
UNIT 3 PATRIARCHIES IN INTERACTION WITH OTHER SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND IDENTITIES

Structure

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will discuss the interrelationship between education and other social structures to understand school education from a gender perspective. It describes forms of social structure such as family, caste, class and tribe to analyze the impact of these structures on gender relations. The unit will introduce learners to the basic definitions of family, caste and class as social institutions and their roles in controlling women's access to education, health care and employment. Education cannot be understood in isolation of social realities in which gender as a part of social structure needs to be emphasized in the context of inclusive education. School education and its intersection with other social structures is complex, thus this unit will help the learners to build up their basic understanding of social structure and gender.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Define and understand social institutions such as: caste, class, family and community from a feminist perspective;
- Comprehend the inter-relationship between social structure, patriarchy and women's marginalization; and
- Explain schooling and school education from a gender perspective.

3.3 FAMILY, CASTE, CLASS AND COMMUNITIES: CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST DISCOURSES

This section is adapted from the course MWG 009: Women and Social Structure of MA in Women's and Gender Studies programme. This section will introduce learners to the sociological definition of certain concepts like family, caste and class that forms part of the social structure. Further, this section briefly explains the functioning of such institutions in relation to women's marginalization and control. Let us now define and discuss what family means and describe its various types in India.

The discussion on family is adapted from the "Unit 1: Forms of Family and Household in India" and "Unit 2: Feminist Debate on Family" from Block 2: 'Family' of course MWG 009. Levi Strauss (1971) has described family and its structures and functions in the following manner: 'social groups that originate in marriage, they consist of husband, wife, and children born of their union (although in some family forms other relatives are included); they bind members with legal, economic, and religious bonds as well as duties and privileges; and they provide a network of sexual privileges and prohibitions, and varying degrees of love, respect, and affection' (p. 56). Mainstream family studies explain family as that unit where: '(i) at least two adult persons of opposite sex reside together, (ii) they engage in some kind of division of labour, (iii) they engage in many types of economic and social exchanges; that is they do things for one another; (iv) they share many things in common, such as food, sex, residence, and both goods and social activities, (v) the adults have parental relations with their children, as their children have filial relations with them; the parents have some authority over their children and both share with one another, while also assuming some obligation for protection, cooperation, and nurturance. (vi) there are sibling relations among the children themselves, with, once more, a range of obligations to share, protect and help one another. When all these conditions exist, few people would deny that the unit is a family.' (Goode, 1982, p. 9 cited by Ray 2014). Family is also defined as 'a group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage or adoption, who form an economic unit, the adult members of which are responsible for the upbringing of children' (Giddens, 2010, p. 331). Rose (1968) defined family as 'a group of interacting persons who recognize a relationship with each other based on common parentage, marriage and/ or adoption' (p. 9, cited by Ray 2014). The biological relationships have been the defining principles of family membership yet family as a basic kinship group emphasizes the dual significance of familial relationships through 'blood' and 'marriage'.

Feminists also pointed out that in all these mainstream studies of joint family and glorification of its unity, the role of women for maintaining family unity; and women's varying and difficult experiences within it was neglected (Patel, 2003; Uberoi, 1993, 2006, refer Ray 2014). They argued that the notion of bargaining power and negotiability is important in the context of kinship and family. However, most women living within the patrilineal, patri-virilocal kinship, have limited rights over resources and virtually no inheritance rights and decision-making power within the family and household (refer Ray

2014). Women are marginalized, seen as dependents and their autonomy over body is controlled by the men. Women within these patrilineal families therefore hardly had choices and bargaining power (Dube, 2001, p.7, refer Ray 2014). These facts were not given importance by mainstream studies of the kinship and family structures, which feminists tried to bring to light in their studies.

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) Define family in Indian context.

