producers.

Alienation is yet another concept that gained special significance in Marxist ideology and has served Marxist and Socialist feminists well as a unifying concept. Marxist thought identifies multiple levels of alienation experienced by workers under capitalism:

- Alienation from the product of their labour which is no longer determined or controlled by themselves
- Alienation from themselves, since the supremely humanizing activity has been reduced to a monotonous, repetitive, soul-deadening exercise on the assembly-line
- Alienation from other human beings who could have been colleagues and friends, but have been turned into competitors and enemies
- Alienation from nature since the very process of industrialization has resulted in a perception of nature as a threat or an obstacle to survival.

Marxist and Socialist feminists, like Ann Foreman and Alison Jaggar, show that not only does all this apply to woman as worker, it also applies to her very being as woman. The reification of woman and especially of the female body, as a result of the combination of patriarchy and capitalism, has created multiple layers of alienation experienced by woman. She is alienated from her own body, from herself, from other women and from nature, as she works away at her body, struggling to make it conform to an externally-imposed standard of perfection.
Motherhood, too, becomes institutionalized, and often becomes an alienating experience in a similar manner, as does the attempt to exercise her intellectual capabilities in the academic world.

1.3.3 Limitations of Marxist Feminism

Convincing as Engels argument appears, it has been challenged by feminists. As Millett points out:

Engels ignores the fact that woman is viewed, emotionally and psychologically, as chattel property by the poor as well as, and often even more than, the rich. Lacking other claims to status a working class male is still more prone to seek them in sexual rank, often brutally asserted. (Millett, 1990)

Simone de Beauvoir, tracing the oppression of women to their position as the Other in her book *The Second Sex*, insists that the relations between men and women will not automatically change with the change from capitalism to socialism, for women are just as likely to remain the Other in the latter as in the former. Engels’s assertion that men’s will to power may be traced to the institution of private property is erroneous, she claims: “If the human consciousness had not included …an original aspiration to dominate the Other, the invention of the bronze tool could not have caused the oppression of women.” (de Beauvoir, 1986)

Marxist feminists themselves raise objections to Engels’s theory. In an article entitled “Do Feminists Need Marxism?” (Flax, 1981), Jane Flax holds that Engels has stressed the importance of production at the expense of reproduction. She is convinced that the overthrow of mother-right probably reflected a change in the perception of reproduction (“such as men discovering their role in reproduction and/or asserting control over reproduction”) as much as in the method of production.

Another flaw in Engels theory is that he does not in any way explain why women were charged with household work while men engaged in productive work, the sexual division of labour, for Engels as for Marx, seems to originate with “the division of labour in the sexual act”. However, Socialist feminists like Alison Jaggar protest that this would seem to imply that there is no hope of abolishing the sexual division of labour as long as the “division of labour in the sex act” remains unchanged. (Jaggar, 1983)

1.3.4 Contribution to the Women’s Movement

While classical Marxist ideology would suggest that women’s oppression is but one aspect of the exploitation of the worker and that both would be redressed when capitalism is replaced by socialism, feminists have disagreed with this from the earliest days. Marching side by side with their brothers in protest against injustice, they found that even the champions of workers’ rights were unable at times to perceive the nature of the injustice experienced by women. From the earliest revolutionaries in Russia – Alexandra Kollontai, Clara Zetkin and others – to the present day Socialists, feminists realized that there is a real need for women to understand the forms that oppression takes in the “private” as well as the “public” domain. Recognizing that patriarchy has predated capitalism and will probably outlive it, Socialist feminists combine the firm material base offered by Marxist analysis with the insights offered by psychoanalytical and radical feminists to arrive at a more holistic understanding of an oppression and injustice that touches every aspect of women’s lives. Yet, by grounding the discourse in a
solid material base, Marxism has rooted the feminist movement in reality and enabled it to join hands with all other liberation movements.

In this section you studied Marxist feminism. Now, you should be able to answer some questions relating to this section given in Check Your Progress 2.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Answer the following questions in about 50 words.
   b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by Marxist feminism?

2) What are the limitations of Marxist feminism?

1.4 RADICAL FEMINISM

1.4.1 Definition

Radical feminism is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, or, more specifically, social dominance of women by men.

Radical feminism views patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges and power primarily by gender, and as a result suppressing women and privileging men. (Jone Johnson Lewis). The “Feminists”, a group of radical feminists formed in New York in October 1968, said in their manifesto: “women”, or “female”, were the first class to be separated out from humanity and thus denied their humanity.

The “Second wave” radical feminism has from the beginning been concerned with forms of oppression which affect the life chances and human dignity of women, that is, with all forms of oppression. By attributing all forms of oppression to male domination, the early radical feminist accounts linked these together, and provided the beginning of framework for understanding all forms of invidious hierarchical distinctions between categories of human beings. Denise Thompson asserts that this early radical feminist account was never challenged, despite its intrinsic faults.

One of those problems was a tendency to locate the primacy of male domination in “history”. The oppression of women, it was argued, provided the model for all
other forms of oppression because it happened first in human history. Women were the first social group to be enslaved. Once men learned that other human beings, namely women, could be enslaved, they applied that model to other groups of men.

Shulamith Firestone said:

“The natural reproductive difference between the sexes led directly to the first division of labour at the origins of class, as well as furnishing the paradigm of caste (discrimination based on biological characteristics)…[Radical feminism] see feminist issues not only as women’s first priority, but as central to any larger revolutionary analysis…the current leftist analysis…does not relate the structures of the economic class system to its origins in the sexual class system, the model for all other exploitive systems, and thus the tapeworm which must to be eliminated first by any true revolution.” (Firestone, 1981)

A poster for Radical Feminism

Fight porn culture!

Feminists were not convinced by the rationale that was repeatedly provided by male politicos that the liberation of women could wait until after the socialist revolution, that, because women’s subordination was connected to the private ownership of the means of production, the abolition of that private ownership would automatically mean the abolition of women’s subordination.

For radical feminists the aim was not simply to establish political priorities, although it was certainly that. It was also a radically different way of looking at the world, from the male dominant status quo. It placed the interests of women first, and from that standpoint spoke in the name of the universal human by asserting that the overcoming of women’s subordination would mean the overcoming of all other forms of subordination as well. For Ti-Grace Atkinson, for example, the oppression of women by men created a world where no one could be free:

*A human being is not born from the womb; it must create itself. It must be free, self-generative. A human being must feel that it can grow in a world where injustice, inequality, hatred, sadism are not directed at it. No person can grow into a life within these conditions: it is enough of a miracle to survive as a functioning organism.*

Radical feminism does not accept existing political and social organization in general because they are tied to patriarchy. Instead, it supports cultural change
that undermines patriarchy and associated hierarchical structures. Radical feminism opposes patriarchy, not men. To equate radical feminism to man-hating is to assume that patriarchy and men are inseparable, philosophically and politically.

Where liberal feminism focused on the issue of equal opportunities for women, in law, in education, etc., and Marxist feminism concentrated on the issue of the economic exploitation of women and the systematic devaluation of women’s work, radical feminism explores a number of different topics – art, religion, literature, ecology, reproduction and mothering, sexuality and so on. The work of radical feminists has illumined a number of areas, and has transformed our perceptions of many things that we have hitherto taken for granted. But whatever area of human life the radical feminist discusses, each of them agrees on one thing: the oppression of women is “the first, the most widespread and the deepest form of human oppression”

Liberal feminist thinking is a more reasoned, intellectual perspective than the radical feminist position, which has both emotional and political centering in its logical expressions. It has been said about the radical feminists that their tactics and their philosophy are inseparable.

This is understandable, since their focus is on widespread cultural awakening rather than on scholarly debate. Their political vibrancy comes in part from the fact that (1) they are saying something relevant and true about men that can almost universally be appreciated by women, and (2) their logical standards are predicated on politics rather than precise theory and thus they become the be-all and end-all for a diversity of people.

Gerda Lerner defines the radical position in the following manner:

“Reforms and legal changes, while ameliorating the condition of women and an essential part of the process of emancipating them, will not basically change patriarchy. Such reforms need to be integrated within a vast cultural revolution in order to transform patriarchy and thus abolish it.”

Symbol of Radical Feminism

The oppression of women by men is assumed to be of the same intensity among all men, yet obviously as Imelda Whelehan has pointed out, “Men have different degrees of access to [the] mechanisms of oppression”. Radical feminism focuses on men as oppressors, yet says little about the possibility of the woman being an oppressor of other women or of men. Radical feminists do not view prostitution as a harmless private transaction. On the contrary, they believe that it reinforces and perpetuates the objectification, subordination, and exploitation of women. They see men as universally believing myths regarding their own sexuality. Two myths are: (1) that men need more sex than women and (2) that they are genetically the stronger sex and therefore should be dominant in relationships with women. Feminist writer Alison M. Jaggar describes the radical feminist view as one in which “almost every man/woman encounter has sexual overtones and typically is designed to reinforce the sexual dominance of men”. According to the radical
feminist view, “men are socialized to have sexual desires and to feel entitled to have those desires met, whereas women are socialized to meet those desires and to internalize accepted definitions of femininity and sexual objectification.” As men cling to the idea that their sexuality is an absolute expression of their need and dominance, they prevent women from effecting new attitudes, self-realizations, and behaviors.

As discussed earlier, when radical feminists speak of “degradation,” they inappropriately apply the term in ethical statements setting forth right or wrong behaviour. What they mainly are talking about is degradation in a social sense and not a moral sense, although they allude to their ideas as morally sound. In a social sense, they seem to see degradation as existing over a broad spectrum of society in which everything that men do, from opening doors for women to sexual assault, reinforces their view of men as “dominating.”

In spite of the fact that radical feminists tend to overemphasize concepts such as degradation, they appear to be more than compensate for it by making several assertions that have high credibility. One of these assertions is that human sexuality derives essentially from culture and not from biology. This idea is reasonable and consistent with contemporary biological theories which emphasize the role of culture rather than genetics in viewing the evolution of human societies. For example, zoologist Theodosius Dobzhansky would recognize the radical feminist assertion framed in biological and genetic terms. He views “culture as an instrument of human adaptation that is virtually inseparable from biology. “Dobzhansky separates biological and cultural theories into three categories: ectogenic, autogenic, and biological.” Thus, there is a certain degree of support for the radical feminist view that people are not necessarily responding to biological forces that are exclusive of cultural influences. In the same way that biological knowledge can expand the ground of support for the arguments of feminists, so too can the study of ethics. The exploitation and oppression of human being is considered to be an immoral act. Once women’s oppression is framed in moral terms, it becomes easier to understand that there are other moral influences that can cause and exacerbate oppression.

1.4.2 The Influences That Have Shaped Radical Feminism

Simone de Beauvoir’s Second Sex was a pioneering work that shaped many of the thought processes that influenced several other feminist scholars, like Kate Millett, who took up De Beauvoir’s ideas.

As Rosi Braidotti lucidly points out in her book Nomadic Subjects this description of the difference between men and women resulted in a dichotomy were ‘normal subjectivity’ is masculine subjectivity which is then phallogocentric, universal, rational, capable of transcendence, self-regulating, conscious and denying bodily origins, whereas the female is then conceived as the lack, the other-than-the-subject (which is then seen as an automatical devaluation), irrational, uncontrolled, immanent and identified with the body. De Beauvoir thus thought that the best feminist political and theoretical thing to do for women was to gain the same entitlement to subjectivity as men. Women thus had to go for transcendence and rationality in order to bring their existence, which De Beauvoir thought as being yet unrepresented, into representation.

