UNIT 2 GENDER ROLES AND PATRIARCHY IN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Structure

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Gender is an evolving concept and is used to understand the differential place of women and men in the society. The purpose of looking at gender is not to divide women and men and causing conflict between them. It draws one's attention to those issues that have brought about unequal relations between women and men, and allows those issues to be addressed with appropriate measures that help reduce inequality rather than perpetuate inequality. The concept of gender and gender roles helps us to know that gender roles are created by the interaction between individuals, communities and their surroundings and suggests that masculine and feminine roles are not associated with 'male and female' biological traits, but are learnt in the process of being socialized. In this Unit, you will learn about gender roles, concepts of patriarchy and matriarchy, violence against women and women in the workforce. More so, you will learn in what way patriarchy contributes to the construction of gender and gendered roles.

2.2   OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand and explain the concepts associated with gender roles

- Explain the concept of patriarchy and matriarchy in society

- Comprehend how patriarchy reaffirms itself and safeguards its interests

- Analyse the role of women in political economy and national wealth.

2.3 UNDERSTANDING GENDER ROLES

In everyday life, the term gender generally refers to gender relations (relations between men and women) in households, community, market and state institutions and analysis of the way social rules, norms and practices determine the way resources and responsibilities are divided between men and women. It is more often used as a synonym for sex, referring to males and females according to genotypic differences and distinct primary sex characteristics. Ann Oakley (1972) was one of the first social scientists to distinguish the concept of gender from the concept of sex.

The United Nations (2001) defines the term gender as culturally based expectations of roles and behaviours of males and females. UN distinguishes the term as socially constructed from the biologically determined aspects of being male and female. Unlike the biology of sex, gender roles and behaviours can change historically, sometimes relatively quickly, even if aspects of these gender roles originated in the biological differences between the sexes. The religious and cultural differences that define and justify the distinct roles and expected behaviours of males and females are strongly cherished and socially enforced.

The concept of gender in feminist writings and other sociological discourses became popular in the early 1970's. In sociological studies, the term gender is also used to describe the differences in behaviour between men and women which are described as 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Therefore, gender is an analytical category that is socially constructed to differentiate the biological difference between men and women. Feminist writings focus on this aspect and claim that these differences are not biological but are social constructions of patriarchal society. Beauvoir (1949) reached the conclusion that one is not born a woman but rather becomes a woman.

Judith Butler (2011) argues that sex is natural and comes first. Gender is perceived as a secondary construct which is imposed over the top of this natural distinction. The distinction between 'male' and 'female' is a social distinction made by the society, that is, it is a social construction. It is a way of perceiving and dividing the differences between 'male' and 'female'. Butler explains that 'sex' though seen as biological, is as much a product of society as is gender. When an infant is born, it is referred to as either male or female baby. This refers to the sex of the infant. Sex, thus refers to the biological difference between male and female. Gender, on the other hand, is a social construct, not a biological one (Sen, 2012).

According to the World Development Report (WDR 2012), gender is defined as socially constructed norms and ideologies which determine the behaviour and actions of men and women. Understanding these gender relations and the power dynamics behind them is a prerequisite for understanding individuals' access to and distribution of resources, the ability to make decisions and the way women and men, boys and girls are affected by political processes and social development.

Gender can be described as an achieved or constructed set of norms which are deemed appropriate for men and women. These norms can include constructed roles, behaviour, activities and attributes. Depending on the

NEVERsociety, these constructed roles vary and are expected to be performed within its' bounds.

Gender dynamics and relations change throughout the course of the lifecycle. Status in the household is often determined by age, marriage, number of children, disability, economic resources and educational level attained.

Girls, including adolescent girls, often have the lowest status in the household, especially in societies where families need to pay dowry and where the daughters are sent to live with the husband's family upon marriage. Recent research has identified adolescent girls as particularly vulnerable and susceptible to gender-based discrimination including sexual violence, forced and early marriage, dropping out of school and risk of death during childbirth. Early marriage and early pregnancy can have adverse effects on girls' health, and may inhibit their ability to take advantage of educational and job opportunities. In many cultures, daughters-in-law and unmarried women, widows and married women who have been abandoned by their husbands do not generally receive equal status as they do not fit into the constructed identities formed for them.

Gender Roles

A **gender role** is a set of societal norms dictating the types of behaviours which are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived sex or sexuality. As we have already discussed the difference between 'gender' and 'sex', gender roles too are constructed and not a natural phenomenon.

How Roles Are Learned

Gender roles are the roles that men and women are expected to occupy based on their sex. Gender roles are passed on through generations. From the age of three, children are able to start becoming aware of the differences between girls and boys based on the actions of the parents and the nature of their environment. Traditionally, many societies believed that women are more nurturing than men. Therefore, the traditional view of the feminine gender role prescribes that women should behave in ways that are nurturing. One way that a woman might engage in the traditional feminine gender role would be to nurture her family by working full-time within the home rather than taking employment outside of the home. Men, on the other hand, are presumed by traditional views of gender roles to be leaders. The traditional view of the masculine gender role, therefore, suggests that men should be the heads of their households by providing financially for the family and making important family decisions.

