

STUDY MATERIAL

5TH SEM SOCIAL WORK GENERIC ELECTIVE

**SW520G: SOCIAL WORK UNDERSTANDING WOMEN
EMPOWERMENT**

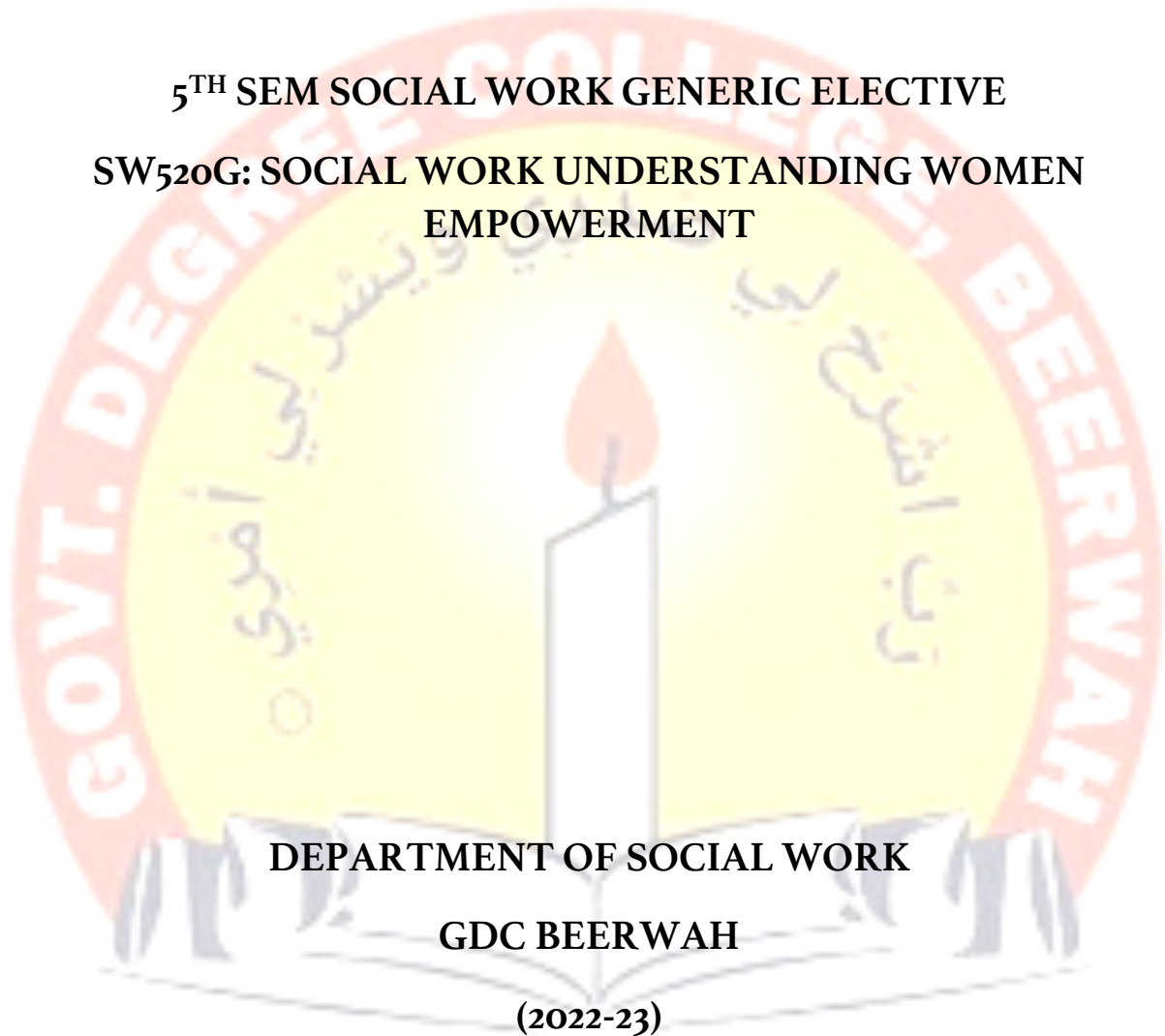


TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO BASIC CONCEPTS	3
1. Gender stratification in traditional and modern societies	3
2. Gender Stereotyping:	3
3. Gender Discrimination:	4
4. Violence in Family and Community:	5
5. Introduction to Feminism:	7
6. Major Feminist thoughts:.....	7
(I) Social feminism:.....	8
(II) Radical Feminism:	9
UNIT 2: PERSPECTIVES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA.....	11
1. Problems faced by Women in India:.....	11
2. Changing Role and Status of women in India:.....	13
3. Women Empowerment – Concept and Objectives:	15
4. Women Empowerment as A Human Right:.....	17
5. Women Empowerment as A Constitutional Right:.....	18
UNIT 3: FRAMEWORKS TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT.....	21
1. Women in Development (WID):	21
2. Women and Development (WAD):	22
3. Gender and Development (GAD):	23
4. Gender Development Index (GDI):	24
UNIT 4: CONTEMPORARY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES IN INDIA	26
1. Employment – NREGA, NRLM, and Social Security:.....	26
2. Reproductive Health and Health Insurance:	27
3. Political Participation Of Women In India:	29
4. Key Outcomes of Women Empowerment Initiatives in India:	31

UNIT I: INTRODUCTION TO BASIC CONCEPTS

1. Gender stratification in traditional and modern societies

Gender stratification also termed gender inequality, is a social phenomenon in which there are inequalities related to wealth, power, and privilege between men and women. These gender inequalities may be influenced by culture, biology, or psychology. For example, women in many cultures are expected to put their careers on hold for childbearing and raising a family while men earn the money to support the family. Women are less likely to be employed and more likely to have lower incomes, which translates in most cases to poor health. Women are also less likely to be authoritative in their jobs, negotiate starting salaries, or request pay increases. As a result, men are more likely to receive promotions and are generally higher paid than women. Gender stratification can also be defined as the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women in society. Traditional and modern societies have different approaches to gender stratification. In traditional societies, gender roles are strictly defined, and women are usually confined to domestic work, while men have more opportunities for education, work, and political power. In contrast, modern societies are more egalitarian, but gender stratification still persists in many areas, such as the workforce, education, and politics. In traditional societies, women are expected to conform to gender roles that are defined by patriarchal expectations. Women are usually seen as inferior to men and are assigned to do domestic work such as cooking, cleaning, and raising children. Women in traditional societies often have limited education and work opportunities, which exacerbates gender stratification. In many traditional societies, women do not have access to political power, and their opinions and voice are often marginalized. Modern societies have made great strides in achieving gender equality, but gender stratification still exists. Women still face discrimination and inequality in many areas, such as education, the workforce, and politics. Women are less likely to have access to education than men. Women are also less likely to hold high paying and high-status jobs compared to men. Furthermore, women are less likely to be politically active and less likely to be elected to political office than men. The most significant barrier to achieving gender equality in modern societies is patriarchal attitudes that persist within society. Men are still seen as the primary breadwinners, and women are often expected to prioritize domestic work above their careers. Patriarchal attitudes perpetuate gender stratification and prevent women from achieving their full potential. This is evident in the gender pay gap, with women earning less than men on average.

2. Gender Stereotyping:

A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives. Whether overtly hostile (such as "women are irrational") or seemingly

benign (“women are nurturing”), harmful stereotypes perpetuate inequalities. For example, the traditional view of women as care givers means that child care responsibilities often fall exclusively on women.

Further, gender stereotypes compounded and intersecting with other stereotypes have a disproportionate negative impact on certain groups of women, such as women from minority or indigenous groups, women with disabilities, women from lower caste groups or with lower economic status, migrant women, etc. Gender stereotyping refers to the practice of ascribing to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men. Gender stereotyping is wrongful when it results in a violation or violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Examples include:

- Not criminalizing marital rape, perceiving that women are the sexual property of men; and
- Failing to investigate, prosecute and sentence sexual violence against women, believing that victims of sexual violence agreed to sexual acts, as they were not dressing and behaving “modestly”.