This idea of ‘woman’ as lack is closely connected to the model of power as developed by Marx and which was also taken over by various feminist scholars
Trends in Feminism

in order to describe the oppression of women in a patriarchal society and the feminist answer to this. In Marx’ view, power consisted of the binary “oppressors versus oppressed”. The oppressors are then the groups who have something (power that is) and the oppressed group are the mere victims of the oppressors. In her groundbreaking article De Lauretis states that thinking of gender as sexual difference now keep feminist theory stuck in a patriarchal dichotomy which therefore gets universalized: woman as the difference from man. This concept prohibits analyzing differences among women, let alone differences within women, says De Lauretis; feminist theory is thus complicit to the sustaining of a binary that is invoked by patriarchal ideology. She gives a critique of feminist theory working with the Marxist notion of power relations, as it relies on a universal and homogeneous oppression of women prior to their entry in the social and historical field. Furthermore, this concept of gender as sexual difference keeps attempts of radical feminist thinking of conceiving the subject in a totally different way, in this case other than the dominant ‘masculine’ notion of rational and unified subjectivity, at a long distance. De Lauretis thus draws attention to the epistemological framework with which feminist theory was working. Women are not the mere victims of patriarchal oppression as their historical and cultural backgrounds give them a certain amount of agency in their specific patriarchal ideologies for as we can see with the Foucaulian model of power, power has also a positive side to it as you are not only subjected to it but it also gives you a potency for certain entitlements. In other words, because of ideology and power structures you can make an investment to work out your subjectivity. The next question then will be, of course, whose investments yield more relative power.

A shift rather similar to De Lauretis’ one, only on a different field, is taken up by Chandra Mohanty in her article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”. In short, she uses this De Lauretis-shift not only on gender, but also on ethnicity, thus proposing an anti-white-centrism (as De Lauretis was proposing an anti-hetero-centrism). In this article Mohanty wants to give a criticism of hegemonic Western scholarship on the big scale and of the colonialism in Western feminist scholarship in particular. In fact, she does a renaming of the feminist position coming from the post-colonialist other.

This project as well as De Lauretis’ project are typical for feminist theory in the eighties which was a reaction to certain ideas in feminist theory in the seventies. The 19th Amendment, which was passed in 1920, is seen as the marking point of the separation between liberal feminists and radical feminists. Some aspects of its philosophy might be seen to have their roots in the American cultural feminist tradition in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There seem to be particular links with the works of Charlotte PerkinsGilman, and her woman-identified utopia Herland (1911).

The locus of radical activism has traditionally been the consciousness-raising (CR) group. In the early 70’s, these consensus-based groups concluded that the linchpin of patriarchy is the institution of heterosexuality and the nuclear family. As long as society eroticizes male dominance and female subordination and thinks women’s unpaid family labour is a fair deal, we’re not going to have real justice. With such startling insights, no wonder both the FBI and the Socialist Workers Party planted provocateurs in these groups. However, most radicals will admit that other problems also weakened the movement.
1.4.3 What Are the Variations of Radical Feminism?

Radical feminism is known for its activism. It popularized the slogan, “Personal is the Political”. Some of those actions can be seen as staged sit-ins, acted out dramatizations, and marches. There are essentially two forms of radical feminism: radical-libertarian and radical-cultural feminists.

i) Radical-Libertarian Feminism

According to Tong, Radical-Libertarian feminists tend to hold the Radical feminist views of the 1960's and 1970's. They often argue that women’s reproductive capabilities and sexual roles and responsibilities serve to oppress them in a patriarchal society, and limit their ability to be full human persons. They long for androgyny and hence embrace reproductive technologies as they can help women escape from the chains of motherhood and childbirth. As we shall see, radical-libertarian feminists are convinced the fewer women are involved in the reproductive process, the more time and energy they will have to engage in society’s productive processes. Beliefs stem from the idea that gender is an aspect that is separated from sex, and that male dominated societies place unyielding gender rules to control women. Patriarchy is the primary oppressor, not individual men. They believe that deconstruction of the nuclear family in favour of the communal family and contracted motherhood would also break chains of mothering stereotypes.

ii) Radical-Cultural Feminism

This group of feminists sees femaleness as empowering and therefore believe women should embrace the values traditionally associated with femininity such as community, sharing, and body to name a few. Radical-cultural feminists see women’s power to create new life as the ultimate source of our power and believe it is in women’s best interests to procreate naturally.

Radical-cultural feminists theorize that women’s oppression is not caused by female biology and reproductive possibilities but rather by men’s jealousy of women’s reproductive abilities and their desire to control them through new reproductive technologies. Many earlier Radical feminists believed that reproduction was at the root of women’s oppression and that we would be emancipated if we could free ourselves from “the tyranny of reproduction”. At that point in time, “Technology was viewed as liberating women”. Things have changed since those days, and today the more popular consensus is that technology is not the liberation Radical feminists thought it would be. Instead of freeing women, our bodies are simply being controlled by men in even greater capacities in the areas of in-vitro fertilization, artificial insemination and other technological methods of reproduction by predominantly male doctors and scientists. This however cannot be said for all Radical feminists.

Radical-cultural feminists conclude that the idea of heterosexuality is male domination over females, and it sets the stage for a number of vices such as rape, sexual harassment, abuse, and prostitution. They also believe that men should be educated about women, and shown that their attitudes are detrimental to women. Only after this could men and women band together to change patriarchy. Susan Brownmiller in her book, “Against Our Will” has done a threadbare analysis of rape.
1.4.4 The Outcomes of This Movement

Radical feminists chose both theory and practice and a combination of the personal and political as a means by which women might transform their lifestyles. They were also militant in their approach for social transformation. The belief that radical feminism needs to question every single aspect of our lives that we have previously accepted as normal/given/standard/acceptable and to find new ways of doing things, resulted in a speech for alternative lifestyles removed from the stifling effects of patriarchy. Communes, businesses, cafés, women’s festivals and other women-only concerns were established to allow women to pursue and construct their own identities unfettered by pre-given social institutions such as the family, marriage and domestic labour. Womyn is one of a number of alternative spellings of the word “women”. “Womyn” will be used for simplicity, although there are many alternative spellings, including “womon” and “womin”. The term has been used in modern times tied to the concept of feminism, as a form of the word without the connotations of a patriarchal society.

Betty Frieden was a leading figure in the “Second Wave” of the U.S. Women’s Movement. Her book *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963 is sometimes credited with sparking the “second wave” of feminism. Friedan co-founded National Organization for Women in 1966 which aimed to bring women “into the mainstream of American society now [in] fully equal partnership with men”. In 1970, Friedan organized the nation-wide Women’s Strike for Equality on August 26, the 50th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution granting women the right to vote. The national strike was successful beyond expectations in broadening the feminist movement. The New York City march alone attracted over 50,000 women. Friedan joined other leading feminists (including Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, Fannie Lou Hamer, Bella Abzug, and Myrlie Evers-Williams) in founding the National Women’s Political Caucus in 1971.

All radical feminists agreed upon the need for separatism, but the scale of separatism varied considerably, ranging from political separatism (women-only discussion groups, dealing purely with issues that affect women), to complete separatism (communes, etc.) – or as complete as was economically or practically viable. Separatism is one of the most lambasted features of radical feminist policy.

1.4.5 Critiques of Radical Feminism

The most common criticism of radical feminism is that its view of patriarchy remains un-interrogated. Critiques feel that many of its arguments lapse into biologics of a reductive kind, and its focus on women’s personal experiences makes it politically ineffectual, or at worst prescriptive – if, for example, it is seen to argue that “lesbian sexuality does serve as a paradigm for female sexuality”. It lacks meta-theory but does not question subordination – domination relationship between women of different classes, castes, race, religions and ethnic backgrounds.

1.4.6 Contribution to the Women’s Movement

We cannot deny however, that the contribution of radical feminism to the women’s movement has been immense. They have transformed perceptions of our own bodies, our sexuality, our understanding of the ways in which we have been shaped and conditioned by the patriarchal society we inhabit; they have highlighted the connections between these and pornography, rape, wife-battering, child-abuse, as
well as the impact of the technological invasion into the area of reproduction on
the role and status of women. One of their most important contributions has been
to bring the issue of violence against women in the public domain. Rape is shown
as a patriarchal way to keep women in a perpetual state of terrorization, humiliation,
degradation and subjugation.

Radical feminists have pushed for many women’s rights we know today, such as
contraceptives, improvements to the Pill, legalization of abortion, and in-vitro
fertilization. Radical feminists gained a lot of ground and respect from the LGBT
movements, in helping to ease the fear and hate of homosexuality.

1.5 POST MODERN FEMINISM

Postmodern feminism has often been termed French feminism, since most of its
significant practitioners have been French. However, today it is a term that is
applicable to all those who use a certain methodology – deconstruction – and
who share a philosophical perspective that is characterized by certain features
that were first articulated by theorists like Derrida, Foucault and others.

1.5.1 Postmodern Feminists

For the postmodern feminists, the basic premise is that woman, ‘the Other’, the
feminine, has been left unthematized and silent in the gap that blocks the union
between language and reality. The three main figures – Cixous, Irigaray and
Kristeva – who have been responsible for postmodern feminism as we know it
today, though the ideas and the orientation have been taken over and further
developed by later feminists.

Helene Cixous is a novelist experimenting with literary style as well as a literary
theorist. She applies Derrida’s notion of difference to writing, and contrasts
literature, which she associates with white, European, ruling class and patriarchal
structures, with lecrite feminine. She objects to the binary oppositions and the
dichotomies that abound in masculine writing and thought. These “dual hierarchized
oppositions,” as she terms them in “Sorties” (Lodge, 1990:287) find their
inspiration in the fundamental opposition between man and woman in which the
first is the concept and the second, the deviation. Man is the self, she claims, in
the same essay, woman is his Other. Thus woman exists in man’s world on his
terms. She is either the Other for man, or she is unthought. After man is done
thinking about woman, “what is left of her is unthinkable, unthought.” (Lodge,
1990: 288)

Cixous challenges women to write themselves out of the world men have
constructed by putting into words, the unthinkable, the unthought. According to
her, men’s writing, in being canonised, has been petrified. It cannot move or
change. Women’s writing is characterized by marking, scratching, scribbling,
jotting, which makes of it a Heraclitean ever changing river. In “The Laugh of the
Medusa”, she asserts that women’s writing holds within itself “the very possibility
of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the
precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural standards” (Warhol
and Herndl, 1991: 337)

Cixous also draws analogies between male sexuality and masculine writing, on
the one hand, and female sexuality and feminine writing, on the other. The former
are both characterized by a pointedness and singularity which is, for Cixous, ultimately limited and boring. The latter are open and multiple, varied and rhythmic, full of pleasures and possibilities. “Her writing can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours….Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible.” (Warhol and Herndl, 1991). Cixous’s own writings are characterized by optimism and a joy that are lacking in both Derrida (who believed that logocentrism is inevitable) and Lacan (for whom the phallus will always dominate). Cixous, in contrast, believes that we can escape our dichotomous prisons, and that women can lead the revolt that will liberate men and women alike. “Now women return from afar, from always: from “without”, from the heath where witches are kept alive; from beneath, from beyond culture.” (Warhol and Herndl, 1991: 335)

The next key figure in this school is Luce Irigaray, who further developed and challenged Lacanian ideals. For her, the feminist enterprise was to empower women to move into the subject position – becoming “subjects and protagonists of their own reality, rather than objects and antagonists in the Father’s drama.” The quest is to discover the feminine feminine (as opposed to a patriarchal construct of femininity) that has been entrapped in an Imaginary stage full of untapped possibilities; to enable mothers and daughters and wives to become women.