While these views remain dominant in many spheres of society, alternative perspectives on traditional beliefs about gender roles have gained increasing support in the twenty-first century. Different disciplines offer a range of perspectives on gender roles. An ecological perspective on gender roles suggests that gender roles are created by the interactions between individuals, communities, and their environments. That is, while individual people play a role in constructing gender roles, so too do the physical and social environments within which people operate. A biological perspective on gender roles suggests that women have a natural affinity towards the feminine gender

role and that men have a natural affinity towards the masculine gender role. The biological perspective does not, however, suggest that one role holds any inherently greater value than another role. A sociological perspective toward gender roles suggests that masculine and feminine roles are learned and that masculine and feminine gender roles are not necessarily connected to male and female biological traits. Sociologists study the different meanings and values that masculine and feminine gender roles hold in society. Related to the sociological perspective, a feminist perspective on gender roles might assert that because gender roles are learned, they can also be unlearned, and that new and distinct roles can be created. The feminist perspective points out that, gender roles are not simply ideas about appropriate behaviour for males and females but are also linked to the distinct levels of power that males and females hold in society.

As these examples demonstrate, gender roles are created based on stereotypes about gender. Gender stereotypes are oversimplified understandings of males and females and the differences between them. Individuals sometimes base their perceptions about appropriate gender roles upon gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes tend to include exaggerated or erroneous assertions about the nature of males and females. For example, a common gender stereotype about males is that they are not emotional. Females, on the other hand, are commonly stereotyped as being irrational or overly emotional.

Types of Gender Roles

Moser (1993) highlighted that women generally have a triple role to play: (i) reproductive; (ii) productive; (iii) community managing activities, while men primarily undertake two i.e. productive and community political activities.

Reproductive role	Child bearing / rearing responsibilities, and domestic tasks done by women, required to guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. It includes not only biological reproduction but also the care and maintenance of the work force (male partner and working children) and the future work force (infants and school-going children).
Productive role	Work done by both men and women for pay in cash or kind. It includes both market production with an exchange-value, and subsistence/home production with actual use-value, and also potential exchange-value. For women in agricultural production, this includes work as independent farmers, peasant wives and wage workers.
Community managing role	Activities undertaken primarily by women at the community level, as an extension of their reproductive role, to ensure the provision and maintenance of scarce resources of collective consumption, such as water, health care and education. This is voluntary unpaid work, undertaken in 'free' time.

Community political role	Activities undertaken primarily by men at the community level, organizing at the formal political level, often within the framework of national politics. This is usually paid work, either directly or indirectly, through status or power.

The gender-based division of labour ascribed in each socio-economic setting determines the roles that men and women perform. Since men and women play distinct roles, they often face very different cultural, institutional, physical and economic constraints, many of which are rooted in systematic biases and discrimination.

Check Your Progress I

Notes : a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Is gender socially constructed? Discuss with an example.

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2) Define the concept of gender roles from feminist perspective.

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3) Gender roles are learned. How? Write five sentences in support of you answer.

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2.4 CONCEPT OF PATRIARCHY AND MATRIARCHY

Societies wherein generations of families are linked through the father's line are said to be patriarchal in nature. Such societies are also termed as patrilineal societies. On the other hand, generations connected through the mother's line are said to be matriarchal in nature and termed as matrilineal societies.

The line of descent in a society delineates the succession of names, property, titles and other valuables in a family. They can either be passed on through a female line or through a male line in different societies. With majority of the world's societies being patrilineal, patriarchal societies dominate in the world's cultures whereas matrilineal societies tend to be primal societies.

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Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a term very commonly used by feminist scholars and practiced by a clear majority of the population in their everyday lives. But what does patriarchy really mean? A patriarchy, from the ancient Greek word *patriarches*, is a society where power is held by and passed down through the elder males. Another rather easy to understand definition of patriarchy is given in the Oxford Dictionary, as *a system of society or government in which the father or the eldest male is the head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line.* Patriarchy is the term used to describe the society in which we live today, characterised by current and historic unequal power relations between women and men whereby women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed. This takes place across almost every sphere of life in the form of under-representation in the work force, in decision-making positions and in government institutions. Male violence against women is also a key feature of patriarchy. Women in minority groups face multiple oppressions in this society, as race, class and sexuality intersect with sexism for example. Women's bodies have been at stake in times of war and conflict, wherein such patriarchal oppressive ideologies are practiced such as mass rapes.

The concept of patriarchy which has been developed within feminist writings is not a single or simple concept but has a whole variety of different meanings. At the most general level patriarchy has been used to refer to male domination and to the power relationships by which men dominate women (Millet, 1970*).*

Matriarchy

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (*OED*), matriarchy is a "form of social organization in which the mother or oldest female is the head of the family, and descent and relationship are reckoned through the female line; government or rule by a woman or women." Matriarchy fundamentally means a society wherein the power is held by and passed on to the female members of the family, at an individual as well as the societal level. In a matriarchal society, women primarily hold power; predominate in the realms of employment, in the decision-making process and control over property. Within the academic discipline of cultural anthropology, according to the OED, matriarchy is a "culture or community in which such a system prevails" or a "family, society, organization, etc., dominated by a woman or women."