Wrongful gender stereotyping is a frequent cause of discrimination against women. It is a contributing factor in violations of a vast array of rights such as the right to health, adequate standard of living, education, marriage and family relations, work, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, political participation and representation, effective remedy, and freedom from gender-based violence.

Prohibition of gender stereotypes and gender stereotyping

Two international human rights treaties contain express obligations concerning harmful stereotypes and wrongful stereotyping.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Article 5: States shall take all appropriate measures... to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 8(1)(b): States undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age, in all areas of life.

3. Gender Discrimination:

It refers to the practice where by one sex is given preferential treatment over the others. The practice of giving social importance to the biological differences between men and women is everywhere there. It has weakened the strength of the female-folk of India. Though constitutionally men and women are equal, socially men are given priority and importance sometimes to the disadvantage of women. There are various areas wherein discrimination is apparent.

Gender discrimination is undermining our social fabric and devalues all of us. It is not just a human rights issue; it is a tremendous waste of the world's human potential. By denying women equal rights, we deny half the population a chance to live life at its fullest. Political, economic and social equality for women will benefit all the world's citizens. Together we can eradicate prejudice and work for equal rights and respect for all. There are several spheres of life where gender discrimination is practiced:-

i) Discrimination in socialization process: In our socialization process female children are becoming victims of discrimination. Male preference and female negligence has almost become a working policy especially in the rural areas. Discrimination is made in matters relating to food, dress, health, education, domestic work etc. In India mothers show preference towards male children because they are wanted during their old age to offer protection and occupational avenues are broader for males than for females. This male preference has led to the technological equipments being misused to determine the sex of the child and abort it if it is found to be female resulting into female foeticide which causes gender imbalance.

ii) Discrimination in the distribution of power and work: Most of the Indian families are patriarchal, hence the philosophy of equality of sex is not acceptable to them. Domestic works such as cooking, looking after the children, doing household chores etc are considered as women's work, but when the question of exercising power comes, it's always man who dominates. The female voices are not taken into consideration.

iii) Women's health is ignored: The maternal functions like pregnancy, child rearing and family planning which involves use of contraceptives, sterilization, abortion cause serious health problems to women like high blood pressure, obesity, internal bodily problems.

iv) Discrimination in Occupations and public life: Women workers are paid less than the male workers for the same type of work. Much labour is extracted from women by giving them less wages or minimum wages. In matters of treatment, promotion, increment, facilities etc discrimination is generally made. In public life men are given priority except in the field of film industry where women are objectified and commodified, in all other fields women are not treated at par with men.

4. Violence in Family and Community:

Violence in family and community is a grave concern that confronts society. It is a form of behaviour that can manifest in several ways, such as physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse. Violence in family and community is dangerous, and it can have a long-

lasting impact on the victim, affecting them physically and emotionally. It also has economic implications to society, as it can lead to the loss of lives, property, and productivity. Therefore, it is critical to address violence in family and community to prevent it from occurring and to provide support to victims. The impact of violence in family and community can range from short-term to long-term. The immediate harm of violence can lead to injuries such as broken bones, bruises, and cuts. However, the long-term effects of violence can be more severe. Children and women who suffer violence in the family are at higher risk of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and substance abuse. In severe cases, it can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can affect the victim's cognitive and emotional responses to situations. Violence in family and community can create a toxic environment that can lead to a cycle of abuse. Children who grow up in violent homes may learn to become abusers in their adult lives, while women who suffer from domestic abuse may become trapped in abusive relationships, leading to more violence. Therefore, it is essential to provide support to victims to prevent them from becoming trapped in the cycle of abuse. Community centers, shelters, and trauma counselling services are some of the strategies that can help provide assistance to victims. Violence in family and community has economic implications on society. Besides from the cost of healthcare and medical treatment for victims, it can also lead to loss of productivity. Victims of domestic violence may require time off from work to seek treatment, leading to a loss of income. Moreover, violence in the neighbourhood can lead to the destruction of properties, which can lead to economic losses for individuals and businesses in the community. In conclusion, violence in family and community is a concerning issue that can have far reaching consequences. It is essential to raise awareness about the issue and provide support to victims. Society can work together to create a safe and nurturing community for everyone.

Reasons for violence in Family and Community

Violence in family and communities can have a devastating effect on individuals and society as a whole. There are many reasons that can give rise to the violence in the family and community. One of the significant reasons for family violence is a lack of communication between family members. Communication is the key to building a healthy family relationship. When family members fail to communicate with each other effectively, it can lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, and even violence. Another reason for violence in families and communities is poverty. Poverty causes stress, frustration, and desperation, leading to aggressive behaviour. People living in poor communities have lower levels of education and lack access to basic resources, making them more vulnerable to violence. Unemployment, job insecurity, and poverty can give rise to violence as it not only destroys the individual's self-esteem but also puts an immense strain on the family and community relationships. Additionally, cultural and societal norms that allow for violence can also contribute to violence in families and communities. For example, in some societies, violence is seen as an acceptable way for men to exert power and control over women, leading to domestic violence. Similarly, gang culture is pervasive in many communities, and young people feel pressure to conform and belong, leading to violence. It is essential that cultural and societal norms are challenged to prevent and reduce

violence in families and communities. Overall, family and community violence have deep-rooted and complex causes that require a multifaceted approach for prevention and intervention.

5. Introduction to Feminism:

Feminism aims to understand the nature of gender inequality, and examines women's social roles, experiences, and interests. While generally providing a critique of social relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's interests. Feminism focuses on the theory of patriarchy as a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on the assertion of male supremacy. The feminist perspective of gender stratification more recently takes into account intersectionality. Intersectionality suggests that various biological, social and cultural categories, including gender, race, class and ethnicity, interact and contribute towards systematic social inequality. Therefore, various forms of oppression, such as racism or sexism, do not act independently of one another; instead these forms of oppression are interrelated, forming a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination. In light of this theory, the oppression and marginalization of women is thus shaped not only by gender, but by other factors such as race and class. Generally speaking, men have had, and continue to have, more physical and social power and status than women, especially in the public arena. This leads to males holding public office, creating laws and rules, defining society. Through socialization; it has become a part and parcel of social existence. But inequality has been a special problem in the areas of higher education, work, and politics.

6. Major Feminist thoughts:

Social and Radical Feminism is a movement that aims to achieve equality between men and women in all spheres of life. It is a complex system of thought that has evolved over time, and there are various schools of feminist thought. Two major schools of feminist thought are social feminism and radical feminism. Social feminism is concerned with the social and economic aspects of women's oppression, while radical feminism seeks to redefine gender relations and overthrow the patriarchy.

Social feminism addresses women's oppression as a social and economic issue. Social feminists believe that women are oppressed because of their gender, and that this oppression is perpetuated by social institutions such as the family, the workplace, and the state. They argue that women's economic and social needs are not met, and that this leads to their further marginalization. Social feminists advocate for policies that redress these imbalances, such as affirmative action, equal pay, and childcare support.

Radical feminism is a more radical and transformative approach to feminism. It seeks to challenge the very foundations of gender relations and to create a genderless society. Radical feminists argue that the patriarchy is the root cause of women's oppression, and that gender is a socially constructed category that perpetuates inequality. They advocate

for a radical transformation of society, including the destruction of gender roles, the end of patriarchy, and the promotion of women's empowerment.

The social and radical feminist perspectives have different goals and objectives. While social feminists seek to address the economic and social imbalances that perpetuate women's oppression, radical feminists seek to challenge the very foundations of gender relations.

Both approaches are important, and they are not mutually exclusive. They demonstrate the diverse and multi-layered nature of feminism as a movement.