Irigaray suggests three strategies of subversion. First, she invites women to develop and deepen their awareness of language and to discover a language that is neither masculine nor “neutral” (there is no such stance, it merely gives one the illusion of objectivity). Next, she invites us to an exploration of the multi-faceted terrain of the human body in order that we may find ways of expressing women’s experience, and learn to speak words, think thoughts, that will blow the phallus over and set the feminine feminine free. And finally, she suggests that we mime – and exaggerate – the roles men have imposed upon women. This subtle secular move, mirroring the mimicry of all women, subverts the effects and the authority of phallocentric discourse, simply by making the process conscious through exaggeration.

At the same time, there is a tension between the conviction that we must end the process of labeling and categorizing, and the antithetical conviction that we cannot help but engage in this.

The third feminist in this group is Julia Kristeva, who shares similar orientation with the other two, but at the same time disagrees with them. Primarily, she disagrees with the collapse of language into biology as being part of the patriarchal straitjacket. The equation of male author and literatur, female author and lecriture feminin is rejected, for Kristeva insists that boys can identify with mothers and girls with fathers. Boys can exist and write in a feminine mode and girls in a masculine mode.

Another point of difference between the other two and Kristeva is that the latter adheres radically to the notion that even if the feminine exists, it must not be. “Woman, as such, does not exist,” she proclaims. Concepts like “woman” and “the feminine” are rooted in the essentialist philosophy that deconstruction seeks to deconstruct. At the same time, the fact that woman cannot be on this deeper level – always becoming, never being – allies her with other marginalized “misfit” groups: minorities, Jews, homosexuals, etc. Kristeva was preoccupied with the scapegoating of such groups, which she held was grounded in the “abject” – a
sense of irrational disgust traceable to pre-Oedipal experiences of excrement, blood and mucus. As a sense of sex difference develops, this becomes associated with “the feminine”. Society’s fundamental problem is with the abject: the feminine is just one angle of it.

Kristeva wants society to come to terms with the abject. All that has been marginalized, repressed by culture - the discourses of madness, of the maternal, the sexual, the irrational – must release their energies into language. She links social revolution to poetic revolution: “the historical and political experiences of the twentieth century have demonstrated that one cannot be transformed without the other,” she asserts in Revolution in Poetic Languages (1982).

Using Lacan’s framework, Kristeva posits a contrast between the “semiotic” and the “symbolic”. Phallogocentric thought is based on a repression of the semiotic (and by extension, of the sexually unidentified pre-Oedipal maternal body). Maternal space is characterized by a different perception of time. Where symbolic time is historical, linear, pointing to a goal, semiotic time is cyclic, monumental, rhythmic and eternal. Symbolic writing, too is linear, rational, objective, repressed, decent, with normal syntax. Semiotic writing emphasizes rhythm, sound, colour, with breaks in syntax and grammar; unpressed, it has room for the repugnant, the horrific. A truly liberated person is able to acknowledge the interplay of the semiotic and the symbolic, the continual vacillation between chaos and order, and is able to avail of both with equal facility.

1.5.2 Limitations of Postmodern Feminism

The postmodern feminists have been criticized on several grounds. They seem to delight in their own opacity and are often dismissed as ivory-tower academicians, irrelevant to the majority of women who cannot even access their work.

The content of their work seems to border on a kind of biological essentialism, preaching the salvation of women through women’s bodies. However, this may be a matter of inadequate translation, since most postmodern feminists do maintain that there is a difference between woman as a biological entity and woman as a social construct. Further there seems to be a valorization of female and feminine over male and masculine which could result in a fascistic matriarchy replacing the fascistic patriarchy that feminists are challenging.

And finally, the philosophical underpinnings of postmodernism can lead us to chaos. Can we sustain any sort of community in total multiplicity, diversity, profusion? The issue here is a profoundly philosophical, political and personal one. Is difference a threat or an opportunity? Postmodern feminists have thematized the “many”, but the problem of creating community is as much ours as theirs. In “Women’s Time”, Kristeva herself points out that “The reality of a world that is provisional in meanings, where logic is denigrated as a mode of thought, where all interpretations are valid and values are upset but not replaced, would be impossible.” (Warhol and Herndl, 1991). Deconstructing our world, our codes, is one thing, but it will not provide us with new conceptual frameworks, new values and priorities, new boundaries. However different in scope and nature to the ones with which we are familiar, these things have to be for a society or a community to survive.
1.5.3 Contribution to the Women’s Movement

However, the basic contribution of postmodern feminism to the women’s movement is undeniable. They have given us an appreciation for the latent possibilities in nothingness, absence, the marginal, the peripheral, the repressed. They have also challenged us to think in non-binary, non-oppositional terms: no word (logos) but a myriad voices open to any number of interpretations. And with their celebration of multiplicity they have provided a new conceptual start that includes the ostracized and alienated, the abnormal and the deviant. They have reminded us that even if we cannot be One, we can be Many.

1.6 BLACK FEMINISM

1.6.1 The Beginnings of Black Feminism

Black feminism argues that sexism, class oppression, and racism are inextricably bound together. The way these relate to each other is called intersectionality. Forms of feminism that strive to overcome sexism and class oppression but ignore race can discriminate against many people, including women, through racial bias. The Combahee River Collective argued in 1974 that the liberation of black women entails freedom for all people, since it would require the end of racism, sexism, and class oppression.

One of the theories that evolved out of the Black feminist movement was Alice Walker’s Womanism. Alice Walker and other womanists pointed out that black woman experienced a different and more intense kind of oppression from that of white women. They point to the emergence black feminism after earlier movements led by white middle-class women which they regard as having largely ignored oppression based on race and class. Patricia Hill Collins defined Black feminism, in Black Feminist Thought (1991), as including “women who theorize the experiences and ideas shared by ordinary black women that provide a unique angle of vision on self, community, and society”. There is a long-standing and important alliance between postcolonial feminists, which overlaps with transnational feminism and third-world feminism, and black feminists. Both have struggled for recognition, not only from men in their own culture, but also from Western feminists. Black Feminism in America began with Delta Sigma Theta participation in the Women’s Suffrage March where they were the only black organization to take part in the Suffrage march. Black feminist theory has argued that black women are positioned within structures of power in fundamentally different ways than white women. Black feminist organizations emerged during the 1970s and face many difficulties from both the white feminist and also from the Black Nationalist political organizations they were confronting. These women fought against suppression from the larger movements in which many of its members came from.

Black feminist organizations had to overcome three different challenges that no other feminist organization had to face. The first challenge these women faced was to “prove to other black women that feminism was not only for white women.” They also had to demand that white women “share power with them and affirm diversity” and “fight the misogynist tendencies of Black Nationalism”. With all the challenges these women had to face many activists referred to black feminists as “war weary warriors”.

Trends in Feminism
In this section you studied radical, post modern feminism and black feminism. Now, you should be able to answer some questions relating to this section given in Check Your Progress 3.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Answer the following questions in about 50 words.

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by radical feminism?
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2) What is post modern feminism? Briefly explain?
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1.7 LET US SUM UP

‘Feminism’ is a collection of movements and ideologies aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment. A feminist advocates or supports the rights and equality of women.

Feminist theory, which emerged from these feminist movements, aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women’s social roles and lived experience; it has developed theories in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues such as the social construction of sex and gender. Some of the earlier forms of feminism have been criticized for taking into account only white, middle-class, educated perspectives. This led to the creation of ethnically specific or multiculturalists forms of feminism.

1.8 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS


Trends in Feminism


1.9  CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) What do you understand by liberal feminism?

Ans. Liberal feminism draws heavily upon the world-view presented by the liberal humanist philosophy in which it has its roots. Very simply, liberal philosophy and liberal political thought hold the opinion that human beings are characterized by the use of reason: liberals tend to define the use in either moral or prudential terms. When the moral aspect is emphasized, the focus is on the value of individual autonomy; when reason is perceived as the best means to a desired end, the value of self-fulfillment is highlighted. A just society then is one which allows individuals to exercise their autonomy and to fulfill themselves.

2) What is the contribution of liberal feminism to women’s movement?

Ans. Liberal feminism has contributed much to the women’s movement. It was the liberal feminists who agitated for and won educational and legal reforms that have changed life so drastically for women, who enabled women to attain a professional and occupational stature within the workplace.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What do you understand by Marxist feminism?

Ans. Marxists believe that the supremely humanizing activity is work, i.e. the transformation of our environment in order to produce our means of subsistence. Men and women through their work create a society that then shapes them. This concept is taken up and emphasized by Marxist feminists who point out that the nature of woman’s work and her role both in family and workplace reinforce her social and economic subordination to men.

2) What are the limitations of Marxist feminism?

Ans. Engels ignores the fact that woman is viewed, emotionally and psychologically, as chattel property by the poor as well as, and often even more than, the rich. Lacking other claims to status a working class male is still more prone to seek them in sexual rank, often brutally asserted. Simone de Beauvoir, insists that the relations between men and women will not automatically change with the change from capitalism to socialism, for women are just as likely to remain the Other in the latter as in the former.
Check Your Progress 3

1) What do you understand by radical feminism?

**Ans.** Radical feminism (radical as “getting to the root”) is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, or, more specifically, social dominance of women by men. Radical feminism views patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges and power primarily by gender, and as a result oppressing women and privileging men.

2) What is post modern feminism? Briefly explain?

**Ans.** For the postmodern feminists, the basic premise is that woman, the Other, the feminine, has been left unthematised and silent in the gap that blocks the union between language and reality.
UNIT 2  WID-WAD-GAD – PART-I

Structure
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Boserup’s Thesis and Status of Women
2.3 Women in Development (WID) Approach
2.4 Women and Development (WAD) Approach
2.5 Critique of WID (Women in Development)
2.6 Gender and Development (GAD) Approach
2.7 Let Us Sum Up
2.8 Glossary
2.9 References and Suggested Readings
2.10 Check Your Progress –Possible Answers

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Ever since the formation of the United Nations Commission on the Status for Women in 1946, it had been proposing a U. N. Women’s Conference with little success. Gradually with pressure from the American Women’s Movement, the U.N. General Assembly declared 1975 as the International Women’s Year and 1975-1985 as the International Decade for Women. This declaration led to a growing awareness of women’s issues and an acceptance of their demands as legitimate issues for policy making, both at the national and international level. The major themes of the International Women’s Year and Conference were Equality, Development and Peace. Equality, however, had been a dominant issue for the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women and it came primarily from the feminist movement of the Western industrialized nations. Peace was increasingly considered to be a women’s issue by the countries of the Eastern bloc. Development, on the other hand, was a recent issue put forward mainly by the newly independent “Third World” nations as a key to improving women’s lives.

