

THEORETICAL ISSUES AND DEBATES: A STUDY ON INTER-SECTIONALITY OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

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ABSTRACT

The central concern examines the rise of feminist scholarship exploring links between caste, class and gender, under the analytical framework of causal relationship of distinction and markers of inequality. While the political economy of difference is indispensable highlighting the role of oppression, a critical sociological understanding of social relations of structural differences and commonalities needs to be built up in order to grapple with a complex and rapidly changing social reality. Drawing from critical feminist framework grounded in theories of production relations and cultural subordination may be useful to explore the complex and dynamic interconnections between caste, class and patriarchy. This course sets to address the new issues of control in the context of gradation on their production, reproduction, sexuality and exclusion. There has been issues of inequality existing everywhere, yet went unnoticed until contemporary times.

KEYWORDS: *Cultural Subordination, Sociological Understanding, Inequality, Political Economy, .*

Introduction

The United Nations Report (1980) declares: Women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two thirds of its work hours, receive one tenth of the world's income. and own less than one hundredth of the world's property. In Indian context caste, class, ethnicity, gendered aspect seems to be a social reality of natural order of things. This can be the consequence of causal interpretation of scarcity or lacking in ability to not being fortunate enough acquiring it hereditarily and thus are poorly represented and marginalized. This hierarchical division based exclusion is therefore a structured phenomenon impacting gender and society at large.

In a society dominated by patriarchal ideologies women in India have been struggling to create an identity for themselves apart from being known as a daughter, wife or mother (Razvi, & Roth, 2010). As a result of their multiple identities depending upon their caste, religion and socio-economic background, some women have experienced profound forms of discrimination and unfortunately are considered as outliers in most researches and studies (Symington, 2004). For a true understanding of intersectionality of gender depends upon the embeddedness of social institutions (caste, class, family, group) inheriting socio-economic status as given in society. In other words, the constitutive elements of these differences are such that any attempt to see them hierarchically would do offence to the logical property of these very elements. The layers in this case are not arranged vertically or hierarchically, but horizontally or even separately. (Gupta 1991: 7). To return to our moot point, even though differences are not necessarily unequal or hierarchical, in practice, gender is often accorded or sufferers from hierarchy and exclusion. Gender is embedded within other social stratifies that mediate different outcomes for men and women. Women's position in the labor market, their health, educational opportunities and

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restrictions, social lives, entertainment and leisure all are implicated in the social construction of masculine and feminine sexuality. Gender inequality in sexual relations between men and women reflect and serve to maintain subordination. Sexual orientation and preference affect people economically and socially for sexuality and sexual choice become the basis for exclusion, marginalization, and violence. Women's movements question the paradigms of development; broaden conceptualizations of family, markets, public/private, politics, and violence and question the narrowness of social movements and broaden the contours of knowledge building and dissemination.

Hence, the focus here is on subject of investigation of gendered power relations within the structures of caste and class as domains of social control. Under the rubric of social collectivity- the need arises to understand the relationship and its impact on the kind of unequal orders, within which, individuals and more so gender are placed, the way social control produces conflict within the inbuilt mechanism of suppression by the patriarchal status of the power groups of caste and class. In other words we start exploring how gender got intertwined or was functional and fixed much before it was discussed in this area of research? How does society exert pressure via social system of belief, tradition and values as modes of social control? The question of inclusion versus exclusion in relation to differential access to resources arises within the larger domain of existing inequality in the society. Do we need these indifferent conditions for discreet social groups (gender, caste, class and ethnicity) to understand the vagaries of exploitation often based upon the above social criteria. However, the paradigm is possibly even more important for gender studies, due to its subject matter and relevance in contemporary times. Change is constant and social change is a structures phenomenon but it differs in terms of history and structure of a society. As individuals do not float freely in society but are part of collective bodies like the family, tribe, caste, class, clan, nation. Inequality is both conflating and functional in Indian Society. We are so well acquainted with the social institutions that surround us that we cannot see them clearly and precisely (Berger 1976:25).

Nevertheless, to ignite a thinking mind the study focuses on individual, i.e. micro interaction to that, macro structures of to understand the overall context of Inequality. This tools certainly helps to understand social reality. But what if the social reality alters or requires amendment in deconstructing the empiricism of classification of its types? Then in such situations the need emerges to constantly interrogate the concepts and theoretical framework. The purpose of this course module is to highlight the interrelationship as a discipline to explore a common understanding of theoretical framework of the matrix of gender mainstreaming-under the incompatible rubric of structures of inequality.