In conclusion, social feminism and radical feminism are two major schools of feminist thought that address women's oppression from different angles. Social feminism is concerned with the social and economic aspects of women's oppression, while radical feminism seeks to challenge the very foundations of gender relations. Both approaches are crucial to achieving gender equality, and they demonstrate the diverse and multi-layered nature of feminism as a movement. Feminism is a continual process of critique and reflection, and both schools of thought offer valuable insights into the ways in which we can transform society to achieve true gender equality.

(I) Social feminism:

Social feminism is a political ideology that emerged in the late 19th century during the feminist movement. This ideology advocates for women's rights and equality with men in all aspects of life, including social, economic, and political domains. Social Feminism is based on Karl Marx's ideas to assert that class oppression made women second-class citizens and, with the change of the capitalist system, they could regain their rights. Frederick Engels, a famous political theorist, echoed Marx, arguing that women would be oppressed if they kept their roles within the nuclear family construct. However, socialist feminism went even more profound, saying that gender oppression isn't due to being part of an oppressed class but rather a Dual System theory.

The concept that the cause of women's subjugation is systems connected to race, social class, gender, sexuality, and nation is at the centre of socialist feminist philosophy. As a result, socialist feminists are concerned with a broad spectrum of oppressions rather than only the sex/gender system. However, socialists and socialist feminists tend to disagree with the emphasis of socialism on class politics, which is the core of its ideology, rather than focusing on other issues such as racial or sexual politics.

Key features of social feminism

We already know the definition and the purpose of social feminism. Now we will deepen on the critical features of this movement.

Intersectionality: In Social Feminism, intersectionality acknowledges that everyone has unique experiences of discrimination and oppression. It is a must to consider everything

and anything that can marginalise people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.

Gender roles and the division of labour: Socialist feminists claim gendered division of labour is unnatural and a source of oppression. To foster more equitable societies, socialist feminists aim to challenge social and economic systems which enforce gender roles. For example, motherhood and the gendered division of labour are the reason for women's economic dependency on men.

Relationship with men: It is crucial to note that socialist feminism opposes patriarchy and capitalism as two oppressive systems. According to socialist feminists, toxic masculinity harms individuals across society regardless of their gender identity. Pressure on males to conform to gender roles contributes to the crisis of rape culture and the normalisation of violence against women.

(II) Radical Feminism:

Radical feminism is a branch of feminism that seeks to dismantle the traditional patriarchal power and gender roles that keep women oppressed. Radical feminists believe that the cause of gender inequality is based on men's need or desire to control women. The definition of the word 'radical' means 'of or relating to the root. Radical feminists thus see patriarchy as the root cause of inequality between men and women and they seek to up-root this. They aim to address the root causes of oppression through systemic change and activism, rather than through legislative or economic change. Radical feminism requires global change of the system. Radical feminists theorize new ways to think and apprehend the relationships between men and women so that women can be liberated. Radical feminism sees women as a collective group that has been and is still being oppressed by men. Its intent is focused on being women-centered, with women's experiences and interests being at the forefront of the theory and practice. It is argued by some to be the only theory by and for women (Rowland & Klein, 1996).

Principles of Radical Feminism:

Patriarchal institutions: Radical feminists believe that there are existing political, social, and other institutions that are inherently tied to the patriarchy. This can include government laws and legislature which restrict what women can do with their bodies, and women are restricted to the maternal role. Traditional marriage is also defined as a patriarchal institution since it makes women part of men's private property.

Control over women's bodies: According to radical feminists, patriarchal systems attempt to gain control over women's bodies. Patriarchal institutions control the laws of reproduction where they determine whether women have the right to an abortion and contraception. Thus, women have less autonomy over their own bodies.

Women are objectified: From a radical feminist standpoint, the patriarchy, societal sexism, sexual violence, and sex work all contribute to the objectification of women. They accuse pornography of objectifying and degrading women, displaying unequal male-female

power relations. With prostitution, radical feminists argue that it trivializes rape in return for payment and that prostitutes are sexually exploited.

Violence against women: Radical feminists believe that women experience violence by men physically and sexually, but also through prostitution and pornography. They believe that violence is a way for men to gain control, dominate, and perpetuate women's subordination.

They claim there is a rape culture that is enabled and encouraged by a patriarchal society.

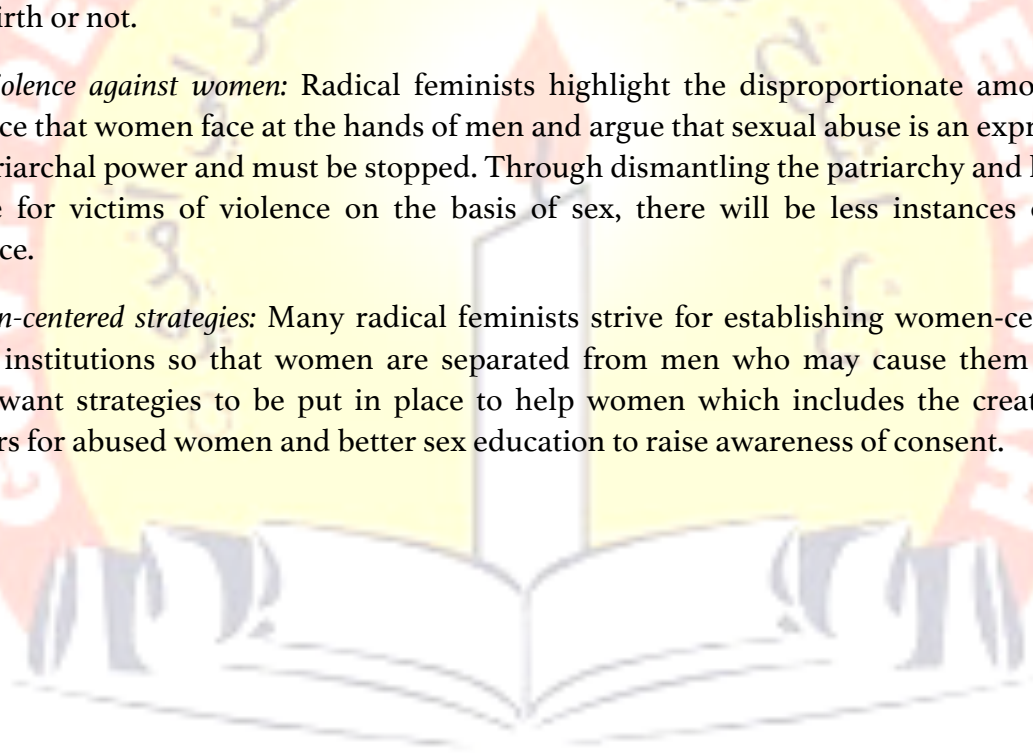
Goals of Radical Feminism:

Structural change: Radical feminists aim to dismantle the entire system of patriarchy, rather than adjust the existing system through legal or social efforts, which they claim does not go far enough. They believe that institutions including the government and religion are centered historically in patriarchal power and thus need to be dismantled.

Bodily autonomy: Radical feminists emphasize the theme of the body and choose to be able to do with their bodies what they want. They have argued for reproductive rights for women which would give them the freedom to make choices about whether they want to give birth or not.

End violence against women: Radical feminists highlight the disproportionate amount of violence that women face at the hands of men and argue that sexual abuse is an expression of patriarchal power and must be stopped. Through dismantling the patriarchy and having justice for victims of violence on the basis of sex, there will be less instances of this violence.

Women-centered strategies: Many radical feminists strive for establishing women-centered social institutions so that women are separated from men who may cause them harm. They want strategies to be put in place to help women which includes the creation of shelters for abused women and better sex education to raise awareness of consent.



UNIT 2: PERSPECTIVES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

I. Problems faced by Women in India:

India is a developing country that is home to over 1.3 billion people. Despite the country's rapid economic growth in the past two decades, gender inequality is still rampant throughout India's social, political and economic spheres. Despite numerous reforms and policies being implemented, women in India continue to face immense social, political and economic problems. This section will analyze the social, political and economic problems faced by women in India.