During the Decade, the important but previously invisible role of women in the social and economic development of the poorer countries was highlighted. The declaration of the International Decade for Women (1975-85) signified the new visibility of Women in Development (WID) in international forums.

The WID approach was adopted pointing to the fact that women’s contribution for development is not recognized by the policy makers. Women are treated as “beneficiaries” of development, not as active agents of development. Prior to this, however, women were brought into “development” policy on very sex-specific terms. Men were seen as the heads of households and productive agents. Women were seen as housewives, mothers and reproducers. Therefore development efforts targeted the male population, while women were relegated to the marginal welfare sector.

In this Unit, we will trace the emergence of a gender-sensitive development debate. But before we examine the details of the term “Women in Development” and the U.N. Women’s Conferences, we need to understand the concept of “development”, who defines it and how it is defined within the context of international politics.
After studying this Unit you should be able to

- discuss the feminist critiques of development; and
- analyze the different approaches to women in development, women and development and gender and development.

## 2.2 BOSERUP’S THESIS AND STATUS OF WOMEN

The publication of Ester Boserup’s book in 1970, coincided with the growing wave of feminist consciousness in Europe and USA and youth radicalization all over the world. Boserup argues that a change in the density of population results in the change of techniques in farming, which requires a higher labour input resulting in a change in the division of labour between men and women. She distinguished between two systems of subsistence agriculture. One is characterized by shifting cultivation, done mainly by female farmers, as in Africa. The other, characterized by plough cultivation, done mainly by male farmers as in South Asia. Boserup criticized the “dubious generalization” according to which males were considered to be the providers of food. With her comparative analysis, she pointed out the differences in women’s work, emphasizing the important role women played in African agriculture as compared to the lesser role women played in Asian and Latin American countries.

The reasons for such a difference— in Africa were a low density of population, absence of agrarian technologies and shortage of domestic animals for agrarian task. Land was easily accessible and there was less class differentiation. Thus the men were mainly occupied with clearing the land, while the women cultivated subsistence crops.

In her analysis, Boserup points to the existence of a strong correlation between economic conditions and polygamy. In areas of plough cultivation, where there is a small minority of polygamous marriages, the women are totally dependent on their husbands for economic support and they are valued only as mothers.

Boserup went on to analyze and point out the adverse effects that European colonialism and the capitalist penetration of subsistence economies often had on women. The European colonial rulers were largely responsible for the neglect of the female farming systems of Africa and the resulting loss of status of the African women. They were unsympathetic to the female farming systems that they found in many of their colonies and believed in the superiority of the male farming system. Hence, when they introduced modern technology, cash crops, and so forth, Boserup argues that they trained only the males to the neglect of the female farmers. This benefited the men, enhancing their prestige and lowering that of women. The discriminatory policies followed in education and training created a technical, cultural and productivity gap between men and women. Women were increasingly relegated to the subsistence sector of food production using the traditional methods of cultivation. The “land reforms introduced by the European administrators”, also resulted in the loss of land rights for the women. From being cultivators themselves, women were increasingly marginalized from agriculture and reduced to being “unpaid helpers in the production of crops belonging to their husbands”. Thus, women lost income and status in comparison to men.
Boserup also analyzed the status of women and the sexual divisions of labour that existed in non-agricultural activities particularly in the urban areas. She divides towns into predominantly female or male towns. Her thesis challenged the commonly held notion that women’s status and their rights automatically improve with modernization. Despite Boserup’s path breaking contribution to the field of women in development, her work has also led to a great deal of debate and controversy.

2.2.1 Critique of Boserup

One of the earliest critics of Boserup’s thesis, Suellen Huntington, argued that the division of farming systems into male and female, ignored important aspects of male domination which could not be explained only by developments in agricultural technology. Besides this, Huntington pointed out that in female farming systems, women may have had an important role in agricultural production. However, it did not mean that they enjoyed equal status or greater power in relation to men. Claims for women’s equality should be argued for on their own merits and not depend on historical evidence that is refutable.

Lourdes Beneria and Gita Sen, argued that Boserup’s thesis was “essentially empirical and descriptive” and that it “lacked a clearly defined theoretical framework”. They criticized her for accepting the capitalist model of development as given. Women’s economic marginalization was due to their incorporation into the worldwide capitalist system which exploited their labour and not because they were excluded from productive labour. Further, they argued that Boserup concentrates on women’s role outside the household and thus ignores women’s role in reproduction and domestic production. Hence, it is argued that, Boserup’s analysis lacks a feminist perspective on women’s subordination (For a detailed critique of Boserup’s thesis, see L. Beneria and G. Sen, 1981). Boserup’s thesis, however, justified the efforts to influence government policy and development on the basis of both justice and efficiency. The debate on Boserup’s thesis can be located in a larger debate which can be largely labeled as the “Decolonization of the Mind” or in other words the issue of development and the politics of knowledge. For the modernization theorists, decolonization had come to mean westernization and the very idea of decolonization assumed a model similar to the child development model. While Carol Gilligan pointed out to the implicit male bias in the model, Nandy had pointed out the implicit imperialistic bias in these models of decolonization. Debates on the western model as environmentally destructive and spiritually lacking were in focus. Tariq Banuri has summarized this in his work “Modernization and its Discontents – A Cultural Perspective on the Theories of Development”. Tariq Banuri points out, that in order to understand the problems of development and progress one needs to look at the cultural context within which they arose. He argues that the theories of modernization are placed in a unique kind of culture, where “the impersonal is superior to the personal”. The modernization theories argue that due to this existence of personal relations in traditional societies, development is impeded. The neo-classical economic theory too, Banuri argues, looks upon the individual as separate from the environment.

Banuri suggests that many of the problems in society that seem insoluble are “based on the assumption of a dichotomy and a hierarchy between the impersonal and the personal spheres of culture”. The solution for it is to supplant the idea of hierarchy with that of a “tension” or “dialectic” between the two. What is needed is a
change in the basic assumption of economic theory that all actions can be reduced to the impersonal sphere and to see human actions as a result of the tension between conflicting obligations and commitments.

The search for an alternative vision thus, begins with the idea of “progress as being the expansion of the awareness of oppression in society”. The existence of a positive relation between impersonality and progress, as claimed by modernization theorists is disqualified. The debate on the meaning of development, it is argued, is highly technocratized and therefore it should be replaced with a “broader social definition”. The oppressed on realization of their oppression, will outline their own priorities and take the required social and political action. The social scientist should take responsibility for the long term consequences of their prescription. The indigenous ways of knowing, based on direct personal relationships, should be strengthened. Decentralization is needed in the polity, economy and society. Finally, however, this alternate vision must differ from place to place according to the cultural characteristics of the place. However, even in these debates on alternative models, gender is not accorded the status of a structural component. The fact that women had not benefited from the new productive opportunities, new technology and market forces, resulted in doubts over the presumed neutrality of the development agencies. This led to the emergence of the WID critique of development. The WID scholars, however, retained the fundamental premise of the liberal world view. The problem was how to integrate women into development.

In this section you have studied about Boserup’s thesis and status of women. Now, answer the questions given in Check Your Progress 1.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Answer the following questions in about 50 words.

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What do we mean by Underdevelopment?

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2) Whose writings highlighted women’s contribution to economic development?

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2.3 WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (WID) APPROACH

The various approaches relating to women in development are discussed below:

2.3.1 Welfare Approach

Initially, during the First Development Decade 1961-70, there was no mention of women specifically. WID was characterized by the Welfare Approach. It was assumed that social and economic development in general, would bring about the desired changes for women. Women were seen as passive beneficiaries of development with focus on their reproductive role. However, at this early stage, the emphasis was on equal rights for women rather than on economic development.

2.3.2 Equity Approach

During the Second Development Decade, 1971-80, the importance of the “full integration of women in the total development efforts,” was emphasized. The Equity Approach aimed at gaining equity for women in the development process. Women were seen as active participants in development. The main goal was to integrate women into the development process more productively. The key route through this could be achieved which was equality of opportunity through education and training. A number of committees within professional associations, new women’s groups and others were formed. They came together on important issues like equal pay for equal work, greater visibility of women within professional organizations, equal rights amendment, and so on. This led to the formation of many women’s pressure groups especially the ones concerning Women in Development (WID). The advocates of WID pointed out to the phenomena that many scholars had observed, particularly in the developing countries i.e. the adverse impact that development seemed to have on women. The feminization of poverty and the growing number of women-headed households as a result of the development policies was also highlighted. With pressure from the American women’s movement, the United Nations declared 1975 as the International Women’s Year and 1975-1985 as the International Women’s Decade. With this there was a growing awareness of women’s issues and an acceptance of their demands as legitimate issues for policy making, both at the national and international level. The major themes of the Decade were – Equality, Development and Peace. The UN Decade for Women and the international conferences gave impetus to the gender component in development debates.

2.3.3 Three World Conferences on Women

In 1975, the World Conference for the International Women’s Year was held in Mexico City. The Conference highlighted the differences in the needs of women from the Western industrialized nations and those from the agricultural nations. This frequently led to debates on what embodied “women’s issues”. The equity approach was identified as “developmental”, but mainly reflected “First world” feminist pre-occupations with equality. The “Second World” delegates were concerned with peace. They argued that capitalism and militarism was responsible for women’s problems. The “Third World” delegates were concerned with development. They argued that development was the key to improving women’s lives. While the women from the underdeveloped nations were concerned mainly with the survival of the family unit, employment opportunities and legal and
economic roles of women; those from the developed nations emphasized the symbolic expressions of authority, status, and control over one’s own body, discrimination against women, etc. It also meant the adoption of different strategies for change in the status of women.

Scholars like Ester Boserup, Elise Boulding and others, have noted that often, economic development in the underdeveloped countries leads to structural changes that dislocate women from income generating occupations, or place a greater load on women who continue with subsistence agriculture, while men move into mechanized agriculture, grow cash crops or migrate to the cities. It was also pointed out that there are a growing number of female headed-households. It was recommended that these women should also be given priority for employment on par with men with family responsibilities. Stress was also laid on the fact that peace also could be achieved only by realizing that women, who consisted of half the world’s population, were also human beings with equal rights in civil, political, economic and social fields.

2.3.4 Anti-Poverty Approach

The Equity approach, however, was considered threatening and not popular with governments. It was criticized as Western feminism. Hence there was a shift to the Anti-Poverty Approach. This approach toned down equality because of criticism. It was more concerned with redistribution along with growth and basic needs. Its purpose was to ensure poor women increase their productivity, since women’s poverty was seen as a problem of underdevelopment not their subordination. However this approach isolated poor women as a separate category with a tendency to recognize only their productive role. It was more popular among the NGOs and developed at a small scale.

2.3.5 Efficiency Approach

With the UN Mid-decade Conference on Women held at Copenhagen in 1980, the concept of WID had shifted from the equity to efficiency approach and was articulated in economic terms. The conference was dominated by debates on trade, development and politics. There were heated debates over the Palestinian issue, the effects of apartheid on women in South Africa, of women refugees all over the world. Despite the highly publicized arguments, women from different parts of the world endeavored to understand one another and create a more congruent perspective. At this conference it was recognized that women were both participants and victims in political struggles. Irene Tinker in her review of the Copenhagen conference asked -- “How do you take one tune and encourage variation while eliciting orchestral support?” The response and comments to it by a number of scholars showed that many people were looking at various women’s issues that had not been mentioned recognized or clarified before the decade began. One of the main functions of the Mexico City and Copenhagen conference was consciousness rising.