There are many studies that show that even in societies with matrilineal descent, the power structure is either egalitarian or dominated formally by the father or some other male figure. For a social system to be considered a matriarchy, it would require following a culture that defined a woman or women in an authoritative stance, and their dominance being considered essential and legitimate.

Broadly speaking, patriarchy as a way of life has affected men as much as it has affected women, across the world. With most of the nation's being patriarchal in nature, men are forced to be the breadwinners of the family, while women are to be its caregivers. Issues of gendered roles have been researched and discussed through the times by scholars. If gender roles are

to be reversed, it would mean to interchange these traditional roles, making men the caregivers of the family and women the breadwinners. But the important question that arises here is whether this is sufficient to challenge the norms of patriarchy and sufficient to achieve gender equality? Couples whose gender roles have been reversed have to try and balance their intimacy and sense of identity in order to achieve equality. Workplace cultures are still embedded with traditional gendered stereotypes. The character and 'masculinity' of men is often questioned and they are looked down upon when they become the care givers of their family. Women's role as care givers is also questioned when they hold positions of leaderships and are divided between their roles at the workplace and that at the home. Ambitious women, at the higher levels of leadership in organizations are often said to be 'bad mothers' and their maternal instincts are questioned. In a modernizing society, the performances of stereotypical roles tend to be compromising, even if such roles remain natural and innovative because of the lack of earning and outside impact. Therefore, gender role reversal is not the solution to address patriarchy, but what is required is liberation from gendered roles and stereotypes to empower men and women to pursue the vocations they like and retain basic values and virtues.

Check Your Progress II

Notes : a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

4) Explain the terms matriarchy and patriarchy and define how both forms of social organisations differ from each other.

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5) Patriarchal system is defined as a system of male dominance. How? Explain briefly.

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6) Define how the notions of masculinity and femininity are constructed?

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2.5 THEORIES AND FEATURES OF INDIAN PATRIARCHY

Patriarchy is a flexible phenomenon; whose characteristics remain the same in all societies. The way it implements and safeguards its interests in different societies depends upon numerous factors such as culture, religion and reproduces its existence with the help of tools such as movies, television, politics, and political economy and so on. Given below are the features of patriarchy:

• **Male dominance**: In a patriarchal system, men make all decisions at both the personal as well as the societal level. They hold all positions of power and authority, and are considered superior to women, mentally as well as physically. Men are concerned with identification that includes qualities of control, strength, forcefulness, rationality, strong work ethic, and competitiveness. Each of these qualities contributes to male identification in a patriarchal system. Such stereotypes tend to make men maintain a traditional and biased attitude towards women, therefore justifying violence or discrimination against them.

• **Protecting the authority of men:** Patriarchal societies, such as India's, work towards safeguarding the interests of the patriarch (the male-head of the family). Patriarchy, in a sense grants power and authority to men, in the public sphere as well as the private sphere. In the public sphere, they are more vocal and have more employment opportunities than women. They are more intelligent, sensible and non-emotional as a part of their masculinity. Such traits further promote and legitimize patriarchal issues, both in the private and public realm. Sexism, negative attitudes, domestic violence, female foeticide and infanticide are examples of such crimes against women in India.

• **Discrimination against women**: One of the most key features of a patriarchal society lies in its discrimination against women. Because of male dominance and the consequent protection of the authority of men, women are naturally subordinate to men and are hence discriminated against. Women are subject to economic, political and social constraints, within and outside the family. Preference for male child, early marriage, lack of jobs, domestic violence, economic and social freedom are some of the many examples of such discrimination. In general, the objective and perceived status of occupations and jobs open to women are inferior to those available to men. Without having access to "good" jobs, women will continue to be economically dependent on their spouses or partners. Economic dependence is one of the factors that force battered women to continue living with a violent spouse. Due to a lack of confidence and economic freedom, divorce or separation means poverty for them.

• **Traditional beliefs and stereotypes regarding women's' roles in the society:** The female child in India is often deprived of her right to education due to traditional beliefs regarding the role they are expected to play in the family, as an institution of the society. The number of girls dropping out of school far exceeds the boys because girls are expected to help at home, either with household work like washing and

cooking or with taking care of younger siblings. Since girls spend more time performing domestic duties and this increases the gap between female and male equality in rural parts of India, it perpetuates the myth that education is of no help to the girl and her primary job will be to look after the household work, get married early, have children and then raise them. Such beliefs and stereotypes are also reflected in the family post-marriage. Women's indispensable role of a wife and a mother are innate qualities of 'being a woman'.

Generally, patriarchal societies are more tolerant and lenient toward men who neglect their role as husband than they are toward women who neglect their role as wife. Moreover, the stigma of being a bachelor or divorced man is not nearly as strong as that of being an unmarried woman who lives alone with her children. Such women are perceived as failing to live up to traditional expectations of them as a wife, mother and woman (Haj-Yahia, 2005). The critical factor underlying gender stereotyping and violence has proved to be power, and not gender per se.