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3.3.1 Family and Nature of Women’s Subordination

Feminist works further pointed to the patterns in which family and kinship have subordinated women in the name of upholding family sanctity and honour within the community. The most obvious forms of women’s marginalization is by imposing restrictions on their mobility, perpetuating violence against them in the name of honour, perpetuating gender socialization, strict norms for gender division of labour, controlling the body in the sphere of reproduction and ultimately keeping women on margins within the family. “Scholars focussed on the violence perpetrated on women in the name of family honour and showed how the rationality of the family honour subordinates women and grants men the power to exercise control on women’ s self and body” (Das, 1996). In this context feminist studies discussed the intersection of caste ideology with that of familial ideology and how they operate together to exercise control over women. Family honour and purity of caste is believed to be dependent upon control over and purity of female sexuality. Caste system emphasizes boundary maintenance (endogamous marriage) for keeping up the purity of the caste structure. The onus of this boundary maintenance falls on women because of their role in biological reproduction” (refer Ray 2014: 104). Family as a form of social institution plays a significant role in sustaining the idea of purity and honour through socializing its members especially women to control their sexuality. According to Ray (2014), girls are expected to be feminine and family exercises control upon them to remain pure.

Other forms of social mechanisms include: restrictions on mobility, maintaining seclusion, stress on the idea of a chaste woman, culture of son preference and importance of early marriage of girls through which the family actively contributes in maintaining caste boundaries and protects its purity and honour. The responsibility for protection of family and caste honour is given to the male members of the community thereby men exercise power over the females. “As a result, men control every facet of women’s behavior and life. Any women seem to be behaving outside of these norms are portrayed as deviant and they often face violence as part of punishment mechanism”

(Ray 2014: 104). Now let us understand class as a form of social institution and its impact upon women.

3.3.2 Intersection of Class and Gender

The discussion on class and gender is adapted from the “Unit 1: Formative Feminist Discourses” of the course MWG 009: Women and Social Structure, MA Women’s and Gender Studies Programme. Feminist engagement with the analysis of class began in the 1960s and 70s across countries. The intersection between women and class is discussed from different feminist positions. For instance, radical feminists in the United States saw patriarchy as “the determinant social relationship under all modes of production” (Custers, 2014: 20). They argued that the social system is characterized by male domination over the female and power rests with the male only.

According to radical feminist position, women’s relation to the means of production is different to that of men since they control the labour power of women. Hence, certain issues such as: women’s invisible labour and housework have been dealt by feminists thereafter. During the first part of 1970s, the debate on women and class was centred on the conceptualization of housework. Some interesting contributions were made by the American author Margaret Benston and Italian feminist Maria Rosa Dalla Costa. When the second feminist wave was on the rise, Margaret Benston (1969) wrote an essay, ‘The Political Economy of Women’s Liberation’ in which she argued that the root cause of women’s secondary status is economic in nature and women as a group share a definitive relation with the means of production (cited in Custers, 2014, p. 81).

Therefore, reproduction and class are complexly related. The universal acceptance of women’s role in the reproductive sphere became the basis for creating the class structure between women and men. Consequently, women’s work is either invisible or unrecognized in the labour market and family. For instance, women in the nineteenth century were withdrawn from work after the birth of their first child. Since ages, women have been shaping their work in and around their reproductive responsibilities and simultaneously made economic contributions. You must have observed that women with children gained access to employment such as part-time work, home-based work and seasonal work. Studies show that where women were allowed to work with their children, their work participation rate increased; for example, Italian mothers in the New York canneries, immigrant mothers in New England textile mills and English cotton factories (cited in Brenner & Remas, P. 27). There are studies shown that since women are never considered as primary wage earners in the society, they are mostly represented in specific occupations such as nurses, teachers and agricultural workers. This relationship between class and gender has implications for women’s access to schooling and education as well.

Activity 1

Collect news items from different newspapers to see how poverty impacts women’s education in our country?