(i) Social problems:

Earlier women were facing problems like child marriage, sati pratha, parda pratha, restriction to widow remarriage, widows exploitation, devadasi system, etc. However, almost all the old traditional problems have disappeared gradually from the society but given rise to other new issues. Women are continuously facing many problems even after having self-confidence, individuality, self-respect, personality, capacity, talent, and efficiency more than men. They are facing problems in their daily life even after they are given equal rights and opportunities like men by the Constitution of India. Some of the major problems modern women are still facing mentioned below:

- (i) **Violence against women:** Women are getting affected by the various forms of violence almost every day which is disrupting the society. Women are being victims of violence at huge level day by day because of increasing crimes against women according to the report of Crime Record Bureau of the Central Home Ministry. Woman is getting kidnapped at every 44 minutes, raped at every 47 minutes, 17 dowry deaths every day, etc. They may face violence within the family dowry related harassment, death, marital rape, wife-battering, sexual abuse, deprivation of healthy food, female genital mutilation, etc or outside the family like kidnapping, rape, murder, etc.
- (ii) **Gender discrimination:** Women are considered as weaker section of the society than men and given less importance. Girl children are becoming real victims of the discrimination. There is also discrimination of power and work between men and women because of the patriarchal system families in India. Gender discrimination affects women in the areas like nutrition, education, health, care, decline of female population, job, public life, etc.
- (iii) **Problems of female education:** Women education percentage is low in India especially in the rural areas because women who are uneducated are more prone to divorce and desertion by their husbands at any stage of life. They have to live whole life with fear of divorce. In some cases they have to finish their life because of unbearable conditions because they are discouraged for higher education like professional and technical education.

(iv) **Dowry system** is another huge women problem in the society which is increasing day by day. Women are ill-treated, man-handled, disrespected, tortured and suffer other cruelties (violence, murder and suicide) because of the issue of dowry at the time of marriage. It causes degradation of women's status to a great extent.

(ii) Economic problems:

Women in India face several economic problems, resulting in a gender gap in various economic indicators.

(i) **Lack of equal pay for equal work:** One of the biggest economic problems faced by women in India is the lack of **equal pay for equal work**. Despite legal provisions, women tend to earn less than men for the same job, often leading to their economic marginalization. This gap is due to many reasons, including societal stereotypes that deem jobs suitable for men, discrimination in the workplace, and lack of opportunities.

(ii) **Lack of access to formal credit:** Another major problem faced by women in India is the lack of access to formal credit. Women entrepreneurs and self-employed women face significant challenges in accessing credit compared to men. This issue can have serious implications for small businesses, where money is needed to fuel expansion and growth. Women also face challenges in getting loans due to limited collateral and lack of financial literacy.

(iii) **Challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities:** Lastly, women in India also face challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities. Women often take on the caregiving responsibilities for their families, leading to less time spent at work and fewer opportunities for economic growth. This challenge can further exacerbate economic issues among women, especially those who require higher wages to meet the needs of their families. To overcome these economic problems, measures need to be taken to create more opportunities, eliminate discrimination, and bridge the gender pay gap.

(iv) **Problems related to unemployment:** Women are getting more problems in searching their suitable work. They become more prone to the exploitation and harassment in the work areas. They are given more work and hard tasks by their boss intentionally. They have to prove their devotion, seriousness and sincerity towards work time to time.

(iii) Political Challenges/Problems:

- **Inaccessibility of Institutions:** Election records show that most political parties, though pledging in their constitutions to provide adequate representation to women, in practice give far too few party tickets to women candidates. A study found that a large section of women who do get party tickets have family political connections, or are 'dynastic' politicians. With normal routes of accessibility limited, such connections are often an entry point for women

- **Notion of women less likely to win:** It is still widely held in political circles that women candidates are less likely to win elections than men, which leads to political parties giving them fewer tickets.
- **Challenging Structural Conditions:** Election campaigns in India are extremely demanding and time-consuming. Women politicians, with family commitments and the responsibilities of child care, often find it difficult to fully participate.
- **Highly vulnerable:** Women politicians have been constantly subjected to humiliation, inappropriate comments, abuse and threats of abuse, making participation and contesting elections extremely challenging.
- **Expensive electoral system:** Financing is also an obstacle as many women are financially dependent on their families. Fighting parliamentary elections can be extremely expensive, and massive financial resources are required to be able to put up a formidable contest. Absence of adequate support from their parties, women candidates are compelled to arrange for their own campaign financing this is a huge challenge that deters their participation
- **Internalized patriarchy:** A phenomenon known as 'internalized patriarchy' where many women consider it their duty to prioritize family and household over political ambitions.

2. Changing Role and Status of women in India:

The status of women in ancient India was quite high however it got deteriorated with the passage of time. Earlier in the Vedic times, women were given lots of respect and honour in the Indian society. They were equally given opportunities like men to develop socially, intellectually and morally. They were completely free to choose their own path in the life and select life partner. They got complete education before marriage as well as military training for their own safety. However, status of women in the Indian society got deteriorated in the middle ages because of various bad practices against women. The society talked volumes about the high status of women in the society but in reality, it was not to be. Women were prohibited to take part in many domestic, social as well as external affairs. They were forced to live under the influence of parents before marriage and under the influence of husbands after marriage. Their social status further deteriorated during the Mughal period. Women were forced to follow the rules of sati pratha, parda pratha, etc.

There has been a lot of improvement in the status of women in India after the independence. Gradually women started enjoying at par status with men in the society. Today, women enjoy all the rights and privileges in almost every area as their male counterparts and it is equally supported by the constitutional provisions. It is but obvious that India cannot take forward strides on the path of economic development by neglecting women who constitute nearly 50% of the total population. The female population of the country, both living in rural and urban areas, are fully aware about their economic, social and political rights.

Participation and role of women in different areas: Women in India now participate fully in areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology etc.

Education: Though it is gradually increasing, the female literacy rate in India is less than the male literacy rate. Far fewer girls than boys are enrolled in school, and the dropout level of girls is high. In urban India, girls are nearly at par with boys in terms of education. However, in rural India, girls continue to be less educated than boys. According to the National Sample Survey Data of 1997, only Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy. According to scholars, the major factor behind improvements in the social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy.

Politics: India has one of the highest number of female politicians in the world. Women have held high offices in India including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the Opposition. The Indian states Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tripura have implemented 50% reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Land and property rights: Due to weak enforcement of laws protecting them, women continue to have little access to land and property. In India, women's property rights vary depending on religion, and tribe, and are subject to a complex mix of law and custom, but in principle the move has been towards granting women equal legal rights, especially since the passing of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005. With amendment of the Hindu laws in 2005, women now have the same property rights as men.

Health: The average female life expectancy today in India is low compared to many countries, but it has shown gradual improvement over the years. Fertility rates have come down and have reached replacement levels in a number of states, Maternal Mortality Rate is improving, from 301 per 100,000 live births in 2003 it has come down to 212 in 2009; Infant Mortality Rate has reduced to 50 per 1000 in 2009.

Role of Schemes and Programmes in the changing Status and Role of Women:

Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP): This programme seeks to provide skills and new knowledge to poor and assetless women in the traditional sectors. Under this project, women beneficiaries are organized into viable and cohesive groups or cooperatives. A comprehensive package of services such as health care, elementary education, crèche facility, market linkages, etc. are provided besides access to credit. Skill development is provided in ten traditional skills amongst women.

Ujjawala: A comprehensive scheme to combat trafficking was launched in December 2007 and is being implemented mainly through NGOs. The scheme has five components- Prevention, Rescue, Rehabilitation, reintegration and Repatriation of trafficked victim for commercial sexual exploitation.

Swadhaar-Swadhaar: This scheme was launched in the year 2001-02 for the benefit of women in difficult circumstances with the objectives to provide primary needs of shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women/girls living in difficult circumstances who are without any social and economic support.