- **Constructing notions of masculinity and femininity**: Sen (2012) explains that the concept of gender includes the expectations held about the aptitudes, characteristics and likely behaviours of both men and women called masculinity and femininity. It is a basic organizing principle of society that shapes how people think about themselves and guides how they interact with each other. They change with time and are different in different societies and cultures. "Gender is lived reality, an experience related to every step of life" (Rege, 2003). Being a male or a female is therefore considered to be their defined sex. On the other hand, 'masculinity' or 'femininity' is the constructed gender roles. According to Oakley, gender parallels the biological division of sex into male and female, but it involves the division and social valuation of masculinity and femininity. In other words, gender is a concept that humans create socially, through their interactions with one another and their environments, yet it relies heavily upon biological differences between males and females. Because humans create the concept of gender socially, gender is referred to as a social construction. The social construction of gender is demonstrated by the fact that individuals, groups, and societies ascribe traits, statuses, or values to individuals purely because of their sex, yet these ascriptions differ across societies and cultures, and over time within the same society. Characteristics, traits, and activities that are "deemed" appropriate for men and women are referred to as 'gender stereotypes'. Such activities tend to enclose men and women in a box, defining their masculinity or femininity. The institutions of the society such as family, school, friends etc., help in developing a child's understanding of an aspect as sensitive as gender. This type of socialization tends to affect ones' ideology at a very early age. A child will grasp such aspects from books, toys, parents and teachers. Such stereotyping puts unwarranted pressure on boys who love to read, dislike fighting, or dislike sports or mechanics. Similarly, it hurts girls who struggle with body image, and who wish to excel in sports. Gender equality benefits both boys and girls. Working toward gender equality will enable both boys and girls to be themselves, instead of being bound by rigid gender roles.

Check Your Progress III

Notes : a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

7) Write a brief note on the various features of patriarchy in the Indian context.

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8) Discuss how masculinity and femininity play a crucial role in defining gendered roles of men and women in media representation.

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2.6 OPPRESSION AND VIOLENCE (SEX, CASTE, CLASS AND DISABILITIES)

The intermingling of the power relations amongst different members of the society forms the basis of patriarchy. These power relations can be between men and women, amongst two men or two women. As discussed before, power is an underlying feature in a patriarchal setting and plays a role of utmost importance to safeguard the interests of patriarchy. The power can lie with the mother of the family and even she can oppress her children or daughter-in-law in terms of financial or physical independence or dowry. Such power relations reproduce the dominance of patriarchy which contributes towards gender-based violence. Such dominance and violence further maintains the status quo of power – vis-a-vis crude forms of oppression, like violence; and subtle ones, like law; to perpetuate inequality. Patriarchy is a structural force that influences power relations, whether they are physically or mentally abusive or not.

India has traditionally been a male-dominated society where women and their bodies have been subject to physical and mental atrocities in their routine lives. Eve-teasing in public transport, molestation, robbery, and rape has become the mundane reality of their lives. The growth of any nation is judged not only in terms of the economic and the statistical factors, but depends a great deal upon the crime rates in the social sphere as well. Rapes, brutal murders, harassment, assault, and chain-snatching, etc. have become common in the daily routine in the modern Indian society. Violence against women has grown with dowry deaths, murder, bride burning, etc. on the rise in

the country. Simultaneous increase in violence against women is hindering the social, economic, political, and cultural progress of the country.

The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (United Nations, 1993).

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on December 18th, 1979 as a women's Bill of Rights to take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedom on a basis of equality with men. The convention entered into force in 1981 and has been ratified by over 100 countries. India ratified it in 1993. The CEDAW defines gender-based violence as "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately". This includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, the threat of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. Together with "sexual violence" and "violence against women"," gender-based violence" is used interchangeably. This does not mean that all acts against a woman are gender-based violence, or that all victims of gender-based violence are female. The surrounding circumstances where men are victims of sexual violence could be a man being harassed, beaten or killed because they do not conform to the view of masculinity, which are accepted by the society. In broad terms, the Declaration lists abuses that fall into the category of violence against women:

1. physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family and in the community, including battering, sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women;

2. non-spousal violence;

3. violence related to exploitation;

4. sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere;

5. trafficking in women;

6. forced prostitution; and

7. violence perpetrated or condoned by the State.

Violence against women is both physical and psychological in its manifestation. Aggression and violence are socially acceptable characteristics of masculinity, which reinforce the power in patriarchy. The continuous practice of dowry system in the society proves that the violence against women is an ideological issue and hence needs to be addressed in an equivalent manner. It is a complex phenomenon covering several dimensions of violence. As many as 22 women are killed for dowry in India every day. During the last three years, 24,771 dowry deaths have been reported from across the country

with Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh witnessing the highest instances of dowry deaths. As per National Crime Records Bureau data, the country has recorded 3.48 lakh cases of cruelty by husband or his relative and West Bengal tops the chart with 61,259 such cases in the past three years, followed by Rajasthan (44,311) and Andhra Pradesh (34,835) *(The Pioneer, 2015)*. The crime bureau 2015 report highlights that there were 59, 277 reported cases of kidnapping and abduction of girls and women (2.01% of the total IPC crime cases); 82, 422 of molestation cases (2.79% of total IPC crime); 24, 041 of sexual harassment (0.82% of total IPC cases); 34, 771 cases of Rape (1.18% of total IPC crime cases); 1, 13, 403 of cruelty by husband and other relatives (3.85% of total IPC cases) despite enactment of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 (PWDVA). Such kind of violence negatively affects girls' lives, their ability to access to education and performance in school.

