

# Gender Studies

## Gender and Development

### 1. Colonial perspectives on Gender

The British in India saw themselves as a force for enlightenment, especially for women. To support their claim, they pointed to the laws liberalising women's legal position. Between 1772 and 1947 they introduced nine major reforms, including the laws forbidding female infanticide, sati and child marriage, and those raising the age of consent, allowing widow remarriage, and improving women's inheritance rights. Official British policy was of non-interference in personal and religious matters, which inhibited the evolution of social change in written law.

British policies in certain other areas present a different outlook often highlighting the colonizers' approach to women. Liddle and Joshi have delineated three such examples:

1. The restitution of conjugal rights: This ideology was derived from Christian ecclesiastical law and was brought to India from England. Under this law a spouse can sue one's partner if she refuses to fulfill the sexual obligations of marriage. A prison term was imposed for non-compliance.
2. Regarding prostitution, the soldiers in the army were provided with Indian prostitutes by the official military authorities. These prostitutes had to get themselves registered and carried a licensed card with them. They also had to undergo compulsory medical examination.
3. Women's suffrage that is the right of women to vote and to stand for office was granted to Indian women in a very limited sense in 1921 in Madras presidency. This franchise was given to those women and men who were educated and wealthy. This was due to efforts of Women's Indian Association (WIA).

## 2. Capitalistic Perspective on gender

**Add marxist perspective previously discussed.** Feminists charge capitalism with the fact that it inevitably leads to inequality, from which women suffer more than men.

### In defense of Capitalism

Capitalism brings technological and social innovations that are good for women, and disrupts traditions that subordinate women in materially beneficial and socially progressive ways. : it promotes technical innovation that tends to improve quality and length of life for everyone, but particularly for women. But more importantly for the feminist defense of capitalism, it promotes social innovation, in particular the destruction of harmful, patriarchal traditions Capitalism upholds the ideology of individual rights and the ideal of mutual advantage

## 3. Gender Analysis of Development Theories; Modernization Theory, World System Theory, Dependency Theory, Structural Functionalism.

- a. **Modernisation theory:** It blames internal cultural factors for **women's subordination** in the developing world. It is argued that some traditional cultures, and especially the religious ideas that underpin the values, norms, institutions and customs of the developing world, ascribe status on the basis of gender. In practise, this means that males are accorded patriarchal control and dominance over a range of female activities and, consequently, women have little status in developing societies. Modernisation theorists note that gender equality is generally greater in more developed countries and believe that there is relationship between modernisation, economic growth and greater gender equality. The World Bank in it's report ***Globalisation, Economic Growth and Gender Equality*** appears to be a strong proponent of this view today.

Feminist Critique: However capitalist development, export-led growth, industrialisation, spread of individualism and meritocracy is not a

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pathway leading to progress and in fact was leading to further exploitation of developing countries and marginalised groups (including Blacks, Dalits, women amongst them) in developing countries.

**b. World System Theory:** The world systems theory, developed by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, is an approach to world history and social change that suggests there is a world economic system in which some countries benefit while others are exploited. Just like we cannot understand an individual's behavior without reference to their surroundings, experiences, and culture, a nation's economic system cannot be understood without reference to the world system of which they are a part. The main characteristics of this theory are:

- i. The world systems theory is established on a three-level hierarchy consisting of core, periphery, and semi-periphery areas.
- ii. The core countries dominate and exploit the peripheral countries for labor and raw materials.
- iii. The peripheral countries are dependent on core countries for capital.
- iv. The semi-peripheral countries share characteristics of both core and peripheral countries.
- v. There are four temporal stages of world system.
  1. Cyclical rhythms: These represents the short-term fluctuation of economy.
  2. Secular trends: This mean deeper long run tendencies, such as general economic growth or decline.
  3. Contradiction: This means a general controversy in the system, usually concerning some short term vs. long term trade-offs.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example, lowering of wages may benefit capitalists in the short term, but the long term decrease of wages may have a crucially harmful effect by reducing the demand for the product.

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4. The last temporal feature is the crisis: a crisis occurs, if a constellation<sup>2</sup> of circumstances brings about the end of the system.
- vi. Feminist Analysis: This theory emphasizes the social structure of global inequality. So the inequality that is present on a global level will inevitably be replicated at a societal level with women being on the periphery and men or the patriarchal system being at the core.
  - vii. Feminist Critique: Crisis has had an impact on gender, race/ethnicity and class transformation in both the developed and developing countries. Still gendered, race, class and ethnic analysis of world-system through the different stages are not part of the world-systems theory and they should be included.

**c. Dependency Theory:**

- i. It was popular in the 1960s and 1970s. It rejected the modernization theory, arguing that underdeveloped countries are not only older versions of developed countries but in-fact wealthier countries of today had become wealthy by exploiting poorer countries in the following three respects:
  1. They exploit natural resources and cheap labour of poor countries.
  2. They support a state of dependence of poor nations on wealthy ones by controlling economics, media, politics, banking, finance, education, culture, sports and all aspects of human resource development including the recruitment and training of workers.
  3. They counter all attempts made by dependent nations to resist their influences by means of economic sanctions, and, at times, by the use of military force.

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<sup>2</sup> Constellation here means a group of associated or similar things that endanger the survival of the system.

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- ii. Dependency theorists define development as ability of countries to being free from exploitation and being able to define development according to their own needs and not dictated by external pressures.
  - iii. Feminist Analysis: One can use this analogy to refer to how men use the patriarchal system to keep women in a state of dependency towards men. They are purposefully kept out of the gendered workforce and their cheap labor is exploited by men and the patriarchal world systems.
  - iv. Feminist Critique: While dependency theory does explain how traditional feudal structures of exploitation like race, caste or class in colonies were used by the present developed countries it does not examine how power relations of gender within colonies were made use off for such development. Neither is the exploitation of women's labour by multi-national corporations under the WTO regime analysed by most dependency theorists.