Mother and Child tracking System: The Mother and Child Tracking System, launched in 2009, helps monitor the health care system to ensure that all mothers and their children have access to a range of services, including pregnancy care, medical care during delivery, and immunizations. The system consists of a database of all pregnancies registered at health care facilities since 1 December 2009, and all births since 1 December 2009.

The Indira Gandhi Matratva Sahyog Yojna Conditional Maternity Benefit Plan(CMB): It is a scheme sponsored by the national government for pregnant and lactating women aged 19 and over for their first two live births. The programme, which began in October 2010, provides money to help ensure the good health and nutrition of the recipients. As of March 2013 the programme is being offered in 53 districts around the country.

Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescents Girls-Sabla: The Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls – Sabla is an initiative launched in 2012 and it offers a package of benefits to at-risk girls between the ages of 10 and 19. The programme offers a variety of services to help young women become self-reliant, including nutritional supplementation and education, health education and services, and life skills and vocational training.

Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC): TSC is a comprehensive programme to ensure sanitation facilities in rural areas with the broader goal to eradicate the practice of open defecation. The key intervention areas are Individual Household Latrines (IHL), School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE), Community Sanitary Complex, Anganwadi toilets supported by Rural Sanitary Marts (RSMs) and Production Centers. It was also targeted that separate toilet blocks would be constructed for girls in all schools.

3. Women Empowerment – Concept and Objectives:

‘EMPOWERMENT’ may be described as a process which helps people to assert their control over the factors which affect their lives. Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent discussion in matters that affect them. Women empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International women Conference in 1985 at Nairobi, which defined it as redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDFW) includes the following factors in its definition of women empowerment:

1. Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the way in which these relations may be changed.

2. Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.

Batliwala (1974) defines empowerment as "the process of challenging existing power relation and of gaining greater control over the source of power". Women's empowerment is seen as the process and the result of the process of:

1. Challenging the ideology of male domination and women's subordinations.
2. Enabling women to gain equal access to and control over the resources (material, human and intellectual).

In Indian context women empowerment implies the ability in women to take decisions with regard to their life and work and giving equal rights to them in all spheres like: personal, social, economic, political, legal and so on. We are living in an age of women empowerment where women are working shoulder to shoulder with men. A woman also manages to balance between their commitment to their profession as well as their home and family. They are playing multiple roles - at home as a mother, daughter, sister, and wife and at working place as professionals with remarkable simplicity and compatibility.

Objectives of Women Empowerment:

1. To identify gaps in the empowerment of women, development of children and adolescents; create a national network of public, private and NGO centres for delivering reproductive and child health services free to any client;
2. To create an enabling environment through convergence with other programmes;
3. To open more child care centres for working women and expand the availability of safe abortion care;
4. To use energy saving devices to reduce drudgery of women;
5. To identify the ways in which the effects of policies and programmatic interventions to promote women's empowerment have been measured;
6. To improve access to sanitation, drinking water, fuel, wood and fodder for women;
7. To develop health management and health package at all levels;
8. To improve accessibility and quality of maternal and child health care services;
9. To identify the evidence on how women's empowerment affects important development outcomes such as health, education, fertility behaviour, income levels, etc.
10. Supporting community activities package for women;
11. To improve and increase clinical and contraception delivery services;
12. To organise educational and empowerment programmes for girls and women;
13. To train resource persons, animators and trainers for activities visualised;
14. To conduct and promote experimentations and innovations and research in the problems and programmes of empowerment of rural women;
15. To increase awareness in women, for their development to use their talent optimally not only for themselves, but also for the society as a whole;
16. To develop the skills for self-decision- taking capabilities in women and to allow them to present their point of view effectively in society;
17. To create awareness among women to be truly ambitious and to dream for betterment;

18. To make efforts in organising the women for fighting against the problems and difficulties related to them; and
19. To integrate socio-economic activities with concern for health and environment protection in the light of the rural women culture.

4. Women Empowerment as A Human Right:

1. Milestones:

Numerous international and regional instruments have drawn attention to gender-related dimensions of human rights issues, the most important being the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979.

1. **CEDAW: The International Bill of Rights for Women:** The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women defines the right of women to be free from discrimination and sets the core principles to protect this right. It establishes an agenda for national action to end discrimination, and provides the basis for achieving equality between men and women through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life as well as education, health and employment. CEDAW is the only human rights treaty that affirms the reproductive rights of women. The Convention has been ratified by 180 states, making it one of the most ratified international treaties.
2. **In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (ICPD):** articulated and affirmed the relationship between advancement and fulfilment of rights and gender equality and equity. It also clarifies the concepts of women's empowerment, gender equity, and reproductive health and rights. The Programme of Action of ICPD asserted that the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status was a highly important end in itself as well as essential for the achievement of sustainable development.
3. **In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing:** generated global commitments to advance a wider range of women's rights. The inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals was a reminder that many of those promises have yet to be kept. It also represents a critical opportunity to implement those promises.

2. Continued Challenges:

In spite of these international agreements, the denial of women's basic human rights is persistent and widespread. For instance:

- Over half a million women continue to die each year from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes.
- Rates of HIV infection among women are rapidly increasing. Among those 15-24 years of age, young women now constitute the majority of those newly infected, in part because of their economic and social vulnerability.

- Gender-based violence kills and disables as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 as cancer. More often than not, perpetrators go unpunished.
- Worldwide, women are twice as likely as men to be illiterate.
- As a consequence of their working conditions and characteristics, a disproportionate number of women are impoverished in both developing and developed countries.
- Many of the countries that have ratified CEDAW still have discriminatory laws governing marriage, land, property and inheritance.
- New challenges for women's empowerment and gender equality that have emerged over the past decade, such as the feminization of the AIDS epidemic, feminization of migration, and increasing of trafficking on women need to be more effectively addressed.

5. Women Empowerment as A Constitutional Right:

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of special importance in this regard.

Constitutional Privileges

1. (Article 14) Equality before law for women:
According to Article 14, The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
2. (Article 15) Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth:
(Article 15(1)) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth or any of them.
(Article 15(3)) The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children.
3. (Article 16) Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment:
(Article 16(1)) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.
4. (Article 19) Freedom Of Speech And Expression
(Article 19(1)(a)) states that, all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression.

5. (Article 21) Protection of life and personal liberty.
No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.
6. (Article 39) Directive Principles of State Policy
(Article 39(a)) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood.
(Article 39(d)) directs the state to secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
7. (Article 39 A) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.
8. Article 42 of the Constitution incorporates a very important provision for the benefit of women. It directs the State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.
9. (Article 51(A) (e)) is related to women. It states that;
It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religion, linguistic, regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
10. *Article 243 D: Reservation of seats.*
(Article 243 D(1) Seats shall be reserved for –
(a) The Scheduled Castes; and
(b) The Scheduled Tribes.
Article 243 D(2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled tribes .
Article 243 D(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.
Article 243 D (4) Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayat at each level to be reserved for women.
11. *Article 243 T: Reservation of seats*
(Article 243 T (3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a

Municipality.

Article 243 T (4) Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide.



UNIT 3: FRAMEWORKS TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

I. Women in Development (WID):

Women in development (WID) is a approach to development that focuses on the role of women in economic and social development. It emphasizes the need to address gender inequality and to promote the participation of women in all aspects of development. The WID approach was developed in the 1970s in response to concerns that traditional development efforts were not adequately addressing the needs and contributions of women.

The WID approach acknowledges that women often face specific challenges and discrimination that hinder their ability to fully participate in the development and benefit from it. These challenges include lack of access to education, economic opportunities, and decision-making power, as well as higher levels of poverty and vulnerability.

The WID approach calls for the inclusion of women in development planning and decision-making, as well as for the design of policies and programs that address the specific needs and rights of women. It also emphasizes the importance of building women's capacity and empowering them to participate in development.