The crime rate of a locality is one of the primary indicators reflecting the prevalent socio-economic condition and the efficiency of the justice machinery in that locality. Most women who are raped or sexually assaulted do not report the crime to police, in many cases because they have little confidence that their attacker would be brought to justice. There are several reasons for the under-reporting of crimes against women in the country:

- **Social stigma attached with crimes related to women:** In a male dominated society, women's crimes are downplayed as women are not independent enough to take their own decisions and are therefore at the mercy of their parents, in-laws or other male members of the family. This is one of the major causes for non-reporting of familial crimes. Shame, embarrassment, or desire to keep the assault a private matter also forms to be a cause.

- **Humiliation or fear of the perpetrator or other individual's perceptions:** Many of the crimes related to women go unreported also because they are threatened by the perpetrators, aiming to harm them more or their families. This, in addition to the lack of a deterrent mechanism leads to under reporting of crimes against women.

- **Lack of trust in the criminal justice system:** The snail paced judicial system such as the Indian Judicial System is also one of the main reasons that women, even educated women fail to report crimes against them.

Violence against women maintains the structures of gender oppression; whether carried out by individuals in private and/or by institutional forces in the public sphere. Social relations of caste and gender are also based on the exercise of power through the use of force (Kannabiran and Kannabiran, 1991)

Power sets the agenda for patriarchy. But, conflating it with abuse or masculinity is problematic and we need a more complex analysis of the typical power and control explanations. Feminism, which is about women claiming their rights to self-determination and equality, confronts gender conformity and aims to replace relationships of power with relationships of meaning.

Check Your Progress V

Notes : a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

9) Write any two explanations of violence that fall into the category of violence against women according to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

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10) List the several reasons of the under-reporting of crimes against women in the country.

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2.6.1 Double Oppression: Violence against Women with Disabilities

Disability is both a political and a feminist issue. People with disabilities are some of the most marginalised, discriminated against segments of the population. They are more likely to be from a lower socioeconomic background, less likely to be in work, less likely to access higher education and have a shorter life span. Feminism tried to bring domestic violence out of the home and into to the public realm, arguing that it was not just a personal issue, it was a societal problem. Today people understand that gender-based violence is also a political issue, that it continues to exist in our society because of patriarchy and its manifestation of power and control onto the lives of women. In a ground-breaking study on disabled women and girls and violence, Barbara Faye Waxman Fiduccia stated: "Disabled women and girls are of all ages, all racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds and sexual orientations; they live in rural, urban and suburban communities. Disabled women and girls live at the corner of disability and womanhood – with two 'minority' identities, a double dose of discrimination and stereotyping and multiple barriers to achieving their life goals. While many women with disabilities derive enormous strength, resilience and creativity from their multiple identities, they also face the consequences of discrimination. Yet, the self-defined needs of women with disabilities remain on the margins of the social justice movements that should represent them – the women's movement, the disability rights movement, and the civil rights movement – leaving disabled women and girls of all backgrounds essentially invisible." (Double Oppression, page 2)

Violence experienced by women with disability can often be the same in many ways as that of perpetrated against non-disabled women. However,

women with disability are also vulnerable to other forms of abuse. For instance, taking away aids or adaptations; using aids to physically hurt the woman; over and under medicating her; refusing or delaying assistance; rough handling whilst assisting her; using aids to sexually assault woman; blaming the fact that she is disabled for the abuse; controlling finances/benefits; patronizing her; undermining her ability to do things for herself, among others.

2.7 PATRIARCHY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

The term political economy is derived from Greek word "polis" meaning "city" or "state" and "oikonomos" meaning one who manages the state or household. Political economy, very simply defined is the study of the relationship between individuals and society and the market and the state. It considers both the political and the economic factors in studying how the public household is governed.

The concept of the state is a confluence of power, authority and the intention of dominant institutions in the society. In a patriarchal society, the dominance over women, in the public sphere is a more subtle and ingrained type of dominance. It is not out in the open and subtler in the laws framed, the legislature, welfare policies and the social institutions, which are in fact crude forms of patriarchy, perpetuating the goal of patriarchy. Like a vast majority of the world, India's patriarchy has legitimized the marginal and unfair position and contribution of women in the political economy. Such a legitimization remains to be an innate quality of patriarchy. Women's contribution in the organized and the unorganized sectors in India have been well researched and documented by feminist scholars. Women, in addition to the wage work done outside the realm of their private lives should undertake the support work for the family, which includes nurturing of the children, cooking and the innumerable other household chores. This is the work that they are obliged to do, be it in an urban setting or a rural setting.

Taking an example of the educational programmes and policies in India, Nelly Stromquist analyses *"The justification of literacy programs for women launched in 1988 by India as part of its National Literacy Mission is illustrative. It identifies the following benefits from women's literacy: increased participation of children in primary education, reduced infant mortality, greater success in child care and immunizations, declined fertility rates, greater self-confidence and self-image among women, and greater awareness by women of their social and legal rights (cited in Ramdas, 1990). Except for the last two benefits, which address women as individuals, all the others focus on the women's maternal roles. Content analysis of primers used in Indian literacy programs reveals a strong emphasis on improving the skills and knowledge of women in their circumscribed roles as mothers (Patel, 1989). In other words, the role of literacy for women is one of accommodation into the patriarchal culture, not one of questioning its structure."* (Stromquist, 1991).