Objectives

- To establish and define the relationship of gendered power connotation for social control;
- To examine differential access to resources vis-à-vis gender within this macro paradigm (caste, class and ethnicity) of structured inequality
- Analyse and interrogate the larger issues of exclusion and inclusion

Significance of Study: Social Stratification and Exclusion

- Historically the differences of gender are more deep-rooted than well studies theoretical frameworks on caste or class systems: in all civilization it is assumed that men have superior standing to women from even primordial hunting and gathering societies, where there is no caste and class existed.
- In modern societies however the other forms of differentiation overlapped substantially with gender differences. The inferior status accorded and believed to be given to women and their socio-economic independence discouraged by fathers, brothers and husbands furthered their exploitation.
- This is because for the great majority of women the allocation of social and economic rewards is determined primarily by the position of their families and, in particular, that of the male head.
- Hence, females carry multiple disadvantages and struggles for the basic life chances of everyday life (employment opportunities, property ownership, income etc). Moreover, women across class and caste or community face greater challenges to compete men unequally in social life (resources).
- Following from this normative aspect, the empirical reality of marginalized women being declared as household's heads is only seen as anomaly in crises as well.

- Hence, so far the theoretical framework is not equipped to explore the implication of gender as an analytical category to understand the traditional forces of patriarchy in the light of caste and class.

To trace its development the need arises to reflect on the perspective to map social change from its historicity till date. As then, there would be pre-modern traditional societies to (post)modern societies. Likewise the shift from primary-group (close knit, informal interaction) community oriented to secondary group (formal interaction to large scale manufacturing) to tertiary sector society. Since then, classical theories of functionalism of Durkheimian collective conscience and solidarity gave way to the empirical understanding of tradition society; Marxian conflict approach of alienation and revolution brought relief to the industrial society capitalism and exploitation ; and Weberian subjective understanding of classes have contributed material and intellectual sociological insights to social stratification theories and perspectives. However, the tool is borrowed from west and how does it impact us in contemporary India. In contemporary west they are using black women movement or Hispanic/immigrant women movement vis-à-vis race, gender and class, although, the tools to study social groups existed yet evolved in specific state of social structure. Similarly, gender is built into caste and class intersectionality as a complex tripartite pillar of exploitation, oppression and exploitation. For Max Weber the concept of change is related to Ideology. In his book "Protestant Ethic and the Sprit of Capitalism" (1958), Weber maintained that Calvinism made possible the emergence of capitalism by focusing their attention on such values as individualism, hard working, and frugality, for a major restructuring of economic life. However, Karl Marx's concept of social change is different. As caste is a empirical entity, could be sub caste and class is empirical reality and gender is social distinction emanating largely from these two categories. Gender thus as a principle of stratification therefore take into account that women members in a family only derive status from the male heads. This in turn reflects structured control over its liberation from social evils. For Marx, the most significant social changes are revolutionary in nature and are brought about by the struggle for supremacy between economic classes. He said that the continuing development of the productive forces in every historical stage changes the relationship between the classes and the condition of the conflict and in due course hitherto dominated class is able to overthrow the existing mode of struggle and system of relationship for establishing a new social order (Vago 1980:46-74).

Gender and Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a feminist theory, which can be used as an analytical tool to study and understand the convergence of multiple identities (caste, class and ethnicity) with gender and to respond appropriately to alleviate the discrimination against oppressed classes. The theory is based on the premise that individuals simultaneously belong to multiple communities (that have emerged from social and power structures in the society) and would experience oppression and privilege both at the same time (Symington, 2004). Multiple identities tend to push women to extreme fringes and make them more vulnerable to discrimination in terms of access to basic human rights, opportunities, resources etc. Intersectionality as a theoretical paradigm helps us gain a better understanding, by voicing, for opposed to self-interest groups. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework has been used for more than a decade to intersect boundaries socially, politically and economic. This can overcome gender bias and fill historically existent gaps and inequalities. Gender and caste based discriminations have been deeply rooted in the Indian history and their origins can be traced back to thousands of years. Work of many social reformers, academicians and policies by the government have alleviated the problem to a small extent, but there is still a long way to go in order to break these barriers.

Gender has long been defined by many feminists, as a concept evolved around reproductive differences of individuals that shape's societal relationships, identities and meanings (Connell, 1989). This interpretation of gender received many critiques from post structural feminists who argued that the concepts of sex and sexuality are in themselves constructed on cultural values and beliefs (Butler, 1990). Researchers like Lorber (1994) further consider gender as an organizing principle or a social concept which goes far beyond just the reproductive differences, some others view gender as a concept that is constantly evolving depending on our everyday lives and the roles we play (Torri, 2009). Gender, as a fundamental principle underlying societal behaviors affects major social institutions such as caste, class and ethnicity organized on gender principles and the interests of power, hierarchy and privilege. The classification in societies is more than often manifested in allocation of resources and autonomy based on gender. Thus to gain a holistic understanding of gender one needs to know the context in terms of structure and meaning relevant to the society or culture under study (Torri, 2009).