3.3.3 Caste and Gender: An Interface

Caste, class and gender are inextricably linked and they shape each other as social institutions. These institutions as part of the larger social structure are continuously engaging with other sectors such as education, health, politics and market. Now let us understand how caste operates in the society to be able to maintain its dominance over women. This section is adapted from the Unit 1: 'Gendering and Caste' from the course MWG 009; and 'Women and Social Structure' of MA in Women's and Gender Studies. The basis of caste system is to sustain the structure of marriage, sexuality and reproduction across generations. It is the fundamental basis of retaining inequalities in relation to gender and other social caste groups within the society. "Louis Dumont (1972) defines caste system as a system of consensual values; a set of values accepted by both dominant and dominated. Historian Uma Chakravarti argues that this definition is popular because it is convenient for the upper castes as it helps them to maintain their own position within the hierarchical structure" (Chakravarti, 2003, cited by Bindhulakshmi 2014:192). Ambedkar defines caste system as a system of 'graded inequality' in which the power hierarchies are always vested in the dominant ideology of caste system. Thus, women and dalit communities often face multiple marginalizations with regard to access to education, health and economic empowerment.

One of the ways to understand the intersection between gender and caste is through the concept of endogamy. "Endogamy is the practice of marrying within the same caste, one of the significant ways in which caste hierarchies are maintained and practiced. Enforcing cultural codes through the strict practice of endogamy led to much gendered violence in India" (Bindhulakshmi 2014:193). You must have come across in the newspapers about the widespread phenomenon of gendered violence in India in the name of the ideology of honour or *Izzat*. Men and women associate with the notion of honour in different ways and the mechanism of social sanction for those infringing caste/community norms also vary for both women and men. For instance, growing incidences of honour killings in different states of India help us to understand the close link between caste endogamy and violence. *Khap* panchayats are perpetuating violence against young couples who transgress the strict boundaries of caste system, community norms and the norm of *gotra*. Uma Chakravarti (1993) argues that women are considered as the gateway of caste system within the structure of marriage and reproduction. Women are seen as a repository of caste honour hence, they are subjected to patriarchal protection, moral policing, control and violence. Violence against women is justified by this very nature of community honour and maintaining caste purity.

As Bindu K. C. writes (2014), "another most important theoretical concept that dalit feminism uses to understand Indian society is the concept of brahminical patriarchy. Dalit feminists following Ambedkar, analyse Indian society as structured around brahminical patriarchy within which power is seen to have a caste-gender basis in South Asia. The power inequality persists through marriages between similar caste families. Endogamy, in that sense, functions as the most important corner stone of the caste system itself, with its purity and pollution rituals most strong among upper caste women" (p. 204).

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.

- 2) What is brahminical patriarchy? Present a case study to explain it.

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- 3) What is endogamy?

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This section has briefly discussed some of the important concepts in relation to patriarchy and social structure. Understanding of these concepts like caste, class and family will help the learners to analyze how education and schooling are part of these structures. Therefore, school as a social system needs to be understood in relation to society. For example, issues like low enrollment of girls; absence of girl child from certain subjects/disciplines; and lack of access to primary and secondary schooling. These can only be discussed in the context of society, caste, class, religion, region, ethnicity, family, and community and gender relations. Let us in brief learn about how school is a microcosm of social reality.

3.4 SCHOOL AS A MICROCOSM OF SOCIAL REALITIES

School system is the suitable site for experiencing the conflict between ideology, social norms, liberal values and progressive thoughts. Therefore, schools are the perfect platforms which reflect the contradictions between women's right to education vis-à-vis women's prescribed roles in the society. In this sense, schools are also gendered in nature and they also reflect gender stereotypes in their practice and culture of teaching. As you may have read in the previous section of this unit, Indian society has layers of social structure which in reality strengthen the patriarchal values in every sphere of life. For instance, women's education is no longer banned in India but certainly controlled and women's seclusion is hardly practiced but their access to work, health care, law and education is always controlled (Ray 1988).

3.4.1 Access to Education and Inherent Gender Subordinations

Indian society is comprised of such contradictions in which women are portrayed as powerful yet they are oppressed and domesticated in the family.