It has evolved over time and has influenced the development of other approaches, such as the gender and development (GAD) approach, which emphasizes the need to examine and transform gender relationships and power imbalances in development.

The main principles and goals of the Women in Development (WID) approach are:

1. **Gender equality:** The WID approach recognizes that gender equality is an essential component of sustainable development and seeks to address the systemic inequalities that disadvantage women and girls.
2. **Empowerment of women:** The WID approach seeks to empower women by promoting their active participation in all aspects of development, including decision-making processes, and by addressing the social, economic, and political barriers that limit their agency.
3. **Recognition of women's rights:** The WID approach advocates for the recognition and protection of women's rights, including their reproductive rights, their rights to education and employment, and their rights to participate in public life.
4. **Integration of a gender perspective:** The WID approach emphasizes the importance of integrating a gender perspective into all development policies and programs, in order to ensure that the needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into account.
5. **Capacity-building for women:** The WID approach seeks to build the capacity of women through education, training, and other forms of support, in order to enable them to fully participate in development processes and to realize their full potential.

Some of the successes include:

1. **Increased awareness of gender inequality:** The WID approach has contributed to an increased awareness of the importance of gender equality in development, and has helped to bring issues such as women's empowerment and reproductive rights to the forefront of the development agenda.
2. **Improved access to education and employment:** The WID approach has led to greater access to education and employment for women in many countries, which has in turn contributed to increased economic opportunities and independence for women.
3. **Greater participation in decision-making:** The WID approach has helped to increase the participation of women in decision-making at all levels, including in local communities, national governments, and international organizations.
4. **Enhanced livelihoods:** The WID approach has contributed to the enhancement of livelihoods for women in many parts of the world, through initiatives such as microfinance programs and entrepreneurship support.

Some of the challenges

5. **Resistance to change:** There has been resistance to the WID approach in some quarters, particularly from those who view it as a threat to traditional gender roles and power dynamics.
6. **Limited resources:** The WID approach has often been underfunded, which has limited its ability to achieve its goals and to scale up successful initiatives.
7. **Lack of gender-disaggregated data:** There has often been a lack of accurate and comprehensive data on the situation of women and girls, which has made it difficult to measure the impact of the WID approach and to identify areas in need of improvement.
8. **Limited institutional support:** There has often been a lack of institutional support for the WID approach, both within governments and international organizations, which has made it difficult to mainstream a gender perspective into developmental policies and programs.

2. Women and Development (WAD):

Women and development is an approach that focuses on addressing the gender inequalities that exist in society. It recognizes the important role that women play in development and aims to empower them by giving them access to resources, education, and opportunities. Historically, women have been marginalized and excluded from the development process, which has limited their ability to contribute fully to society. However, the women and development approach acknowledges that women are valuable agents of change who can drive progress in their communities, countries, and the world at large. The women and developmental approach has several key goals, including:

1. Empowering women: This involves providing women with access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities so that they can achieve their full potential.
2. Reducing gender inequalities: This includes addressing issues such as unequal pay, discrimination, and gender-based violence.
3. Increasing women's participation in decision-making: Women's voices must be heard and their perspectives must be taken into account when making important policy decisions.
4. Improving access to reproductive health services: This includes providing access to contraception, safe abortion, and maternal health services. Overall, the women and development approach is essential in creating a more equitable and just world. By empowering women and reducing gender inequalities, we can create a more sustainable world that benefits everyone.

3. Gender and Development (GAD):

Theoretical approach:

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach focuses on the socially constructed differences between men and women, the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations and the creation and effects of class differences on development. This approach was majorly influenced by the writings of academic scholars such as Oakley (1972) and Rubin (1975), who argue the social relationship between men and women have systematically subordinated women, along with economist scholars Lourdes Benería and Amartya Sen (1981), who assess the impact of colonialism on development and gender inequality. They state that colonialism imposed more than a 'value system' upon developing nations, it introduced a system of economics 'designed to promote capital accumulation which caused class differentiation'.

GAD departs from WID, which discussed women's subordination and lack of inclusion in discussions of international development, without examining broader systems of gender relations. GAD challenged the WID focus on women as an important 'target group' and 'untapped resources' for development. GAD marked a shift in thinking about the need to understand how women and men are socially constructed and how 'those constructions are powerfully reinforced in the social activities that both define and are defined by them.'

GAD focuses primarily on the gendered division of labor and gender as a relation of power embedded in institutions. **Consequently, two major frameworks, 'Gender roles' and 'social relations analysis', are used in this approach.** 'Gender roles' focuses on the social construction of identities within the household; it also reveals the expectations from 'maleness and femaleness' in their relative access to resources. 'Social relations analysis' exposes the social dimensions of hierarchical power relations embedded in social institutions, as well as its determining influence on 'the relative position of men and women in society.' This relative positioning tends to discriminate against women.

Unlike WID, the GAD approach is not concerned specifically with women, but with the way in which a society assigns roles, responsibilities and expectations to both women and men. GAD applies gender analysis to uncover the ways in which men and women work together, presenting results in neutral terms of economics and efficiency. **In an attempt to create gender equality (denoting women having the same opportunities as men, including ability to participate in the public sphere), GAD policies aim to redefine traditional gender role expectations.** Women are expected to fulfil household management tasks, home-based production as well as bearing and raising children and caring for family members. The role of a wife is largely interpreted as 'the responsibilities of motherhood.' Men, however, are expected to be breadwinners, associated with paid work and market production. In the labor market, women tend to earn less than men. In response to pervasive gender inequalities, Beijing Platform for Action established gender mainstreaming in 1995 as a strategy across all policy areas at all levels of governance for achieving gender equality.

Criticism

1. GAD has been largely utilized in debates regarding development but this trend is not seen in the actual practice of developmental agencies and plans for development.
2. GAD has been criticized for emphasizing the social differences between men and women while neglecting the bonds between them and also the potential for changes in roles.
3. Another criticism is that GAD does not dig deeply enough into social relations and so may not explain how these relations can undermine programs directed at women.
4. It also does not uncover the types of trade-offs that women are prepared to make for the sake of achieving their ideals of marriage or motherhood.
5. While many development agencies are now committed to a gender approach, in practice, the primary institutional perspective remain focused on a WID approach. Specifically, the language of GAD has been incorporated into WID programs.
6. Further criticisms of GAD is its insufficient attention to culture, with a new framework being offered instead: Women, Culture and Development (WCD).