The emergence of the efficiency approach in this period should be seen in the context of a declining world economy and accompanying stabilization and adjustment policies. With serious cuts in welfare spending, the focus on efficient development meant that women became crucial actors in the development scenario. It recognized women’s resilience and ability to adjust to crisis. In the formal sector women are prepared to work for longer hours for less pay, they are usually
hired later and fired earlier. Given these disadvantages in the formal sector, women are willing to accept worse conditions than men in the informal sector. All these qualities attracted development planners to focus their programmes on women. These approaches recognize that women play a significant economic role both within and outside the families. The efficiency approach focused on credit for women, supplementary income generating projects for women, micro-enterprise for women and so on. It focused only on economic aspects of women in development and it was designed to suit the interests of bigger agents of development rather than the women themselves. This approach is still the most popular WID approach for many national governments, state machineries for women and aid agencies, as well as NGOs who are keen to maintain the status quo in the name of economic development without having to question the underlying power relations in the communities in which they work.

At the third and final conference of the international decade for women at Nairobi, the various dimensions of women’s needs came up. It was at this conference that the needs of the “Third World” women gained recognition and were highlighted. The main concerns of women living in subsistence societies were environmental issues, methods in forest and water management, sustainable agriculture, etc. These issues were combined with environmental issues on a world scale. The demands of “Third World” countries for techniques to limit the drudgery of everyday work were also put forward. Divisive and political issues such as the debt crises and its effects on countries of the “Third World”, the issue of apartheid in South Africa were debated upon. There was growing recognition of the fact that one-third of the families of the world were headed by women. The women worked to support their families and were also charged with bringing up the children.

In this section you have read about emergence of women in development (WID) approach and three world conferences on women. Now, answer the questions in Check Your Progress 2.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Answer the following questions in about 50 words.
   b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Trace the emergence of the WID approach.

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2) List the first three international women’s conferences.

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2.4 WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT (WAD) APPROACH

The Women and Development (WAD) approach pointed out that women are already integrated into the development process in an exploitative way. This is due to the fact that planners hold imprecise assumptions about women’s specific activities leading to the neglect of women’s real needs and over-exploitation of their labour. Proponents of the WAD approach are mainly activists and theorists from the South and few from the North who saw the limitations of WID and argued that women would never get their equal share of development benefits unless patriarchy and global inequality are addressed. Women from the developed nations were slowly realizing that the concerns of “Third World” women were also legitimate. They began to identify with them and their earlier patronizing attitude towards “Third World” women diminished. Efforts were made to link issues of the family with that of politics at the local, national and international levels. The Third World feminist movement increasingly incorporated struggles against sexual inequality with political struggles. The gathering at Nairobi provided women of the “Third World” as well as the “First World” the chance to combine forces to fight against injustice. The WAD approach provides a more critical view of women’s position than WID. It is assumed that women’s position will improve once international structures become more equitable. However, how these could change is not clearly explained. According to this perspective, women were not a neglected resource but overburdened and undervalued. Their substantial contribution to development needs to be recognized, along with a redistribution of its benefits and burdens between men and women. The WAD approach also demanded “affirmative action” by the State as “Laissez Faire” in the market worsened already existing inequalities.

2.4.1 Empowerment Approach

Unlike the previous approaches, the empowerment approach is a direct result of “Third World” women’s social and grassroots movements and their realities and experiences of mainstream “development”. Its roots were in Latin American social movements where educationists such as Paulo Friere and Evan Ilich used conscientization as a tool of mobilizing oppressed sections.

The approach emerged out of a critique of all other approaches, which were based on the expert analysis of how and what “Third World” women need to develop themselves and their communities. This approach gained momentum in the 1980s and continues to be popular among social activists, feminist researchers, NGOs and Aid agencies who are genuinely interested in the transformatory potential of development initiatives. The empowerment approach questions the notion that “women” can be addressed as a universal category. Further, for the first time women’s subordination was seen as a men’s problem as well. The empowerment approach broadened the scope of development theory by addressing issues hitherto not considered relevant. These included oppressive gender relations, ecological destruction, and the ethics of multinational control over the developing countries and so on. Thus the empowerment approach became most threatening to government and international agencies. The Self-Employed Women’s Organization (SEWA) started in Ahmedabad, India; the Grameen Bank (Bangladesh), are examples of the success of the strategy of empowerment through organization.
At the Nairobi conference, 1985 some Third World Women formed a group DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) which interpreted development issues from the woman’s perspective. They pointed out that the concept of development followed in the post-colonial world has been guided by a western patriarchal and capitalist idea of economic development which believed that change is linear. They rejected the aggressiveness of the dominant system and advocated the values of nurturance and openness, discarded hierarchy and recognized the diverse but equally genuine meanings of feminism of every area.

The UN decade for women brought to light the fact that women still perform two-thirds of the world’s work, but earn one tenth of its income and own only one hundredth of its property. There was recognition of the fact that the feminization of poverty was on the increase. Women’s participation in the goals and strategies for change and their empowerment, both within and outside the home, were stressed if change was to occur.

The conferences of the International Decade for Women brought about greater interaction and mobilization of women from various countries. They provided the motive to investigate the common concerns of women worldwide. Conventional indicators of development-modernization, urbanization, per capita income, growth of the economy, mechanization, white-green-blue revolution were questioned. During the conferences, the various meanings of the term “women in development” predominated. Besides economic development, it also signified “legal equality, education, health, employment and empowerment”. Equal rights for women and men before law were stressed in the early years. During the International Women’s Decade a number of conventions were passed, important among them is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Later on, legal rights were not given great importance. Though most countries had granted women’s equality, they were not enforced. It was argued that women’s status could be improved by educating them. However, the earlier literacy programme had failed because classes were held at the time when the women were busy with economic activities. No formal education systems were advocated and emphasis was laid on reducing gender biases within the education system. Emphasis was laid on employing women especially in the development agencies as an effective method of ensuring that development programme reach and involve women. Consciousness raising and empowerment of women was emphasized. Economic development remained the main focus of “women in development”. The attempt was to remove the gender bias in development planning that over-looked women’s role in economic activities.

2.4.2 The Indian Context

The U.N. decade for women generated a lot of data on the status of women the world over. In India, political emergency was declared in 1975. Yet in this period, the UN sponsored International Women’s Decade provided the space for women’s organizations to meet and discuss issues, organize seminars and so on. It was during this period that an important and significant report on the status of women in India was published entitled the Towards Equality” Report (in 1974 it was tabled in the Parliament). The Committee on the Status of Women was appointed by the Government of India in 1971 to look into the changes – legal, constitutional, administrative, political, social and economic, -- that had occurred in the status of women since Independence. The Committee submitted its report in December 1974. Its investigations revealed the dismal reality of declining sex ratios,
decreasing participation of women in employment and political activities. Illiteracy and lack of vocational training prevented women from being absorbed into the modern economy. Development itself was very uneven between different regions, communities and sections of society. The low status of women in society was indicated by a number of factors such as – the age of marriage of girls was below 15 years in more than 1/3 of the districts of India. The life expectation for females was 45 years as compared to 47 years for males in 1961-71. The gap in male and female life expectation was in fact increasing. The female mortality rate was much higher than that of males especially in the age group of 15-44 years. Though there has been an increase in the female population, the number of females per thousand males has been declining. In 1901, it was 972 females per thousand males, but by 1971, it had declined to 930 females per thousand males and in 1991 it had declined further to 929 women per thousand males. One of the reasons for the low sex ratio, it is observed, is the high maternal mortality. In 1964, it was 252 per 1,00,000 live births in the whole country, and in 1968, it went up to 573 for 1,00,000 live births in rural areas. Maternal mortality has been mainly due to frequent pregnancies, abortions, malnutrition, etc. another reason is rampant female feticide and infanticide. The literacy rate among women was much lower than for males – 18.4% and 39.5% respectively. The number of women in the labour force came down from 34.4% in 1911 to 17.35% in 1971. 94% of the women workers are found in the unorganized sector and the rest 6% in the organized sector. It was also noted that a majority of women did not make use of the rights and opportunities guaranteed by the Constitution. There has been an increase in the incidence of dowry in the urban as well as rural areas and also among communities which did not follow this practice earlier. This report demystified the popular belief that equality between the sexes had been guaranteed by the Constitution. The mid-sixties witnessed an economic crisis, stagnation, inflation and increasing lawlessness. There was general discontentment and displeasure in society, especially among the youth and working class. All over the world there were strong protests by students, trade unions and anti-price rise movements as well as anti-war and colonial liberation movements.

In India too, in the seventies, there were student protests, anti-price rise morchas, tribal revolts, and the Naxalbari movement. Women participated in large numbers in these movements. A number of radical activists started autonomous groups involved with education, popular science (KSSP – Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad), health, environmental protection, civil liberties, women’s issues, tribal issues. Involvement with the anti-price rise protests, student and tribal movements, made the women realize the importance of taking up issues related to the oppression of women, violence in the family, dowry, alcoholism, sexual discrimination against women. It was in the decade of the 1970s that the “Third World” began to emerge as a challenge and a force to reckon with. This heralded the critiques of “development” and “under-development” in the “Third World” countries from both feminist and others.

2.5 CRITIQUE OF WID (WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT)

The main critique of Women in Development came from three sources: - Marxist feminists, women from the developing countries and scholars who sympathized with the female sphere approach. In their effort to influence the development
experts, the advocate practitioners and scholars of the WID approach did not raise basic theoretical issues, but instead, sought to adjust the contemporary development practices to include and benefit women. As the field developed, the pragmatic approach of the WID practitioners and advocates and the detail of women’s lives coming from WID scholars began to influence the theorists. The theorists then raised questions about the global power structures, values etc. which were more relevant.

The Marxist feminists have questioned the constitution of women as a “category”. They argue that biological sex has been misunderstood as gender relations through social, cultural, political and economic forces. However, women’s interests vary by class. But one common factor, among women of all classes and in all societies, is their subordinate position in society. The main cause of this is class and patriarchy. While Marxists and other feminists would try to change this situation and fight for equality, the feminists who argue for a female sphere, would emphasize the difference. Over the years, other factors of subordination of women have come up like race in the USA, colonialism, underdevelopment and dependency in the “Third World” and the intricacies of caste, religion and ethnicity in India.

Development programmes that are supposed to help women with their practical and material problems and to address the causes of their subordination often end up perpetuating it. What is required, therefore, is feminism that provides a political basis for bringing women of all classes together despite their differences. Throughout the Decade, the effort was to associate value and status to women’s work. But often, the emphasis has been on economic activities. Though women have worked for long hours, be it in subsistence societies or the new industries of developing societies, their work has not been valued and they have not got high status. The effort now is to decrease the woman’s work and simultaneously empower her. This would need an examination of the controls on woman’s labour and hence an examination of the household and the issue of patriarchy.