School as a part of the entire social system is also not free from such gender conflicts and contradictions. Historically, schools were created to educate the boys since girls were idealized in society in roles of mothers, wives and daughters-in-law. Raka Ray in her article “Class and gender in schooling in India” has narrated gender biases that existed in the schools of 19th century Calcutta. She presented the case of girl’s schools started in 1800’s and the main purpose was defined as “The existence of intelligently educated mothers..., is essential to the training of a race of intelligent and high-spirited sons and brothers and husbands. (As quoted in Borthwick, 1984:65). These schools started getting the support by mid 1800s since western educated young boys began to feel that the condition of their women didn’t fit the new liberal ideas of the 19th century. Thus, the educated men supported their women to be educated so that they could function in a rational manner. However, this effort was not so much towards women’s empowerment but rather creating a class of educated women who could balance both the private and the public domains. Schools began to stress that “women’s education did not mean greater freedom of behaviour, nor did it override a woman’s primary duty to her husband” (Borthwick, 1984: 39)” (cited in Ray 1988: 389). This example shows how school as a form of institution was created on the basis of the gendered understanding of society. Boys are educated to become wage earners and the intellectual class and girls have the right to education but they are trained to become good daughters and diligent wives. In this sense, school is like any other social institution which believes in reasserting the patriarchal values or gender stereotypes. Let us study in further detail the interrelationship between gender, class and schooling during post-independence era in India.

Raka Ray in her article discusses a case study of two schools which were offering education for both boys and girls in Calcutta after Independence. Though after Independence the notion of formal equality was emphasized by the Constitution of India, boys and girls were trained in the school for taking up different roles in life. The underlying principle of school education was based on the gender differential roles and relationships. She claimed that schools established during the colonial era and had the highest prestige were adhering to hierarchical and patriarchal values in their approach towards girls’ education. She studied two schools one was St. Mary Convent School (SMC) that has British style Public school approach and another is a government aided school, i.e., Tripti Girls High School (TGHS) in Calcutta to find out the inter-linkage between gender and class in the schooling system. SMC was catering to the children of westernized Indian elite families who had financial security to pay the high fees. TGHS was a government aided school catering to the children of clerical workers, low-grade management and factory workers. Girls were primarily from lower-middle class families of Calcutta. Teachers at SMC aimed to train the girls how to become ladies who can carry forward the ideas or values of western liberal elite classes of India. Therefore, the school was aimed to produce elite women but not skilled women workers. This can be done in two steps:

SMC must produce women who will be the wives of elite men and must therefore have the appropriate domestic and ladylike capabilities. Secondly, as wives of elite men and as elite women themselves, they must have leadership capacities, for they will be the ‘leaders’ of society (p. 391).

On the other hand, TGHS aimed to produce women who will have necessary domestic skills to manage both the household responsibilities and the market. The primary aim was to train girls in such a way who can contribute to the economy as low paid white-collar workers. You can see a sharp class boundary between the girls of SMC and TGHS schools with clear principle of gender stereotyping with regard to why girls need education, what kind of education girls need and what will be the use of this teaching for their lives. For instance, girls at SMC were encouraged to complete the final board examination because it can make the highest status difference to their lives. However, for girls at TGDS, girls were encouraged to learn the domestic and market related skills which they can use during their marriage negotiations. For example, woman can negotiate marriage with fewer dowries since she has skills that increase her earning capacity in the family. The above narrative clearly shows schools emphasized different skill sets for boys and girls who held from different class background. In this sense schools represent social realities thus function as microcosm of the larger society. The curriculum, pedagogy, textbooks and evaluation methodology are integral part of this microcosm in which they impart the knowledge of the society. In this sense, school and society are not separate institutions and both reinforce gender inequalities in its culture and practices. Social norms and cultural practices also affect the gender gaps in school education in India. Discriminatory social practices and attitude such as: early marriage, practice of social seclusion for girls, favouring of boys in family education investment and gender division of labour have adversely affected girl child's access to school and primary education in India and others in different parts of the world (OECD 2012, c.f. Global Monitoring Report 2015). The report cited, for example, in many countries, women and girls take up a huge amount of household labour including collecting fuel wood and water, and caring for younger siblings which can limit girls' ability to attend school. Access to school becomes challenging for many women due to social norms and their invisible reproductive work within the household. Effective policies with multipronged strategies have been adopted by many countries to reduce the gender gaps in education. For instance, in India, multi-strategies of the government have helped to improve accessibility and quality of girl's schooling. Multi-strategies include textbooks for girls, back to school camps and bridging courses, appointment of female teachers and national programmes to increase demand for schooling for rural and disadvantaged girls (Govinda, 2008, refer Global Monitoring Report 2015). We have discussed about gender stereotyping and gender segregated roles and its relationship with the increasing gender gap in school education. Certain programmes and courses have underlying gender stereotyping, for instance, certain courses such as arts and education, and home science are designed keeping in mind the domestic role of women rather than emphasizing their productive roles. Because of gender profiling and stereotyping women tend to participate more in programmes and courses that relate to their reproductive responsibilities so much so that the discipline of science and technology, and vocational training are primarily perceived as male dominated spheres (Nair 2010). Families are also less likely to educate the girl child due to various social and normative considerations and further, other social factors like class; region and ethnic identities also play a key role in limiting women's access to education.

