Volume : 2 | Issue : 5 | May 2013 • ISSN No 2277 - 8160

Research Paper Economics

Understanding Gender: A Sociological Perspective

Mr. Dharaben H. Nimbark Research Scholar, CMJ University

The concept of gender, as we all know came into existence during the early 1970s. It was used as an analytical category to draw a line of demarcation between biological sex differences and the way these are used to inform behaviours and complexes which are then assigned as masculine or feminine. The purpose of affirming a sex / gender distinction was to argue about the actual physical or mental effects of biological difference which was exaggerated to maintain a patriarchal system of power as well as to create a consciousness among the woman that they were naturally better suited to domestic roles. The conception of gender varies according to different contexts and time period. Common core sediment of meaning that the gender concept carrier while engaging with how different cultures work in, through and off gendered realities Though gender has always been a part of societal realities everywhere, its emergence as a concept and a discursive tool is a recent and modern phenomenon.

The concept of gender is addressed in various specialized disciplines for instance in literary studies, history, anthropology, etc. each of which retrieves and refigures the concept differently. Centrally speaking the gender has been the issue of sexual difference and its manifestations and their consequences. The debate usually is found amongst man and woman and even women themselves, which implies the combination of biological and socio-historical factors in the definitions.

In the present exercise, we try to understand the major conceptual concerns on which the gender concept has been laid out working through the related terms such as sex/gender, inequality and biology/ culture, in the first part. While in the second we would analyze the notions of gender, equality, sex and how these intersect with caste, community and religion in Indian context. Though gender is a complex of individual rights, identity, and equality, this complex often intersects with positions delineated by caste, creed, community, religion, etc. Despite the flexibility of meaning of the term gender, it also appears to retain a certain core reference to the social organizations of power relations between the sexes (Scott, 1988). Accordingly, every culture as well as every contextual configuration of elements within a culture, draws on this core, yet reconfigures the meaning of gender, gender relations, or gender inequalities differently under specific political and cultural contexts.

Gender and Inequality

The concept of gender emerged as a reaction to the marginality of women in existing critical frameworks, and sought to initiate changes in the substantive context and philosophical theory of knowledge of these disciplines.

In social sciences, it became natural to analyze the society in terms of caste, class and race alone was not sufficient because it neglected to take into account relations of asymmetry between men and women. This term emerged to challenge the new categories and ways of understanding that could account for the nature and organization of male-female relations and the ways in which they are overlapped in a larger context of power relations.

Body Vs Mind

A woman's existence is centrally because of her body she bears and rears children. Besides her laudation functions has made the functional abilities of her body more prominent. The society has burdened her with childcare, assigning no role to men. Other than breastfeeding, there is no work involved in childcare and household chores that a man's anatomy prevents him from doing it

Nature Vs Culture

The male dominated society clearly depicts the dominance of male and subordination of the women. Women were allocated domestic service and attending upon children while men did the rest. When a child is born, the mother is usually in most cultures in charge of breast-feeding the baby taking care and socializing it (Ornery, 1997: 16).

Private Vs Public

These physical and social roles of women and men have extended their association with private/public dichotomy. The private sphere popularly known as the domestic sphere has no economic political or historical significance. The private realm stands in opposition to the public sphere.

Inequality and Gender

Sex role theory proved inadequate to explore the variations in gender definitions, which requires deeper examination of the variations within the category of men or women. Such theorizing enables to see the relationships between and among men women as structured relationships not as abstract set of relations. A movement, which relates to social change, for e.g. feminism or gay liberation, ultimately becomes movements that expand role definitions and even change role expectations.

Gender, Biology and Culture

The understanding of gender based on commonsensical perceptions of the differences between male and female vary everyday. Gender is not found as self- evident and unproblematic but also found as naturally given. Moreover, the evolution of gender as a concept has also been a consequence of the realization of the pitfalls in relying on "woman" as an analytical category.

Reconfiguring Gender: Some Issues

In spite of the advance, gender analysis represents today over the earlier sexual difference argument, the distinction made between sex and gender has given rise to number of questions related to the relation between women and their bodies such as – What are bodies? Do they exist prior to gender? Does one belong to a gender or does one become a gender? Female body is a natural fact, and there is nothing-cultural expression or external something.

Gender Construction

At a very early age, the title boy develops an object-cathexis of his mother, which is originally related to the mother's breast... his father the boy deals with by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships exist side by side, until the sexual wishes in regards to the mother become intense and the father is perceived as an obstacle to them. This gives rise to the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1957: 219). So in repressing the erotic feelings towards the mother and accepting the father as a superior being, the boy identifies with the father and become aware of his male identity. (Freud cited in Giddens, 2000:

Sex Discrimination

With the release of the Census 2001, UNFPA began a journey to address the growing sex-ratio imbalance. Calculated based on the number of girls per 1000 boys in the 0-6 year age group, the child sex ratio showed a sharp decline from 976 girls to 1000 boys in 1961 to 927 as per the 2001 census.

Status of Women in India

The constitutions of India guarantee women, as it does to all citizens, equality in all spheres besides making special provisions for them. The situation of women as it exists is one of low status, powerless, endangered by development suppressed by poverty and oppressed by patriarchy. Traditional structures have not failed to make room for

them as equal partners in the decision neither making process, nor has the system ensured that their interests and concerns are reflected in development plans and local programmes.

Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

For many years, the chief obstacle facing women in the labour force is sex discrimination. Discrimination occurs when we treat people unequally because of personal characteristics that are not related to the job. To exclude one race, caste or gender from housing, educational opportunities, or employment would be a form of discrimination. With regard to gender discrimination in the workplace, employers have historically referred to a variety of characteristics about women to exclude them.

Women in Organized and Unorganized Sectors

Among rural women workers, majority is employed in agriculture as labourers and cultivators. 55.6% of women workers followed manufacturing, 21.4% agriculture and allied occupations 9.8% and finance, insurance, real estates and business 4.9%. In 1997, women workers employed in factories, mines and plantations constituted 14%, 6% and 51% respectively of the total work force. **Women in Agriculture**

Women farmers provide enormous services at almost every stage of agriculture practice. The tradition of producing, selecting, storing and replanting seeds dates back to at least 5000 years. A major characteristic of the India's labor force is the structural stagnation in its intersect oral distribution. About 70% of the labor force is concentrated in agricultural.

Historical Materialism and Women

According to historical materialism, human being is not only an animal species, but also a historical reality. In their opinion women could not be treated simply as a sexual organism, their position has also been determined by techniques, attainment and economic organization.

Industrialization and Capitalist Production

The Industrial Revolution Western Europe upset the existing demand and supply so drastically that structure of job composition rapidly changed with the mushrooming of textile industries. As a result the demand for women and children increased. This driving force pulled the women from home to the labor market. Women have always been responsible for the clothing of family, but with the commercialization of the cotton industries they became wage earners rather than small independent producers.

Cultural Construction of Masculinity and Femininity

This socialization process is so strong in men and women that one can notices a deep chasm between them in terms of their perspective, priorities in life, their dreams and life style and their vision of looking at things.

REFERENCES

Acker, J. (1989). Teachers, Gender and Careers. Johanesberg: Sage Publications. Acker, J. (1990). The Problem with Patriarchy, Delhi: Sage Publications. | Althusser, L. (1971). 'Ideology and the State' in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, London: New Left Books. | Bagdikian, B. (1988). The Media Monopoly, Boston: Beacon. Ball-Rokeach, S.J. (1985). The Origins of Individual Media-System Dependency in Communication Research, 12(4).