Do you know?

Article 39 of the Indian Constitution envisages that the State shall direct its policy, among other things, towards securing that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

To give effect to this constitutional provision, the Equal Remuneration Ordinance was passed on September 26, , 1975. The Ordinance provides for payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers for the same work or work of similar nature and for the prevention of discrimination on grounds of sex. The Ordinance also ensures that there will be no discrimination against recruitment of women and provides for the setting up of Advisory committees to promote employment opportunities for women. This Act is called the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

In a similar manner, the production industry of a patriarchal society is also a meaningful category that can be analysed (Rege, 2003) for this purpose. Raj Mohini Sethi (1989) in her article on the agricultural producers in Himachal Pradesh analyses the participation of women workers in agriculture at a very high rate. Despite such high participation by women, the overall status of women remains to be unchanged. "*Political, ideological and cultural factors cause increasing marginalized women despite their high rate of work participation on family farms. Women's participation in decision-making in production and distribution and their representation in village development activities have not changed. Women are treated as mere beasts of burden who do seventy-five per cent of the work on family farms and take upon themselves the major, if not the sole, responsibility for cattle-care, housework and the socialization of the young. Men perform only productive agricultural work and non-agricultural work and when unemployed prefer to remain idle than share housework. In Himachal Pradesh, the ownership and control of land remain with the men. The hold of patriarchal values is so strong among the peasant communities that the provisions under the Hindu succession Act 1956 providing women equal rights over parental property (*Sethi and Sibia, 1987*) remain on paper only*" (Sethi, 1989). Therefore, even in the case of women dominating the production sector in some cases, they remain to be secluded from various educational and employment opportunities, furthering their marginalization in the society. Women, as discussed in the above sections have been a marginalised group, in the private as well as the public sphere, wherein patriarchal norms produce and reproduce its characteristics.

2.8 HOUSEHOLD LABOUR AND ITS TYRANNY

*"Man may work from sun to sun,
but woman's work is never done."*

-Proverb

Historically women have always worked, yet the work at home has always been invisible. As a result of rapid industrialization, work done outside the realm of the family was given more preference. Therefore, work done in

the home, which as we have discussed is done mostly by women, became invisible and its contribution to the family was overlooked.

Men too are victims of patriarchy. A male stereotype such as dominance, aggression and intelligence has led to more job opportunities and hence has made him the breadwinner of the family. On the other hand, however, working class women were often able to sell their domestic skills to earn money and of course when they came home they continued to perform work at home to take care of their families. During a seminar, a professor once shared his experience of coming home and asking his mother what she had done all day, to which she would always reply, "Nothing!"

Even women who are economically free to get a job and be financially independent are often required to take care of their families as well. This dual work or second job (at home and work for pay) places women at a disadvantage compared to men. Various scholars have analysed and discussed the possible explanations for this duality of work. Sexual division of labour is considered to be a direct consequence of patriarchy and capitalism. While a number of Marxist feminists would argue that capitalism determines the requirements of women's oppression in the market, there has been significant disagreement whether household work contributes to the surplus value or not. Time availability and ideology (Shelton and John, 1996) have also been explanations for household labour in the society.

Although women and men both leave the house to earn paid wages, women continue to perform more of the unpaid domestic work at home. This is referred to as having 'The Second Job'. While more and more men are coming up and helping their spouses with the domestic work as well, an egalitarian or an equal society is yet to be achieved.

Alice Abel Kemp in her article *Domestic Labor in the Patriarchal Family*, (1994) describes four components of domestic labour: housework, support work, status production, and child care.

2.9 VALUE OF WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL WEALTH

You are already familiar with housework and child care, but you might not have known about support work and status production. Let us understand the concepts of Status Production and Support Work.

Do you know?

India has laws and procedures to address the cases of sexual harassment at the workplace. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Vishaka and Others vs. State of Rajasthan and Others (JT 1997 (7) SC 384) passed guidelines against Sexual Harassment at the Workplace and it is popularly known as Vishaka guidelines. These guidelines, later in 2013 were passed as 'The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Status Production and Support Work

To understand the concepts of status production, we would look at the works of Hanna Papanek (1979) who describes the status-production as support work generated by the demands of income-earning activities by other family or household members. Support work can also include the training of children. This can include physical well-being, language, education, health, hygiene and presentation of the self. Support work can range from consoling a child to make him/her feel better when a pet has died or listening to one's spouse complains about an obnoxious co-worker. This is also one type of labor that is often overlooked when trying to determine how much "work" someone does.

This type of support work has the following characteristics: (1) there is no direct relationship between the support worker and the actual earning activity or the institution in which it takes place; (2) rewards for support work are indirect, often through participation in the perquisites of rank, such as access to housing or medical care provided by the earning member's employer; (3) direct rewards for support work take a variety of economic and noneconomic forms; (4) the conditions of support work are negotiated with the earning worker and subject to considerable variation (Papanek, 1979).