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.
- 4) What is gender based discrimination within the family? Write a story or a case study to explain this.

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The inter-sectionality approach will clarify the relationship between gender, education and other social structure. The position paper of NCERT has brought out a wide range of case studies to be able to analyze the education system from a gender perspective. Let us know read a small case study which focuses on how difficult it becomes for a dalit girl to get access to education. Factors such as: material poverty, cultural norms, gendered behavior, value assigned to female labour in the labour market, and dominant culture of femininity constantly set limits for girl’s education in particular girls from dalit community and underprivileged sections of the society.

Being Dalit and female

This is a story about Mangal who belongs to a dalit community and lives in Baroda. Her father works as a daily wage worker and mother works as a domestic help. Mangal has studied till third standard in a government school after which she was pulled out of the school to look after her younger siblings. Later on she worked as a helper in an English pre-school near to her home. She loved to do this job and also learnt English language while working. Months later it was found out that now she was married and leaving with her husband and family members in a small village. She is pregnant yet continues to work in family agriculture. She looks tired but also thinks of returning back to the school. She believes that girls need to be educated so that no girls should suffer the way she has struggled.

(Source: Position Paper, NCERT, 2006: p. 6)

The above case study depicts certain micro-realities of girls in India where women’s labour is valued in the expanded sphere of domesticity. In addition, when other social factors such as caste, class, ethnicity and rural/urban divide intersect with gender it increases vulnerabilities for girl’s education. In the context of Muslim community in northern India, studies have reported that poverty of Muslim households provides significant explanation for the poor levels of Muslim women’s education (Zoya Hasan & Ritu Menon cited in Position paper, NCERT, 2006). The position paper also discusses other forms of discrimination that a girl faces in the context of access to education. For instance, the boys can be studied in an English medium school and girls can be educated in vernacular medium. Such practices are a manifestation of newer forms of discrimination in India. Let us look at a conversation:

Narration about why boys need to study in English Medium?

[Why don't you go to an English school?]

Girls can do housework, that's why. Boys will have to work.

(Seema, 9)

My brother will be a doctor.

[To be a doctor, do you have to go to an English school?]

Yes.

[And what about you...?]

No, I'll be a teacher. (Ritu, 10)

(Source: Manjrekar, 1999, cited in NCERT 2006: 12)

You will come across many such case narratives and examples in your daily interaction to be able to analyze to what extent the gender of a person determines her/his access to education. Economically poorer sections and middle-income group of India less likely to invest in the education of the boy child compared to education of the girls. For instance, among the agricultural poor households, the girl child is considered as a valuable resource for the household work and in the field; therefore, families feel educating the girl child may not bring any visible economic gains. Similarly, among the upper middle-class families, women are often seen as secondary wage earners hence, educating women will not have much impact on the economic situation of the family. These are some of the socio-cultural factors that deter women's access to primary education and schooling. Sonalde Desai, in her book on Gender Inequalities and Demographic Behaviour, argues that 'another disincentive for sending daughters to school is a concern for the protection of their virginity' and honour (cited in Nair 2010, p. 104). Fear of violence also contributes towards less participation of a girl child in education when the schools are at a distance.