The female sphere theorists argue that the demand for equality of work for a just and egalitarian society may be disadvantageous for women. In a society where women enjoyed autonomy in the private sphere, for the sake of family however, they are withdrawn from the visible public labour force and are made economically dependent. However, many women have chosen to retain their economic independence. Yet another perspective is put forward by scholars like Elise Boulding, who argue that women have developed the quality of nurturing, survival and peace. It is these feminine values that will save the earth and not the male values of ruling and conquering. The need is for environment-friendly technology and efforts towards peace. The DAWN report points out the connection between global economic policies and women at the local, national and international levels. The economic crises, ecological degradation, increasing militarism and so on are all linked to the global policies. Scholars have pointed out how the debt crises, the structural adjustment policies and the macro-level development policies have had differential effects on male and female work, and how they perpetuate gender bias in market policies. Rae Blumberg argues that the African food crisis was the result of macro-level development policies that overlooked the importance of women’s contribution to economic development.

Kathryn Ward, in her work “Women in the Global Economy”, argues that women’s economic status has stagnated due to underdevelopment processes. Increasingly, women are pushed into subsistence agriculture or the service or informal sectors.
Until the coming of transnational corporations, women did not get industrial employment. However, even this employment is not permanent and they are once again displaced into the service sectors.

Ward argues that women’s status has been structured both directly and indirectly by the global capitalist system. She highlights three processes of trade dependency, dependent development, and debt dependency as being particularly important in shaping women’s status. As a result of this global capitalist system, the peripheral regions within this system experience socio-economic dependence on the core nations along with underdevelopment.

The major problems with the WID approach are as follows.

- WID considers women as a homogeneous group. It ignores the fact that women are not a single uniform category. Women are differentiated by racial, economic and other factors which are not considered important.

- WID projects the myth that women’s development can be achieved by addressing economic issues alone. Yet in a context where women are not allowed to own property and do not have control over resources, it is questionable how income generating projects can lead to women’s development.

- It does not question the kind of development that is being imposed on the developing countries. WID does not have any scope for change and transformation. It does not challenge existing power relations in the society. Hence it has remained popular.

However, since the early 1980s WID came under severe attack, mainly from “Third World” women’s movements, who are questioning the relevance of such development programmes in the context of continuing poverty and oppression. This has led to a rethinking of the WID approach and resulted in the emergence of the Gender and Development Approach or GAD.

### 2.6 GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT (GAD) APPROACH

GAD, which shares elements with the empowerment approach, gained popularity in the 1980s and attempts to address the loopholes of WID. It is rooted in post-development theory and post-structuralist critiques in feminism. GAD does not consider women as a uniform group. It maintains that women’s situation should be seen in the context of the socio-economic, racial and other factors that shape a particular society. It points to the importance of understanding the relationship between women and men and how society influences their respective roles. Development to be meaningful will have to take all these factors into consideration.

This approach rejects the dichotomy between the public and the private. It focuses attention on the oppression of women in the family, within the private sphere of the household. It emphasizes the state’s role in providing social services to promote women’s emancipation. Women are seen as agents of change rather than passive recipients of development. The focus is on strengthening women’s legal rights. It also talks in terms of upsetting the existing power relations in society. Gender is an issue that cuts across all economic, social and political processes. The GAD
approach attempts to identify both the practical gender needs of women as well as the strategic gender needs that are closely related. The problem with GAD is that it is easy in the name of gender, to disguise and even side track real issues that affect women. Gender can rise above the personal, which means the personal can remain behind the scene, despite all the efforts that go into the analysis of “social construction of gender”. Most often, however, GAD is seen as just a new label for the same old women’s programmes which do not address power relations in society or women’s oppression. Though it is popular among funding agencies and NGOs and has the potential to be different, it has become institutionalized like WID.

In this section you have read about Women and Development (WAD), critique of WID approach and Gender and Development (GAD) approach. Now, answer the questions in Check Your Progress 3.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Answer the following questions in about 50 words.

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Is the Empowerment approach drawn from WAD?

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2) What was the outcome of the Fourth Women’s Conference in Beijing?

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

In conclusion, the significant issues that emerge are: In the 60’s and 70’s women voiced their dissent and protest through the mass movements as well as autonomous feminist groups. The “Western” model of development as the role-model was not only questioned but women activists in the Third World refused the label of “always and already victims” that the Western feminists had accorded them. This translated into viewing women, not as passive recipients of development but as active agents in the process. The issues of gender, nationality and ethnicity within the context of the global political economy came into focus; rightly questioning thereby the “woman” as subject of feminist debates. The increasing marginalization of women in the economy, their increasing landlessness and lack of access to resources had resulted in feminization of poverty. A significant relationship between the feminization of poverty and female-headed households was brought into focus.
2.8 GLOSSARY

Economic Development: The progress of the economy in means of quality and quantity is known as economic development. It also means the development and adoption of new technologies, transition from agricultural economy to industrial economy and improvement in the standard of living of people.

Marginalization: Marginalization is a social process which pushes some sections of the population outside the mainstream or being made to be at the margins of society. They are excluded or ignored in the mainstream development process.

Laissez Faire: It is policy or practice of Government letting people act without interference or direction of government to have their industry, business etc. which lead to economic growth. There would not be any conditions imposed by government and no regulation and control.

Decolonization: Decolonization is being free from the colonial status. It is getting independence status from the country which has control over them and treats them as their colony.

GNP: GNP means Gross National Product. It is the total value of final goods and services produced within a country in a particular year by its citizens. It is one of the measures of economic conditions in the country.

2.9 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS


### 2.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS –POSSIBLE ANSWERS

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) What do you mean by underdevelopment?

**Ans.** Lack of economic growth is considered as under development. This is measured in terms of GDP.
2) Whose writings highlighted women’s contribution to economic development?

**Ans.** Esther Boserup’s writings argue that a change in the density of population results in the change of techniques in farming, which requires a higher labour input resulting in a change in the division of labour between men and women. With her comparative analysis, she pointed out the differences in women’s work, emphasizing the important role women played in African agriculture as compared to the lesser role women played in Asian and Latin American countries.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) Trace the emergence of the WID approach.

**Ans.** The pressure from the Third World women group led to the emergence of WID approach. In this approach the status of women on par with men was discussed in terms of equality. This emerged in the year 1975.

2) List the first three international women’s conferences.

**Ans.** The first three international women’s conferences which took place are as given below:

1) Mexico – 1975
2) Nairobi – 1980
3) Copenhagen – 1985

**Check Your Progress 3**

1) Is the Empowerment approach drawn from WAD?

**Ans.** Yes, in WAD period, the Empowerment approach was adopted. Unlike the previous approaches, the empowerment approach is a direct result of “Third World” women’s social and grassroots movements and their realities and experiences of mainstream “development”. Its roots were in Latin American social movements where educationists such as Paulo Frire and Evan Ilich used conscientization as a tool of mobilizing oppressed sections.

2) What was the outcome of the Fourth Women’s Conference in Beijing?

**Ans.** The important outcome at Beijing was the new recognition by both NGOs and governments that macro-economic policy is also an issue of critical importance for women and therefore a feminist concern. Furthermore, it was important not just to be reactive after policies have done their damage, but to be creative in framing alternatives. The “Beijing Platform for Action” recognizes the link between the economic and the political. Eradication of poverty cannot be accomplished through anti-poverty programmes alone, but will require democratic participation and changes in economic structures to ensure access for all women to resources, opportunities and public services.
UNIT 3  WID, WAD, GAD PART-II

Structure
3.1  Introduction
3.2  Empowerment
3.3  Gender Mainstreaming
3.4  Gender Planning
3.5  Gender Budgeting
3.6  Gender Auditing
3.7  Let Us Sum Up
3.8  Glossary
3.9  References and Suggested Readings
3.10 Check Your Progress –Possible Answers

3.1  INTRODUCTION

For the past three decades international organizations and national governments have focused on gender equality. The last two UN conferences on women analyzed the state of gender equality and the impact of public policy and action. They developed the prospective of gender equality as a human right and social justice among nation states. With the efforts of bodies like UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action was developed. In spite of more achievements based on WID, Under WAD and GAD perspectives, more efforts are needed to achieve improvements in overall well-being of women and reduce the gender gap. In order to accelerate development intervention and to address challenges to engender all development issues, new perspectives have to be developed. Through the analysis of developments of the past, new approaches have emerged. Based on the approach many tools were developed. This Unit will deal with the tools and country specific examples.

After studying this Unit, you should be able to

- explain the GAD approach;
- discuss the tools of Gender and Development; and
- describe the applications of GAD tools in programmes and policy making.

3.2  EMPOWERMENT

Gender and Empowerment: Definitions, approaches and implications for policy:

According to Zoë Oxaal and Sally Baden empowerment is a process whereby women critically reflect on the condition of their own lives and acquire the knowledge skills and consciousness to change or transform that condition. It is a condition where women’s self reliance and inner strength are enhanced and thereby gain control over assets and resources and subsequently are able to control all aspects of their lives. This empowerment can be reflected in four ways namely,
The word ‘empowerment’ is used in many different contexts and by many different organizations. For example, literature about ‘empowerment’ is found in the fields of education, social work, psychology, in US radical politics in the 1960s and community development groups in the North and South, as well as in the work of feminist and development organizations.

The idea of ‘power’ is at the root of the term empowerment. Power can be understood as operating in a number of different ways:

- **power over**: This power involves an either/or relationship of domination/subordination. Ultimately, it is based on socially sanctioned threats of violence and intimidation, it requires constant vigilance to maintain, and it invites active and passive resistance;

- **power to**: This power relates to having decision-making authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling;

- **power with**: This power involves people organizing with a common purpose or common understanding to achieve collective goals;

- **power within**: This power refers to self confidence, self awareness and assertiveness. It relates to how individuals can recognize through analyzing their experience how power operates in their lives, and gain the confidence to act to influence and change this.

### Box 1: Perspectives on empowerment

The Human Development Report 1995, stresses that empowerment is about participation:

*Empowerment*- Development must be *by* people, not only *for* them. People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives (UN, 1995). At the same time this promotes a rather instrumentalist view of empowerment; Investing in women’s capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development (UN, 1995).

For Oxfam, empowerment is about challenging oppression and inequality:

Empowerment involves challenging the forms of oppression which compel millions of people to play a part in their society on terms which are inequitable, or in ways which deny their human rights. Feminist activists stress that women’s empowerment is not about replacing one form of empowerment with another: Women’s empowerment should lead to the liberation of men from false value systems and ideologies of oppression. It should lead to a situation where each one can become a whole being regardless of gender, and use their fullest potential to construct a more humane society for all (Akhtar 1992 quoted in Batliwala, 1994: 131).

### 3.2.1 UNIFEM

UNIFEM includes the following factors in its definition of women’s empowerment:

- acquiring understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations can be changed.

- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one’s ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one’s own life.
• Gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power.
• Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

The current popularity of the term empowerment in development coincides with recent questioning of the efficacy of central planning and the role of ‘the state’, and moves by donor governments and multilateral funding agencies to embrace NGOs as partners in development. Political and institutional problems have gained prominence on the development agenda with a focus on human rights, good governance and participation. Recent UN conferences have advocated that women’s empowerment is central to development. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Agenda 21 mentions women’s advancement and empowerment in decision-making, including women’s participation in national and international ecosystem management and control of environment degradation as a key area for sustainable development.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, discussed the population issue not just as a technical, demographic problem, but as a choice that women should be empowered to take within the context of their health and reproductive rights. The Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD), called for the recognition that empowering people, particularly women, to strengthen their own capacities is a major objective of development, and that empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and well-being of societies. The Report of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women called its Platform for Action an agenda for women’s empowerment meaning that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities.

**Box 2: Empowerment as a Feminist Vision of Development**

Development Alternatives for Women in New Era (DAWN) is a network of Southern activists, researchers and policymakers, which is closely associated with the development of ideas about women’s empowerment. Founded in the mid-1980s, DAWN has questioned the impact of development on the poor, especially women, and advocated the need for alternative development processes that would give primary emphasis to the basic needs and survival of the majority of the world’s people. DAWN has sought to link micro-level activities from the experience of grassroots initiatives at community level, to a macro-level perspective. They challenge the assumption behind many projects and programmes targeting women, that the main problem for Third World women is insufficient participation in an otherwise benevolent process of growth and development. DAWN argue the need for a new vision of development based on the perspective of poor Third World women. This perspective focuses attention on the related problems of poverty and inequality and the critical dimensions of resource use and abuse.

### 3.2.2 Economic Empowerment

Empowerment is often envisaged as individual rather than as collective, and focused on Entrepreneurship and individual self-reliance, rather than on cooperation to challenge power structures which subordinate women (or other
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This individualistic approach to empowerment fits together with the belief in entrepreneurial capitalism and market forces as the main saviours of sickly or backward economies, and with the current trend for limiting state provision of welfare, services and employment. It is also consonant with a liberal approach to democracy, emphasizing individual rights and participation in decision-making, through the electoral process.

3.2.3 Economic Empowerment through Credit Programmes

Microcredit programmes, many targeting women and claiming to empower them, have become extremely popular among donors and NGOs in recent years. The change in development policies from the focus on women’s active role in production as a means to more efficient development, to the approach of women’s empowerment through women organizing for greater self-reliance, has also meant a change in policies for the enhancement of women’s economic role. The focus has changed from providing grants to financial assistance to women through the establishment of special credit schemes.

Credit schemes are seen as having the potential to link women with the formal banking sector and thereby integrating women in mainstream development. Many credit schemes aimed at women attempt to follow the model of well-known microcredit providers such as the Grameen Bank. The problems of high administration costs and lack of collateral of small-scale women borrowers are overcome by establishing borrower solidarity groups based on joint liability.

The ability of credit schemes to promote women’s empowerment has come under close scrutiny. Research on credit programmes has shown that apparently successful credit programmes targeting credit to women cannot be taken at face value without a more careful

Box 3: Credit for Women in Rural Bangladesh

A study of rural credit programmes in Bangladesh highlighted the problems of ascertaining who actually had control over credit, as research showed that a significant proportion of women’s loans were in fact controlled by male relatives. High repayment rates of loans by women cannot be taken as clear evidence that women have made effective loan investments, or that they have been empowered through the loan. Where men take control of loans and invest them badly, women’s position may even be worsened, as women may be forced to mobilise repayment funds from resources which would otherwise be used for consumption or savings. The control of loans and repayment are also potential sources of gender-related tension within rural households. Improving women’s access to credit is a positive step, but is by no means enough to secure their ‘economic empowerment’. An examination of the social context in which women live.

3.2.4 Empowerment through Political Participation

One important approach to supporting women’s empowerment is the promotion of the participation of women in formal politics, alongside support to broad programmes of democratization and good governance with a strong focus on developing civil society. This includes promoting women in government and national and local party politics as well as supporting women’s involvement in NGOs and women’s movements. In 1994, only 5.7 per cent of the world’s cabinet
ministers were women. In government, women in decision-making positions tend to be concentrated in social, law and justice ministries. Fewer women are to be found in chief executive and economic areas. This poor representation is in spite of the fact that women are found in large numbers in lower-level positions in public administration, political parties, trade unions and business, who could potentially serve as representatives at higher levels.

There are a range of possible mechanisms to increase women’s participation in political life which have had varying degrees of success including:

- reform of political parties, quotas and other forms of affirmative action;
- training to develop women’s skills and gender sensitivity;
- work with women’s sections of political parties; and
- development of women’s political organizations.

Quotas have been used to increase women’s participation in the leadership of political parties and in party lists for elections. They may be one of the only ways to ensure some representation of women in countries where this is very low, and they can be effective where women already have some degree of political power, such as in the Nordic countries or South Africa. For example the Norwegian Labour Party stipulates that at least 40 percent of candidates for election must be women. In Norway, quotas proved an effective way of increasing the number of women in parliament. In order that women’s perspectives are placed on the political agenda a critical mass of women is required, with 30 per cent often cited as a figure above which women begin to make an impact on political life. However, quotas for women in elections have proved a very controversial measure meeting much resistance and requiring a good deal of political will. They are a mechanism more frequently used by political parties than by governments. A number of parliaments have operated a mechanism of reserved seats for women, e.g. in Bangladesh, Egypt, Nepal, Pakistan and Tanzania. The drawbacks of this system are that token women may be appointed who in actual fact have little power and lack appropriate skills, and that reserved seats may be interpreted as a ceiling for the number of women in parliament. The transfer of power to local government through decentralization strategies which form part of democratization and governance agendas, has the potential to create spaces at the local level for women as political actors. However, efforts to increase women’s representation in local politics through affirmative action or reserved seats in India and Bangladesh have shown that female councilors elected under this system may have little impact, tending not to speak in meetings, and lacking knowledge about the problems faced by women in their constituencies. Increasing the numbers of women in decision-making positions in formal political power does not in itself translate into greater empowerment for women. Quantitative measures of women’s participation in politics are inadequate as measures of women’s empowerment. Measures to increase the quantity of women representatives need to be accompanied by measures to improve the quality of participation in order to support women’s empowerment. More attention is needed to assess qualitatively women’s empowerment through political systems.

### 3.2.5 Empowerment as a Process

Empowerment is essentially a bottom-up process rather than something that can be formulated as a top-down strategy. Understanding empowerment in this way
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means that development agencies cannot claim to ‘empower women’. Women must empower themselves. Devising coherent policies and programmes for women’s empowerment requires careful attention, because external agencies/bodies tend to be positioned with ‘power-over’ target populations. The training of development professionals, in government, NGOs or donor agencies does not always equip them to consult and involve others, which is necessary for supporting empowerment. Appropriate external support and intervention, however, can be important to foster and support the process of empowerment. Development organizations can, under some circumstances, play an enabling or facilitating role. They can ensure that their programmes work to support women’s individual empowerment by encouraging women’s participation, acquisition of skills, decision-making capacity, and control over resources. Agencies can support women’s collective empowerment by funding women’s organizations which work to address the causes of gender subordination, by promoting women’s participation in political systems, and by fostering dialogue between those in positions of power and organizations with women’s empowerment goals.

3.2.6 Implications for Policy and Strategy

Adopting women’s ‘empowerment’ as a policy goal in development organizations implies a commitment to encouraging a process of more equitable distribution of power in society on personal, economic and political levels. It implies increasing women’s control over their lives both individually and collectively and their participation and influence in institutional decision making. However, unless empowerment is clearly defined and the strategies or processes whereby it is to be translated from policy to practice specified, empowerment becomes a vague goal or meaningless buzzword. Without clear definition of the term, in the particular contexts in which they are working, development organizations run the danger of merely renaming old top-down approaches as part of an empowerment policy, without altering the content and character of their programmes or examining the need for changes in organizational culture and process required. The analysis here suggests a number of strategic considerations for development organizations in adopting a women’s empowerment approach:

1) Where women’s empowerment is stated as a policy goal it should be defined or explained.

2) Strategies for promoting women’s empowerment need to be integrated into development programmes.

3) Empowerment is relevant to all programmes/projects and should not be confined to one area of development activity.

4) Different aspects of empowerment (e.g. political, economic, legal, physical) should not be addressed in isolation.

5) The participation of women in planning at all stages is essential if development programmes are to be empowering.

6) Since the context is crucial to understanding processes of empowerment, indicators of empowerment need to be devised specific to programmes.

7) Mainstreaming policies within agencies and policies/programmes to support empowerment in the work of agencies should be linked.

8) Support for women’s organizations is a key strategy in promoting women’s empowerment.
9) Promoting empowerment also involves examining organizational culture, structures and processes and identifying where these may conflict with empowerment goals, e.g. in terms of accountability.

### 3.3 GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the status of men and women in all policies and programmes of Government and other organizations and also its implications. The concept of gender mainstreaming was first proposed at the 1985 Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi. The idea has been developed in the United Nations development community. The idea was formally featured in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Most definitions conform to the UN Economic and Social Council formally defined concept: Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

United Nations has defined Gender Mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. Gender mainstreaming is not only a question of social justice, but is necessary for ensuring equitable sustainable human development by the most effective and efficient means.

Gender Mainstreaming makes a gender dimension explicit in all policy sectors. Gender equality is no longer viewed as a separate question, but becomes a concern for all policies and programmes. Furthermore, a gender mainstreaming approach does not look at women in isolation but looks at women and men – both actors in the development process, and as its beneficiaries. Significantly gender mainstreaming differs from the women in development approach in that it takes as its starting point a thorough and rigorous analysis of the development situation, rather than a priori assumptions about women’s roles and problems. Experiences have shown that gender issues differ by country, region and concrete situation. At the same time, experiences have also shown that rigorous, gender-sensitive analysis invariably reveals gender-differentiated needs and priorities, as well as gender inequalities in terms of opportunities and outcomes. Gender mainstreaming seeks to redress these problems.

In this section, you have studied empowerment and gender mainstreaming. Now, answer the question given in Check Your Progress 1.
Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Answer the following questions in about 50 words.

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by empowerment of women?

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2) What do you understand by gender mainstreaming.

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Box 4: Case Study

Promoting gender equality through empowerment: The Centre for Development and Population Activities established the global better life options programme. The programme promotes opportunities for adolescent girls and boys to make better life choices concerning their health, economic status, civic participation, education, employment, decision making abilities and family planning. The programme is based on an empowerment model and combines elements of education family life education, life skills vocational training, health services and personality development. It initiated the BLT for girls based on the belief that early intervention will be most effective in improving their long-term status and empowering them to later take their place as full and equal partners with men in Indian society. It perceived that through women’s empowerment would be possible and sustainable only if male support and behaviour change was forthcoming for women’s issues. This shows that the need for a similar empowerment programme for adolescent boys to effectively challenge gender inequalities was also expressed by the communities and by the boys themselves.

2. A collective approach to sustainable economic development: Himalayan Action Research Centre enables the local people to organize into community-based institutions for collective action to increase their food security, socioeconomic security, promotion of livelihoods and rural market linkages. Uttarakhand is a land of rich natural and cultural heritage. The Uttarakhand people live mainly on agriculture and dairy farming. Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand is a Rawain valley. On an average, 23 per cent of the population of Rawain is Scheduled Caste. Rawain Valley also had a rich tradition and culture of community-based institutions and practices of collective planning and resource management. Over the past decades these practices have declined
because of the modern top-down approach. As a result, the communities’s sense of ownership of decision making decreased and people become more dependent on government development programmes. The government sponsored Mahila Mangal Dals are also inactive due to lack of vision, guidance and future plan of action. By empowering mountain women through collective action HARC developed an economic development model addressing priority needs. The establishment of women’s cooperatives is the major outcome of the whole process. Rawain Mahila Multipurpose Autonomous Cooperative Society Limited is the only women’s federation engaged in trading activities in the state of Uttarakhand. This society built confidence among women, increased social acceptance and enhanced their decision making capacity.