4. Gender Development Index (GDI):

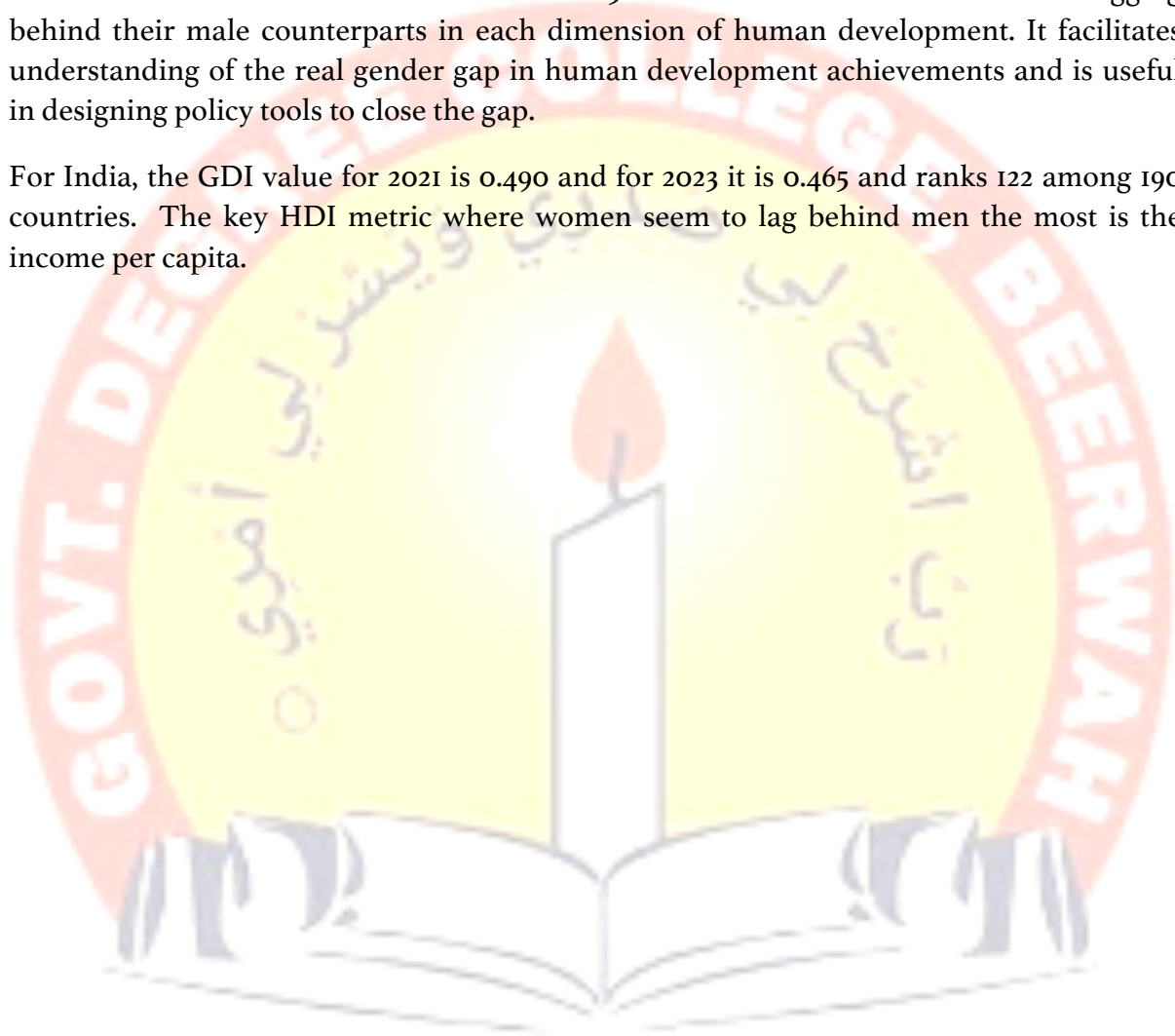
The Human Development Index is a three-indicator index that assesses progress in human development but ignores gender inequalities. Therefore, the GDI index is used to investigate gender differences in achievement. The GDI, like the HDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: **health**, measured by female and male life expectancy at birth; **education**, measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and female and male mean years of schooling for adults ages 25 years and older; and **command over economic resources**, measured by female and male estimated earned income.

The Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) were first introduced in the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report in 1995. The goal of these assessments was to give the Human Development Index a gender-sensitive dimension (HDI).

The GDI is a “distribution-sensitive metric that takes into account the impact of existing gender gaps on human development in the three components of the HDI. It considers not just the averaged or overall level of well-being and prosperity in a given country, but also how this wealth and well-being is distributed among different social groups.

The GDI is calculated for 161 countries in 2015 and shows how much women are lagging behind their male counterparts in each dimension of human development. It facilitates understanding of the real gender gap in human development achievements and is useful in designing policy tools to close the gap.

For India, the GDI value for 2021 is 0.490 and for 2023 it is 0.465 and ranks 122 among 190 countries. The key HDI metric where women seem to lag behind men the most is the income per capita.



UNIT 4: CONTEMPORARY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES IN INDIA

I. Employment – NREGA, NRLM, and Social Security:

Employment generation coupled with improving employability is the priority of the Government. Accordingly, the Government of India has taken various steps for generating employment in the country. The efforts comprise of various long term schemes/ programmes/ policies for making the country self-reliant and to create employment opportunities. A number of these program have special reservations or focus on women.

(i) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

Launched in 2005, MGNREGA is a demand driven wage employment programme which provide for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

As per the Para 15 of Schedule-II of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, “Priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work.

Efforts to increase participation of single women and the disabled shall be made”. Mahatma Gandhi NREGS is a gender positive programme which promotes participation of women by providing wage parity with men, provision of separate schedule of rates of wages for women, facilities for crèche, work-side sheds for children and child care services. In 2022-23 the participation rate of women in MGNREGA was 54.54 percent at all india level.

(ii) National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM):

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (National Rural Livelihoods Mission) (DAY-NRLM) was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in June 2011. Aided in part through investment support by the World Bank, the Mission aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor, especially women, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.

DAY-NRLM focuses on women's economic and social empowerment through self-help groups (SHGs) and federations. In convergence with MGNREGA, the NRLM has introduced the concept of women mates,, which again facilitate the participation of women. With over 74.98 lakh SHGs empowering 8.16 crore women throughout the country through its grassroots initiatives focused on agroecology, farming and allied activities, pickle, and papad making, handicrafts, handlooms, COVID-19 emergency measures, and other entrepreneurial ventures, the DAY-NRLM is silently empowering women, families, and communities socially, economically, and politically through rights and entitlements.

(iii) Social Security Schemes:

A number of social security programs are currently in place in India. Some of the key programs with focus on women are as following:

1. **Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme:** Under this scheme, widow pension is provided to the widows belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. This is a sub-scheme under National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) of Ministry of Rural Development. Under the scheme, central assistance at the rate of Rs. 300/- per month is provided to widows in the age group of 40-79 years and the pension amount is enhanced to Rs 500/- per month on attaining 80 years.
2. The **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)** is a fully funded Centrally Sponsored Scheme targeting the destitute with the objective of providing a basic level of financial support. Under NSAP, central assistance of Rs. 200 – 300/- is provided in pension to senior citizens (men and women) (60 years and above), widows (40-79 years) and to disabled persons.
3. **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM)**
Government of India has introduced a pension scheme for unorganised workers namely Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM) to ensure old age protection for Unorganised Workers above the age of 40 years.
4. **National Pension Scheme for Traders, and Self-employed Persons (NPS-Traders)**
The scheme is meant for old age protection and social security of retail traders/ shopkeepers and self-employed persons whose annual turnover is not exceeding Rs. 1.5 crore.
5. **Atal Pension Yojana (APY):** This scheme is implemented with an objective to create a universal social security system for all Indians, especially the poor, the under privileged and workers in the unorganized sector. The scheme is open to all citizens of India between 18-40 years of age having a saving bank account in a bank or post office.

2. Reproductive Health and Health Insurance:

(i) REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

1. Introduction:

Reproductive health implies that people are able to have a responsible, satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide, if when, and how often to do so. Government of India adopted the Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) framework in 2013, in line with 4th and 5th Sustainable Development Goal, National Population Policy-2000, the National Health Policy-2001. It essentially aims to address the major causes of mortality and morbidity among women and children.

Based on the framework, comprehensive care is provided to women and children through five pillars or thematic areas of reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child, and adolescent health. The programmes are guided by central tenets of equity, universal care, entitlement, and accountability to provide 'continuum of care' ensuring equal focus on various life stages.