A report by the International Programs Centre for the U.S. Department of Commerce (Velkoff, 1998) lists some of the significant barriers to women's education in India includes: inadequate sanitary facilities, absence of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum. This data also supported by a BBC news report by Kaushik Basu (2004) that emphasized the lack of infrastructure in school and its relationship with the low participation of a girl child in school education. He said, a study of 188 government-run primary schools in India found that 59% of the schools had no drinking water and 89% had no toilets. Another report in the Times of India (2005) cites a 2003/2004 data by National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration that reported only 3.5% of primary schools in Bihar and Chhattisgarh had toilets for girls. In Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, the rates were 12-16%. These studies show that the lack of toilets can be detrimental to girl's school

education and attendance (cited by Nair 2010). So far, we have discussed how culture and social norms significantly affect a girl child's access to school in various parts of India. Similarly, absence of basic infrastructural facilities in schools, poverty and attitude of the people negatively impact women's participation in primary and secondary education. Let us now move on to discuss some of the issues like gender biases in text-books and curriculum to analyze how structure and the content within our education system is gendered in nature. Let us look at some case studies to analyze the gendered nature of textbooks and content in schools.

This section briefly analyzed how education is socially constructed in the sense it operates in relation to its society and the social structure. Caste hierarchies, economic inequalities, cultural diversity and gender relations deeply affect the access to and participation of children in education in India. These social and other disparities (rural/urban) are greatly reflected in school's enrolment and completion pattern. For instance, girls belonging to SC & ST communities and other ethnic groups are educationally more vulnerable. The school system is inherently stratified and gendered in nature and as a result provides different educational experiences to children from under privileged and marginalized categories (National Curriculum Framework 2005). The National Curriculum Framework 2005 has emphasized the aspects of inequalities arising from gender, caste, class, religion, region, and so on to be able to offer dignity and value to each child under Universal Elementary Education. The document emphasizes, "Unequal gender relations not only perpetuate domination but also create anxieties and stunt the freedom of both boys and girls to develop their human capacities to their fullest. It is in the interest of *all* to liberate human beings from the existing inequalities of gender" (National Curriculum Framework, 2005, Chap I: p. 9).

Education is a means for re-socialization therefore many girls and boys feel a sense of freedom after they are being educated. Society imposes certain norms to control women and as a result the girl child is denied basic education. In this sense, education is perceived as a threat to the socialization and social control. This discussion is well emphasized in academic work through numerous examples. For instance, girls are sent to school and they also feel some form of freedom and agency. When they are about to reach the age of puberty, more restrictions and code of conduct are imposed upon them. As a result, more number of girls drop out from school between the age 11 plus and 14 plus. The education system and the school need to develop a gender sensitive perspective to be able to discuss indicators like access to education, enrollment pattern, dropout rates, curriculum and texts (Position Paper, NCERT, 2006). There are gender biases that exist in different forms in the curriculum, textbooks, and schools and in the entire education system. Let us look at some these biases expressed through poems, stories and research articles.

A Poem about gender constructs in text books

*In my textbooks, I learned that only men
are kings and soldiers.*

*Till I read a book in which famous,
queens ruled and fought against enemies.*

*In my textbooks, I learned that only men
are doctors.*

*When I went to a doctor I saw that
she was a woman.*

*In my textbook, I learned that only men
do farming in my country,*

*until, on a train journey I saw women
working in the fields.*

I have learned that I have a lot to learn by seeing.

Pooja, Ramya, Anuj, Utkarsh (students of class VII, Baroda,
Adapted from Position Paper National Focus Group, NCERT).