**d. Structural Functionalism**

Structural functionalists posit that gender roles arise from the need to establish a division of labor that will help maintain the smooth running of the family and contribute to the stability of society. So, girls and boys are taught different approaches to life.

Two beliefs: – Women are inferior outside the home. – Women are more valuable in the home. So it discourages women from venturing in to the workplace and states that her domain is the house.

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## **4. Gender Approaches to Development: Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD); Gender Critique of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs).**

Over the years development programs have been criticized for ignoring gender roles and the impact it has on women in the global south. However we see a shift to integrate women into development programs in hopes of eradicating poverty and low social economical status. The main theoretical approaches are:

1. Women in development (WID);

It originated as a result of three factors. The first and second waves of feminism<sup>3</sup> and the publication of Ester Boserup's book "Women's Role in Economic Development" in 1970. The book proved how specialised division of labor along with development led to the neglect of women and the value of their work especially in developing countries. In 1973, the US congress implemented a bill, which required the USAID to include women in development programs. The WID approach helped to ensure, the integration of women into the workforce and increase their level of productivity in order to improve their lives. However some have criticized this approach as being very western. It fails to acknowledge the collective and cultural concerns of women in the developing world. It fails to understand the dynamics of the private sphere but focus solely on the public sphere.

2. Women and development (WAD);

The women and development (WAD) approach originated back in 1975 in Mexico city, as it sort to discuss women's issues from a neo-Marxist and dependency theory perspective. Its focus was to "explain the relationship between women and the process of capitalist development in terms of material conditions that contribute to their exploitation" (pg 95). It focuses specifically on the relation between patriarchy and capitalism and brings women-only development programs. Some have criticised this approach. They believe the women-only

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<sup>3</sup> Which inevitably led to the first UN Global Conference on Women in Mexico 1975

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development projects would struggle, or ultimately fail, due to their scale, and the marginalized status of these women. Furthermore, the WAD perspective suffers from a tendency to view women as a class, and pay little attention to the differences among women. WAD fails to fully consider the relationships between patriarchy, modes of production, and the marginalization of women. It also presumes that the position of women around the world will improve when international conditions become more equitable.

### 3. Gender and development (GAD);

The Gender and development approach originated in the 1980s by socialist feminism. This approach was majorly influenced by the writings of academic scholars such as Oakley and Rubin who emphasize the social relationship between men and women. Its two main goals were to prove that the unequal relationship between the sexes hinders development and female participation and to change the structure of power into a long-term goal whereby decision-making and benefits of development are distributed on equal basis of gender neutrality. The GAD approach is not just focused on the biological inequalities among sexes: men and women, but also on how social roles, reproductive roles and economic roles are linked to Gender inequalities of: masculinity and femininity. GAD has been criticized for emphasizing the social differences between men and women while neglecting the bonds between them and also the potential for changes in roles. Another criticism is that GAD does not dig deeply enough into social relations and so may not explain how these relations can undermine programs directed at women. It also does not uncover the types of trade-offs that women are prepared to make for the sake of achieving their ideals of marriage or motherhood.

### 4. Gender critique of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs):

Structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) consist of loans provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to countries that experienced economic crises. SAPs are created with the goal of reducing the borrowing country's fiscal imbalances in the short and medium term or in order to adjust the economy to long-term growth. The bank from which a borrowing country receives its loan depends upon the type of necessity. SAPs are supposed

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to allow the economies of the developing countries to become more market oriented. This then forces them to concentrate more on trade and production so it can boost their economy. Through conditions, SAPs generally implement "free market" programmes and policy. These programs include internal changes (notably privatization and deregulation) as well as external ones.

There are many detrimental effects on the poor, particularly on women, due to structural adjustment programs. With the patriarchal society that exists in the world, cultural constructs ensure that women have less access to resources and power than men do. The structural adjustment programs exacerbate women's already unequal access, which further harms women. One of the most detrimental effects of SAPs on women is the aspect of IMF's conditionality requirement for fiscal austerity. IMF does not necessarily specify where the budget cuts must come from, just that spending must be decreased. More often than not, countries begin the budget cuts with social programs and subsidies. They typically cut from programs such as health care, welfare programs, social security, education, and agricultural subsidies. Social programs are seen as unnecessary, high cost expenses that must be cut in order for a state to decrease its debts. The ramifications of the loss of social programs are huge and are felt especially by women. IMF's structural adjustment programs indirectly cause a severe impact on women due to patriarchy of society and the invisibility of women at IMF.

## **5. Globalization and Gender**

Globalisation has had a big impact on gender and how we think about it. There has been a move towards widespread international concern and activism against inequalities between genders. International Organisations such as the United Nations have had an increasingly productive impact in building a narrative around the issue. It is Goal 5 of the SDGs to Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. UN Women is also an entity solely dedicated to Gender equality and women empowerment. Through Globalisation women in the Global South countries are being employed by Multi National Corporations (MNCs) and they are being provided access to better jobs.



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However globalization has also led to exploitation of women by the MNCs, most prevalent in the form of sweatshops where, usually, women<sup>4</sup> and young girls and children work in horrendous conditions for a pittance and manufacture products which are sold in western countries for exorbitant rates. The developmental approaches WAD, WID, GAD etc may help in creating a better future for females,

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<sup>4</sup> They make up 90% of sweat shop workers