2. Essential components:

1. Prevention and management of unwanted pregnancy.
2. Maternal care that includes antenatal, delivery and postpartum services.
3. Child survival services for newborns and infants.
4. Management of Reproductive Tract Infection (TRIs) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

Key Programs:

1. **JananiSurakshaYojana (JSY):** it is a demand promotion and conditional cash transfer scheme launched in April 2005. It is being implemented with the objective of reducing maternal and neonatal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among poor pregnant women.
2. **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram(JSSK):** Government of India has launched JSSK on 1st June, 2011, which entitles all pregnant women delivering in public health institutions to absolutely free and no expense delivery including Caesarean section. Also entitlements have been put in place for all sick new-born accessing public health institutions for treatment till 30 days after birth.
3. **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA):** Carrying forward the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan was launched in 2016 to ensure quality antenatal care and high risk pregnancy detection in pregnant women on 9th of every month.
4. **Comprehensive Abortion Care:** Comprehensive abortion care is an important element in the reproductive health component of the RMNCH+A strategy as 8% (2001-03 SRS) of maternal deaths in India are attributed to unsafe abortions, thereby this is indeed a very important component of RNMCH+A program. This program is implemented as per the mandates of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act.
5. **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act & Rules, 2021:** The MTP Act, 1971 recognized the importance of providing safe, affordable, accessible and legal abortion services to women who need to terminate a pregnancy due to certain therapeutic, eugenic, humanitarian or social grounds. The Act was amended for expanding the base of beneficiaries to provide safe abortion services.

(2) HEALTH INSURANCE:

The government of India has launched plenty of social welfare schemes for the public, including many health schemes, especially for women in India. They aim to create a safe environment for women who belong to the lower sections of society and all those women

who might require it. Some of the key government health insurance schemes for women in India are as following:

1. Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana

It was introduced in 2010 and is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Its benefits are transferred for lactating and pregnant women who are at least 19 years of age and older for their first childbirth. It covers the losses in wages that will be experienced by women who give birth.

2. Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan

This program is aimed to provide essential medical treatment for pregnant women during their pregnancies for 3-6 months in semi-urban, under-served, rural, and poor regions. All the tests are undertaken free of charge, which comprises blood pressure, glucose levels, weight, haemoglobin tests, screening tests, and blood tests.

3. Janani Suraksha Yojana

This health scheme is 100% funded by the Government of India through the National Health Mission to facilitate the entire population of BPL, SC, and ST Pregnant Women to give birth in government health centres/institutions and to decrease infant and maternal deaths. It provides pregnant women a cash incentives of Rs. 700 for delivery in urban areas, Rs.600 for delivering via C-Section in private hospitals, along with Rs.1500. For birth at home the incentive is Rs 500 in cash to cover their post-delivery wage loss.

4. Ayushman Bharat Yojana scheme

It was introduced in 2018 as a centrally-sponsored program to provide health insurance coverage to all those with low incomes in India. Some of the salient features of PMJAY are coverage of Rs.5 lakh per family per year for medical treatment, pre-hospitalization of 3 days, and post-hospitalization of 5 days, in addition to reimbursing the cost of diagnostics and expenses towards medicines.

5. Employees State Insurance Scheme (ESIC)

It was launched in 1950 for the working community to get health insurance and safeguard against health-related issues like temporary or permanent incapacity, sickness, fatalities due to injuries sustained in the workplace that could result in a losing income for their families.

Medical benefits, maternity benefits, sickness benefits, disability benefits, dependents benefit, funeral costs, and rehabilitation allowances are some of the facilities extended to more than three crore beneficiaries who are registered under ESIC.

3. Political Participation Of Women In India:

(1) What is political participation:

Political participation includes a broad range of activities through which people develop and express their opinions on the world and how it is governed, and try to take part in and shape the decisions that affect their lives.

(2) Situation of political participation of women in India:

India's Constitution stipulated that all political, social, and economic spheres would treat **men and women equally**. At present, only about **14.4% of the members of the Indian Parliament are women**, the highest so far. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, India has a fewer percentage of women in the lower House than its neighbours such as Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. As per the latest Election Commission of India (ECI) data as of October 2021, **Women represent 10.5% of the total members of the Parliament**. The scenario for women **Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs)** across all state assemblies in India is even worse, with the national average being a pitiable 9%. In the last 75 years of independence, women's representation in Lok Sabha has not even increased by 10%. According to **Global Gender Gap Report 2022**, **India ranks 48th out of 146 in Political Empowerment (Percentage of Women in Parliament and in Ministerial Positions)** dimension.

(3) Reservation of women:

(i) *Background:*

The issue of reservation for women in politics can be traced back to the **Indian national movement**. In 1931, in their letter to the British Prime Minister, submitting the **official memorandum jointly issued on the status of women** in the new Constitution by three women's bodies, leaders Begum Shah Nawaz and **Sarojini Naidu**.

The **National Perspective Plan for Women** recommended in 1988 that reservation be provided to women right from the level of the **panchayat to that of Parliament**.

(ii) *Reservation Of Women in Local Bodies:*

These recommendations paved the way for the historic enactment of the **73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution** in 1993 which mandate all State governments to reserve **one-third of the seats for women** in Panchayati Raj Institutions and one-third of the offices of the chairperson at all levels of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, and in urban local bodies, respectively. Within these seats, **one-third are reserved for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe women**.

Many States such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Kerala have made legal provisions to ensure **50% reservation for women in local bodies**.

Some of the key outcomes of these reservations are:

This **reservation of seats for women in local bodies and legislative assemblies** has turned to be a successful way to increase women's representation in politics. More such reservation policies could be implemented to provide women with more opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.

It has also led to women's right to self-representation and self-determination.

The various surveys do indicate that **women representatives from Panchayati Raj have worked commendably in the development and overall well-being of society** in villages and many of them would definitely want to work on the larger scale, however, they face various challenges in the political structure prevalent in India.

(ii) Reservation of Women in State Elected Bodies:

On similar pattern to panchayats and local bodies. there has been a long-term plan to extend this reservation to parliament and legislative assemblies. In this regard the Women's Reservation Bill or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 9th March, 2010, is a bill passed in the Parliament of India which seeks to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 1/3 of all seats in the lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. The seats were proposed to be reserved in rotation and would have been determined by draw of lots in such a way that a seat would be reserved only once in three consecutive general elections.

The Rajya Sabha passed the bill on 9 March 2010. However, the Lok Sabha never voted on the bill. The bill lapsed since it was still pending in Lok Sabha and the Lok Sabha expired during this two times in 2014 and 2019.

4. Key Outcomes of Women Empowerment Initiatives in India:

Several governments over the years have worked towards women empowerment, especially targeting issues pertaining to reducing gender inequality, violence against women, improving the sex ratio at birth, health and education. This was possible through decades of women's activism and the feminist movements. Today we see some signs of positive changes in the status and position of women but there are many challenges still ahead. Some of the key outcomes are highlighted as following:

(I) Education:

The country has registered significant improvements in closing gender gaps in education. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report Index (2022), India has a score of 1 for the sub-categories of primary education and tertiary education enrolment under the vertical 'Educational Attainment.'

Concerted governmental efforts at the Union and state level, such as Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyaan (2001), the Right to Education Act (2009), the mid-day meal scheme (1995), and Beti Bacho, Beti Padhao campaign (2015), and myriad scholarship schemes for the girl child, have at least captured public imagination at some levels. However, gender gaps when it comes enrolment into different streams of higher education still continue.

(II) Health:

i. Sex ratio:

From having a highly skewed sex ratio at birth owing to the social and cultural devaluation of females and the phenomenon of strong 'son preference', India has improved its sex ratio at birth from 898 females per 1000 males in 1999 to 907 females per 1000 males in 2019.

ii. Life expectancy:

As per the latest estimates from the report of the Office of the Registrar General of India, female life expectancy at birth improved by 22.9 years from 47.8 years in 1971 to 70.7 years in 2014-18. Overall life expectancy of Indian women is 2.7 years higher than men.

(III) Social Inequality:

India also improved its position marginally in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) in 2021 (0.490) from 2020 (0.493). The GII measures inequality in the achievement between women and men across three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market.

(IV) Economic independence:

According to National Family Health Survey data 42.3% and 31.7% of females own a house and land alone or jointly, respectively. Also 51.2% of women have autonomy in financial matters, most of them did not have any autonomy in selecting their life partner.

(V) Political participation:

Women's political representation has increased at the local levels with the introduction of gender quota in politics – at panchayat and urban local bodies level.

(VI) Technology:

Though still much lower than male, 54% of women own mobile phones, with most of them having access to internet as well.