This small poem subtly explains the existing gender constructions which are represented in different text books of India. When you carry out a small study on gender audit of textbooks you may come across many such representations expressed through language, pictures and statements. The National Focus Group on Gender Issues in Education, NCERT has deliberated upon these issues in details to make the schools in India more gender inclusive in nature. As a result, gender is adopted as a significant variable/component in the current curriculum of NCERT.

Activity V

Take one chapter from any text book to carry out a gender audit exercise. Identify pictures, language usages and representations in the text to be able to analyze the content from a gender perspective.

3.4.2 Gender Biases and Its Representations in Textbooks

Gender biases in textbooks is a universal phenomenon and its pattern is also consistent across countries. Blumberg (2008) describes the pattern and degree of gender biases present in learning materials of both developed and developing countries. The author cites academic literature pertaining to gender biases in textbooks in countries like Syria and India. Alrabaa (1985) analyzed 28 textbooks from Syria from a gender perspective. These books were taught to students of 8th to 12th standards. The study shows that these books have centered around males in its content and language. For example, male-centric language such as ‘mankind’, ‘he’ is used for both male

and female. These books have represented a traditional pattern of gender division of roles for instance, male as the master of the home and women are often described in relation to housework. Functions within the family: household budgeting and controlling the children are seen to be managed by the men-folk of the family. Women in the textbooks are projected as victims, passive, silent actors who lack decision-making power even within the family. Blumberg also cited works of Ellis and Ahmed who have considered the issue of gender biases in textbooks in India. An article by Ellis (2002) concerning school textbooks in the state of West Bengal with reference to history and geography texts for years three and four of middle school (Parts 1 and 2, published in 1992 and 1996, respectively). This study found out that gender stereotypes are expressed through pictures and expression of content. Out of 52 pictures, 50 (96%) are of males in one of the textbooks. Women are shown in pictures in relation to the traditional gender roles. To cite, “no women are shown in the chapter about “Main Ways of Earning a Living”, nor in an illustration of people receiving land titles from a male government officer.” (Ellis, cited in Blumberg 2008, pp.348-349).

The work of Ahmed (2006) provides a national perspective on reducing gender discrimination in education with special emphasis on the policy formulation and implementation. Since 1982–83, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) “has been laying stress on removing gender disparities-specifically emphasizing the elimination of sex stereotypes and sex biases from textbooks” (cited in Blumberg 2008). He concludes that women are still shown and described in stereotyped roles and “lessons...are male-centric” in nature. A survey conducted by the Friends of Education shown that in six primary textbooks on mathematics, not a single woman is depicted in roles such as: a shopkeeper, a merchant, a seller, an executive or an engineer (Blumberg, pp. 348-349).

Let us take some more examples particularly in the context of women in science in which a lot of research has been done on the representation of women scientists in books. McArthur (1998) conducted a study of science books for junior readers which are generally read by the children aged between 7 to 13. The books were selected from the general science section, books containing biographical information and sketches and some books were on discrete biographies. It was observed that in those books containing scientific experiments the images were primarily portraying human arms and equipments which do not communicate the gender of any person and many books had the portrayal of children including both girls and boys. However, there were a few books such as *Explorabook: A Kids' Science Museum Book* by John Cassidy (1991) which showed the images of boys only and women were represented for using housekeeping appliances (p. 249). *How Science Works: 100 Ways Parents and Kids Can Share the Secrets of Science* (Haan 1991) is a classic example of a book in which girls and boys from different racial and ethnic backgrounds were portrayed in an inclusive manner, involved in scientific activities. Books on popular histories of science like *The Usborne Book of Scientists- from Archimedes to Einstein* which is a forty-seven-page book and in that the section on Women in Science only contains two pages from 44 to 45 pages. Women scientists like Marie Curie and Rosalind Franklin were briefly mentioned in page

numbers 37 and 39. These are a few examples which show that how our books often do not portray gender inclusive images in the discussion of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