With an increase in the participation of women in the realm of work, attitudinal barriers for them have also risen. Getting a job may not be as difficult for a woman as it was in the past, but what follows is surely a difficult path to follow. Sexual harassment at the workplace is a grave concern in India, like the rest of the world. The Indian National Bar Association (INBA) conducted and presented a study, found that of the 6,047 participants (both male and female) that they surveyed, 38% said they'd faced harassment at their workplace. Of these, 69% did not register any complain about it. The very few who challenge the perpetrators in the court of law remain entangled in long judicial processes.

Traditional gender expectations and practices over the years have led to under representation of women in leadership roles in major sectors of the workforce. Women are said to be becoming, more masculine in their career choices. Characteristics such as authority, competitiveness and domination, which in men are viewed as features of a good leader, are viewed as undesirable in women. While these qualities may appeal to be assertive in men, they become harsh in a woman.

Women, still being viewed in the traditional, patriarchy induced roles of home makers and child rearing; now face the responsibility of both the household as well as their workplaces. Even women, who hold positions of leadership are often viewed as being domineering and cold, which is said to be 'unfeminine' in nature. What is needed today is attitudinal change in the gendered roles that have long been reinforced in the patriarchal realm.

2.10 LET US SUM UP

This unit has given you an overview of the broad concepts of gender, gender roles, features of patriarchy, matriarchy and how they contribute in the construction of gender roles and determine the status of women in a society.

Broadly speaking, gender refers not just to women and men, and to the interaction between them. It is important to understand the differences between women and men that are externally influenced, as well as the conditions imposed on them based on naturally given biological differences. Our sex roles and gender roles are likewise different. While our sex roles are imposed on us by nature (through the basic physiological and anatomical differences between women and men), our gender roles are usually defined by the society (e.g., there are behaviour/roles which are deemed as either masculine or feminine by the society). In other words, gender refers to socially constructed roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men in each location and the social structures that support them, all of which are subject to change over time. We can say that gender roles are learned behaviours. Gender roles are conceived, enacted and learnt within a complex of relationships. Gender roles are affected by age, class, race, ethnicity and religion, and by the geographical, economic and political environment. Many a time, this leads to sex-role stereotyping which may have either positive or negative effects on individuals. It may lead individuals to conform to the stereotypes. It may also have significant effects on an individual's self-image which comprises one's self-esteem, self-confidence and locus of control. The biggest social agents and forces in the transmittal of sex-role stereotypes are the parents, the teachers and the schools.

The purpose of looking at gender is not to divide women and men, causing conflict between them. Rather, it draws our attention to those issues that have brought about unequal relations, and allows us to address these issues with appropriate measures that will help reduce rather than perpetuate inequality. Thus, the concept of gender helps to focus on growth in terms of the equitable distribution of benefits between women and men, equality of power relations between them and, most of all, the partnership between them in any field of development.

During the last three decades or so, significant improvements have been made in women's access to education, health care and family planning, employment opportunities, decision making and in governance etc. worldwide. Women are now entering many such professions that were mainly the domain of men in the past. But estimates of various international agencies indicate that women's status is very low in developing countries as compared to the developed ones. The basis of women's problems in the developing region is mainly gender -biased socialisation, and prevalence of systems of patriarchy which limit and confine women to subordinate roles. Patriarchal structures perpetuate the enduring gaps between the opportunities available to men and women. Though norms of patriarchy are not similar everywhere, yet there are overall structures of patriarchy which allow men, in general, more mobility, authority and control than women in general. The culture of patriarchy is so deeply entrenched in countries of this region, it even convinced women that the work they do for their family is their duty and the work they do is not as valuable as much as the work men do. Substantial proportion of women do not have a say even in decisions - whether to use contraception or not or how many children they should have. Family decisions are the principal domain of their husbands and family adults. Illiteracy seems to be the major problem that acts as a strong impediment in the development and wellbeing of women in developing countries.

To conclude, we can say that generally men make all household decisions and women are expected to follow. Persistence of strong patriarchy, traditional gender roles and religious fundamentalism also contribute to the low status of women in developing countries. A study conducted in USA in 2000 reported that violence against women is a function of the beliefs, fostered in all cultures, that men are superior and that the women they live with are their possessions which they may treat as they wish and as they consider appropriate. The feminist view is that status of women is low because of oppression and subordination, basically due to sexual division of labour which relegates women to the reproductive roles that limits their freedom. In the changing scenario world over, women are said to be becoming, more masculine in their career choices. Characteristics such as authority, competitiveness and domination, which in men are viewed as features of a good leader, are still viewed as undesirable in women. While these qualities may appeal to be assertive in men, they become harsh in a woman. Women, still being viewed in the traditional, patriarchy induced roles of home makers and child rearing; now face the responsibility of both the household as well as their workplaces. What is needed today is attitudinal change in the gendered roles that have long been reinforced in the patriarchal realm.

2.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

Note: Use the space given below for your answers. Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit

1) Explain the term 'gender roles'. Enlist and discuss few gender roles you observe in day to day life.

2) Describe the meaning of the concepts of patriarchy and matriarchy.

3) Patriarchal norms affect both men and women in a society. How? Discuss critically.

4) In your opinion, is gender role reversal the answer to challenge the norms of patriarchy? If yes, how? Explain in five lines.

5) Get a copy of the 'The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and list out five guidelines available to women for Prevention of sexual harassment at workplace.