3.4 GENDER PLANNING

Gender planning is the recognition of existing gender inequalities in the society and helps to formulate the policies to mitigate gender inequalities in the society. It aims to improve the status and conditions of women by formulating appropriate policies and programmes. The existing planning approach treats all as equal and it will make a plan for all without considering the inequalities existing in the society. Gender planning helps to expose, analyze and resolve the inequalities existing in social, economic, culture, legal and family structures and serves to initiate processes of change to address inequalities in such structures and processes.

3.5 GENDER BUDGETING

Gender budget is one of the most important instruments which reflect the economic policy of the government. It can also be a powerful tool in transforming the economy at different levels of State, District or Grassroots level of village Panchayats. It reflects the choices that the government chooses in order to achieve the economic and developmental goals. Of late, Gender budgeting has emerged as a new process. This ensures the care for women’s needs and priorities in the total budget. This has become an effective mechanism to bring about gender equity. A Gender Responsive Budget is a budget that acknowledges the gender patterns in the society and allocates money to implement policies and programmes that changes these patterns in a way that moves towards a more gender-equal society. Gender budget initiatives are exercises that aim to move the country in the direction of a gender-responsive budget.

Box 5: Women’s Component Plan in Kerala

It aims to provide a mechanism for special activities to ensure gender equity in society and within the family. At least 10 percent of the plan budget is mandated to be set apart to meet the specific needs of women. The government of Kerala initiated people’s plan campaign during ninth plan period. In this campaign Women’s Component Plan is also included. Long-term and short-term strategic needs of women can be addressed through Women’s Component Plan to ensure overall empowerment of women. Studies revealed that the last two decades of the Women’s Component Plan in the decentralized plan process in Kerala met the needs of the women and it increased women’s income and enhanced the status of women through adoption of non-traditional
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Projects carried out in some areas. Women’s groups formed as transport cooperatives of women, training of women as masons, collectives for repairing of household tools, manufacture of electric equipment, paramedical training, gender education, karate and self defense training, cycling training, sport and cultural competitions. The Women’s Component Plan has paved the way for women to enter the small-scale industry sector. It has also helped women in participating in the local planning process and improved their organizational ability. As part of the plan, the government of Kerala introduced ‘Kudumbashree’ scheme which helped women to organize collectively and involve themselves in development activities.

Box 6: Gender Responsive Government at the Grass Roots Governance:

| The enactment of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment of India during 1993 has enabled significant changes in the grassroots governance. As a result more than a million leaders are at the local government level as decision makers of whom one third are women. These leaders having ample opportunities to develop budgets with a gender perspective. These grassroots leaders are managing the affairs of the Gram Panchayats during the last twenty years with grants received from various sources like allocation from the government, funds for different schemes etc. With the help of these funds the leaders undertake a number of development activities in their respective local government. Some women have taken initiatives to have gender-responsive budget in their sphere of Governance. Efforts have been taken in Karnataka with the help of UNIFEM to develop gender-responsive budget in selected Gram Panchayats. |

3.6 GENDER AUDITING

Gender auditing is the analysis of the system and process of finance of any government. Gender auditing implies auditing the income and expenditure of governments from a gender perspective and also analyzing the development process including the process of legislation, guidelines, taxes and social development projects. It understands that policies have a differential impact on men and women by recognizing the roles and responsibilities of men in the society form the basis for gender auditing. Gender auditing is the one aspect of social auditing.

3.6.1 Case study: Social Audit

Over the last two decades, civil society organizations, academics, and researchers have debated different methods for measuring and improving transparency and accountability in development programmes meant for the poor. Social audits have emerged as a powerful method — one which is able to reach those areas of information reserve and bring it in the public domain, which conventional audit mechanisms and agencies have been unable to. Unlike traditional audits, a social audit is not a one-time, but a continuous exercise, that audits expenditure, its usefulness, and its impact. It thereby tries to ensure that the activity or project is designed and implemented in a manner that is most suited for the prevailing (local) conditions, appropriately reflects the priorities and preferences of those affected by it, and most effectively serves public interest. Such a process provides for effective people’s participation in monitoring expenditure and influencing decision making in the formulation and implementation development programmes. Accessing relevant information, consolidating it in a manner that people can easily
comprehend, and facilitating a verification process by the stakeholders are some of the basic steps undertaken in a Social Audit. In doing so, the process also helps create awareness about people’s rights and entitlements.

The MGNREGA and Social Audit in the Indian state of Rajasthan, a network of civil society organizations called the Rozgar Evum Suchna Ka Adhikar Abhiyan has been conducting social audits of projects under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for close to three years now. Passed in 2005, the Act guarantees 100 days of employment each year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. Failure to provide work within 15 days, gives the applicant a right to claim unemployment allowance. Despite this progress, however, most people remain unaware of their rights and entitlements under the MGNREGA. The information flow has been minimal, with the administration taking little or no initiative. Inadequate staff and lack of training have also been areas of concern. Unlike the previous employment schemes, in the country - beset with a range of problems from lack of awareness, planning and people’s participation, low quality of assets, diversion of funds and no public accountability, the MGNREGA provides for two distinct and extremely powerful legal provisions – transparency and public monitoring. The passage of the Right to Information Act (RTI) in the year 2005 have made social audits of the MGNREGA possible and strengthened these provisions since access to information is the primary and most crucial step in conducting a Social Audit. Regular social audits since then and the presence of people’s groups in certain areas have resulted in strong transparency measures, such as transparency boards at worksites detailing the funds allocated for (and spent on) labour and material. Also, the availability of muster rolls in nearly all the worksites has considerably reduced delays in wage payment and non-payment of wages. Large numbers of men and women have attended the public hearings held as part of the audits to testify against false records and register their discontent, despite enormous pressure placed by local powers. Apart from corrupt practices and deviation of funds that get identified in these social audits, such exercises also allow a discussion on various other features of a programme, which get overlooked or unaddressed otherwise. In the case of the Abhiyan, the social audits proposed that addressing basic issues like adequate honorarium and allowance to elected representatives, increasing administrative, technical and managerial staff at the lowest level and establishing responsibility for proper maintenance of records will also clear away instances and scope for possible monetary deviations and reduce the slack in implementation resistance to Social Audits. Nearly all of the social audits conducted by the Abhiyan have been in coordination with the state government, local authorities, and field-level functionaries. The three have come together on a number of occasions to discuss findings of the social audits and worked towards correcting the problems and strengthening the MGNREGA. However, two audits recently organized by the Abhiyan in the district of Banswara and Jhalawar encountered strong resistance, even violence. Despite the strong transparency provisions in the MGNREGA and the RTI, members of the Abhiyan had to stage sit-in protests to access records. A wide array of local actors opposed the social audits, creating an air of fear and tension and making it difficult for the Abhiyan to conduct the social audit. In Banswara, the Government of Rajasthan had itself invited the Abhiyan to do the social audit but then refused to be a part of the process in the midst of this resistance and violence. In Jhalawar, the government’s failure to provide sufficient information forced the Abhiyan to restrict itself to five panchayats (small administrative governmental units usually composed of a cluster of villages); however, the audits
there uncovered evidence of embezzlement in 14 different villages. There were numerous other instances of fudged muster rolls and other problems; for example, most marginalized sections of society were either denied a job card or charged for what should have been a free document. These acts of resistance to the social audit raise fundamental questions and doubts about the government’s commitment to transparency and accountability in development programs for the poor. They also expose the limits of the government’s commitment to making the MGNREGA a healthy and successful program.

3.6.2 Emerging Challenges

A social audit is fundamentally a people’s process. It has given shape to the idea of public vigilance in large development programs such as the MGNREGA, where it is nearly impossible for one person or agency to run the program. The idea of incorporating social audits in the MGNREGA also reflects a decade of struggle and democratic protests by ordinary men and women who realized the importance of official information to their lives and livelihood. The events that unfolded in Banswara and Jhalawar, however, threaten to destroy this effort. The government and the local administration sought to strengthen the existing power relations in the area by resisting the social audit, in part by reading the provisions of transparency and accountability in the narrowest possible terms — announcing that the audit could be held only under the terms they themselves established. Such resistance only shows the potential of social audits to weed out the corrupt, strengthen people’s entitlements, and establish accountability. The time has come for people’s groups to redesign their strategies to meet these fresh rounds of attacks and keep alive democratic spaces and practices for those most marginalized.

In this section you have studied gender planning, gender budgeting and gender auditing. Now, answer the questions in Check Your Progress 2.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Answer the following questions in about 50 words.

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What is Women Component Plan?

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2) Define Gender Budgeting and Gender Auditing.

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3.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit an attempt has been made to discuss the recent initiatives in the gender and development discourses. The process of empowerment, which is considered as the opening up of opportunities for the deprived people has gained momentum in the recent years and the progress has been made significantly. It is both an internal and external process. While internal processes have to happen within, external process will takes place through the initiative of social and political institutions. Gender mainstreaming, gender panning, gender budgeting and gender auditing will certainly serve as tools of gender and development. But agencies are in the process of refining them to serve better.

3.8 GLOSSARY

Social Justice : Social justice generally refers to the idea of creating an egalitarian society or institution that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being.

Microfinance : Microfinance is the provision of financial services to low-income clients, including consumers and the self-employed, who traditionally lack access to banking and related services.

Micro Credit : Microcredit is the extension of very small loans (microloans) to those in poverty designed to spur entrepreneurship. These individuals lack collateral, steady employment and a verifiable credit history and therefore cannot meet even the most minimal qualifications to gain access to traditional credit.


3.9 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS


Razavi, Shahrashoub, and Miller, Carol, *From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse*, UNRISD Occasional Paper, UNRISD,
Approaches to Gender and Development


3.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS –POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) What do you understand by empowerment of women?

Ans. Empowerment is a process whereby women critically reflect on the condition of their own lives and acquire the knowledge skills and consciousness to change or transform that condition. It is a condition where women’s self-reliance and inner strength are enhanced and thereby gain control over assets and resources and subsequently are able to control all aspects of their lives.

2) What is gender mainstreaming?

Ans. Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the status of men and women in all policies and programmes of Government and other organizations and also its implications.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What is Women Component Plan?

Ans. It was introduced in ninth five year plan. At least 10 percent of the plan budget is mandated to be set apart to meet the specific needs of women.

2) Define Gender Budgeting and Gender Auditing.

Ans. A Gender Responsive Budget is a budget that acknowledges the gender patterns in the society and allocates money to implement policies and programmes that change these patterns in ways that moves towards a more gender equal society.

Gender auditing is the analysis of the system and process of finance of any government from a gender perspective. Gender auditing implies auditing the income and expenditure of governments from a gender perspective and also analyzing the development process including the process of legislation, guidelines, taxes and social development projects.
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