You may be aware of such forms of gender constructions in various textbooks in India as well. In certain books, gender constructions are represented in a paradoxical manner. For instance, an education activist from Pune observed that in one text book women are represented as equal yet in another chapter the same representation gets changed. Therefore, it is important to construct alternative knowledge framework to be able to make our schools and educational system gender inclusive in nature. For instance, the very curriculum needs to be redesigned within a Gendered Framework of Knowledge Construction. The position paper 3.2, NCERT shows how one can develop a gender sensitive curriculum by attaching gender inclusive meaning to the existing concepts. The paper writes, “The curriculum’s presentation of gender relations is frequently based upon popular assumptions or upon ideas perpetuated by dominant groups. And it normally posits the male as the normative epistemic subject” (NCERT, 2006: p. 30). It is therefore important to expand the concepts from a gender perspective. Certain assumptions like “men are physically stronger than women”, here the notion of ‘physical strength’ needs to include the stamina or physical strength of women as well. Other ideas like “men do not cry”, need to change and communicate that men or boys are equally vulnerable and emotional (NCERT, 2006: p. 30). Other concepts like visible and invisible work, paid and unpaid labour, gender division of labour in the household, sexual harassment, gender based violence need to be introduced and explained through curriculum and textbooks.

Check Your Progress IV

- Notes :** a) Write your answers in the space given below.
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.
- 5) Discuss nature of gender biases in syllabus and textbooks.
Use examples to answer this question.

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit discusses in detail how gender biases get manifested in text books, curriculum and schools in general. School as a microcosm of society is analyzed in the context of social structure including caste, class, family and gender. The unit introduces basic concepts of caste, class, and family to analyze the inter-linkages between social structure and women’s subordination. It uses case studies, illustration and examples to show how gender relations have become an inherent part of the school and others socio-cultural systems. In brief, this unit tries to show gendered hierarchies that are present in the structure of the school and curriculum and text books.

3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Family is defined as ‘a group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage or adoption, which form an economic unit, the adult members of which are responsible for the upbringing of children’. In India, you can find complete elementary family, incomplete elementary family, joint-family and extended family. Elementary family is described as “ a group composed of a man, his wife and children’ (Shah, 1998: 15). Many scholars in India assume that members of an elementary family always live together in the same household either by themselves or they live as a part of the wider household groups such as: joint-family and extended family.
2. Caste hierarchy and gender hierarchy are the organizing principles to maintain the brahmanical social order in India. These two principles are closely interconnected to maintain caste purity in Hindu society and are instruments to subordinate or control upper caste women in India. This is an institution unique to Hindu society within which caste purity and purity of blood are maintained by exerting sexual control over women to patrilineal succession. Purity of women is central to brahmanical patriarchy since purity of caste is dependent upon it. Many anthropological studies have shown that one can find evidence of brahmanical patriarchy in different practices and rituals of upper-caste communities of India. Nur Yalman’s (1962) work shows that the honour and respectability of men is protected and preserved through their women. Therefore, women are always guarded and controlled by the men folk of the society. In many communities, the onset of puberty is celebrated with rituals which indicate the important relationship between female purity and purity of caste (Chakravarti 1993). You can find many such examples in both historical and contemporary India.
3. The practice of marrying inside a specific group such as: clan, caste or tribe as determined by customary practices, norms, religion, class or ethnicity. A classic example of endogamy within the Indian sub-continent is caste endogamy. The function of endogamy is to regulate marriage to be able to preserve cultural identity, of a group and maintain the caste boundaries in the society. Endogamy with its concepts of purity and pollution supports the notion of caste or community rigid boundaries. Infringement of these rules leads to caste violence, honour killings and violence against women.
4. Gender discrimination is practiced in homes with the socialization process. For instance, culture of son preference in many families, gender division of work within the home, construction of femininity and masculinities are manifestation of gender discriminated practices. Girls are encouraged to focus on housework and boys are encouraged to concentrate on studies.

3.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Explain women’s subordination within the institution of family. Use case studies to answer this question.
2. How does caste and gender interrelate with each other? Discuss.

3. Do you agree that school is gender neutral in nature? Justify your answer with examples.
4. What is class and how does it relate with gender relations? Explain.

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