6) Explain the concepts of status production. What are its characteristics?

2.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Gender roles are the roles that men and women are expected to occupy based on their sex. Gender roles are passed on through generations. Traditionally, many societies believed that women are more nurturing than men. The traditional view of the masculine gender role, therefore, suggests that men should be the heads of their households by providing financially for the family and making important family decisions. While these views remain dominant in many spheres of society, alternative

perspectives on traditional beliefs about gender roles have gained increasing support in the twenty-first century. A sociological perspective on gender roles is that gender roles are learned, they can also be unlearned, and that new and distinct roles can be created. The feminist perspective points out that, gender roles are not simply ideas about appropriate behaviour for males and females but are also linked to the various levels of power that males and females hold in society.

2. **Patriarchy** is a term very commonly used by feminist scholars and practiced by a vast majority of the population in their everyday lives. A patriarchy, from the ancient Greek word *patriarches*, is a society where power is held by and passed down through the elder males. Broadly speaking, the concept of patriarchy which has been developed within feminist writings is not a single or simple concept but has a whole variety of different meanings. At the most general level patriarchy has been used to refer to male domination and to the power relationships by which men dominate women. **Matriarchy** is a form of social organization in which the mother or oldest female is the head of the family, and descent and relationship are reckoned through the female line; government or rule by a woman or women. Matriarchy fundamentally means a society wherein the power is held by and passed on to the female members of the family, at an individual as well as the societal level. In a matriarchal society, women primarily hold power; predominate in the realms of employment, in the decision-making process and control over property. There are many studies that shows even in societies with matrilineal descent, the power structure is either egalitarian or dominated formally by the father or some other male figure. For a social system to be considered a matriarchy, it would require following a culture that defined a woman or women in an authoritative stance, and their dominance being considered essential and legitimate.

3. Patriarchy as a way of life has affected men as much as it has affected women, across the world. Majority of the nations in the world being patriarchal in nature, men are forced to be the breadwinners of the family, while women are to be its caregivers. Patriarchy, in a sense grants power and authority to men, in the public sphere as well as the private sphere. In a patriarchal system, men make all decisions at both the personal as well as the societal level. They hold all positions of power and authority, and are considered superior to women, mentally as well as physically. Men are concerned with identification that includes qualities of control, strength, forcefulness, rationality, strong work ethic, and competitiveness. Each of these qualities contributes to male identification in a patriarchal system. Such stereotypes tend to make men maintain a traditional and biased attitude towards women, therefore justifying violence or discrimination against them.

4. Issues of gendered roles have been researched and discussed by feminists since the beginning of the study of gender studies. If gender roles are to be reversed, it would mean to interchange these traditional roles, making men the caregivers of the family and women the breadwinners. But the important question that arises here is whether this is sufficient to challenge the norms of patriarchy and is this is sufficient to achieve gender equality? Couples whose gender roles have

been reversed should try and balance their intimacy and sense of identity to achieve equality. Workplace cultures still embedded in traditional gendered stereotypes. The character and 'masculinity' of men is often questioned and they are looked down upon when they become the care givers of their family. Women's role as care givers is also questioned when they hold positions of leadership and are divided between their roles at the workplace as against that at the home. Ambitious women, at the higher levels of leadership in organizations are often said to be 'bad mothers' questioning their maternal instincts. In a modernizing society, the performances of stereotypical roles tend to be compromising, even if such roles remain natural and innovative because of the lack of their earning and outside impact. Therefore, gender role reversal is not the solution to address patriarchy, but what is required is liberation from gendered roles and stereotypes to empower men and women to pursue the vocations they like and retain basic values and virtues.

5. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. In consonance with the guarantee of fundamental rights of a woman to equality under articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India and her right to life and to live with dignity under article 21 of the Constitution and right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business with includes a right to a safe environment free from sexual harassment; and universally recognised the protection against sexual harassment and the right to work with dignity by international conventions and instruments such as Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by the Government of India in 1993, this Act states: 1) No woman shall be subjected to sexual harassment at any workplace. (2) The following circumstances, among other circumstances, if it occurs, or is present in relation to or connected with any act or behaviour of sexual harassment may amount to sexual harassment:- (i) implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in her employment; or (ii) implied or explicit threat of detrimental treatment in her employment; or (iii) implied or explicit threat about her present or future employment status; or (iv) interference with her work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment for her; or (v) humiliating treatment likely to affect her health or safety.

6. Hanna Papanek (1979) describes the status-production as support work generated by the demands of income-earning activities by other family or household members. Support work can also include the training of children. This can include physical well-being, language, education, health, hygiene and presentation of the self. Support work can range from consoling a child feel better when a pet has died listening to one's spouse complain about an obnoxious co-worker. This is also one type of labour that is often overlooked when trying to determine how much "work" someone does. This type of support work has the many characteristics. Some of them defined by Hanna Papanek are: (1) there is no direct relationship between the support worker and the actual

earning activity or the institution in which it takes place; (2) rewards for support work are indirect, often through participation in the perquisites of rank, such as access to housing or medical care provided by the earning member's employer; (3) direct rewards for support work take a variety of economic and noneconomic forms; (4) the conditions of support work are negotiated with the earning worker and subject to considerable variation.

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