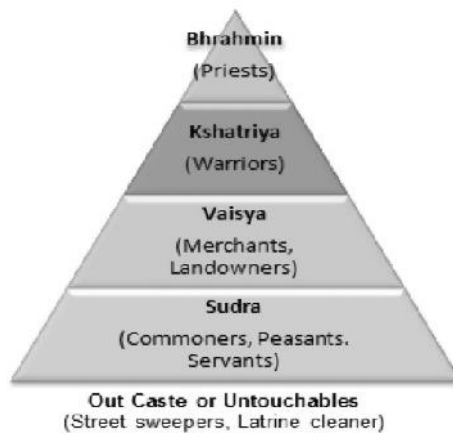
History of Women Movement

The women's question arose in modern India as part of the nineteenth century middle class social reform movements. The nature of these movements varied from region to region. They are often termed as middle class reform movements varied regionally emerging from western educated Indian middle class. They were often at once inspired by the democratic ideals of the modern west and by a deep pride in their own democratic traditions of the past. Many used both these resources to fight for women's rights. Jyotiba Phule's simultaneous attack on caste and gender oppression and from the social reform movement in Islam led by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan were all the same.

Raja Rammohun Roy's attempts to reform society, religion and the status of women can be taken as the starting point of nineteenth century social reform in Bengal. Resulting in establishing the Brahmo Samaj in 1828, campaign against "sati" which was the first women's issue to receive public attention. The deplorable and unjust treatment of the Hindu upper caste widows was a major issue taken up by the social reformers. Ranade used the writings of scholars such as Bishop Joseph Butler dominated the moral philosophy syllabus of Bombay University in the 1860s. At the same time, M.G. Ranade's writings entitled *The Texts of the Hindu Law on the Lawfulness of the Remarriage of Widows and Vedic Authorities for Widow Marriage* elaborated the shastric sanction for remarriage of widows. While Ranade and Rammohun Roy belonged to one kind of nineteenth century upper caste and middle class social reformers, Jotiba Phule came from a socially excluded caste and his attack was directed against both caste and gender discrimination. He founded the Satyashodak Samaj with its primary emphasis on "truth seeking". Phule's first practical social reform efforts were to aid the two groups considered lowest in traditional Brahmin culture: women and untouchables. As in the case of other reformers, a similar trend of drawing upon both modern western ideas as well as the sacred texts characterized Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's efforts to reform Muslim society. He wanted girls to be educated, but within the precincts of their homes. Like Dayanand Saraswati of the Arya Samaj, he stood for women's education but sought for a curriculum that included instruction in religious principles, training in the arts of housekeeping and handicrafts and rearing of children. Apart from the early feminist visions there were a large number of women's organizations that arose both at the all India and local levels in the early twentieth century. And then began the participation of women in the national movement itself. Not surprisingly women's rights were part and parcel of the nationalist vision. In 1931, the Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress issued a declaration on the Fundamental Rights of Citizenship in India whereby it committed itself to women's equality. Two decades after Independence, women's issues re-emerged in the 1970s. In the nineteenth century reform movements, the emphasis had been on the backward aspects of tradition like sati, child marriage, or the ill treatment of widows. In the 1970s, the emphasis was on 'modern' issues - the rape of women in police custody, dowry murders, the representation of women in popular media, and the gendered consequences of unequal development. The law was a major site for reform in the 1980s and after, especially when it was discovered that many laws of concern to women had not been changed since the 19th century. As we enter the twenty-first century, new sites of gender injustice are emerging.

Caste and Gender

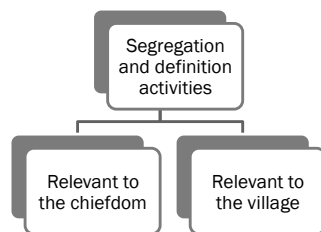
To begin with concepts, we need to understand them independently of its association to social terminology. In stratification system an individual's position relied totally upon the status ascribed by birth rather than on any which way are achieved during the course of one's life. Statistics have revealed that there has been an increase in the violence rate in the recent towards lower-caste individuals from people from higher caste. It has been reported that on an average three *Dalit* women are raped per day by individuals from higher-caste, and this is done primarily to reinforce their power and hierarchical position in the society. It structures legitimacy and enforces discriminatory practices against people born into lower castes. There have been various case studies (sonbhadra village) related to exploitation and injustice faced by people 'born into' to bear the brunt of violence. There usually are further ranking-sub castes within each broad occupational based caste graded by lower social status. The historicity of social and economic interest coincides with the hierarchical subordination of lower caste ordained by rigid classification of castes in Hindu society. The Brahmins were higher in ranking yet lower in economic status earned by Kshatriyas (kings and rulers); and yet lower in sacred and religious sphere than Brahmins. India different castes formed a hierarchy of social precedence. Each position in the caste structure was defined in terms of its purity or pollution relative to others. However, the class position can be further altered but status is fixed. Since traditional times, these fixed positions are stratified on the basis of higher and lowest order of Hindu (Brahminical) Society. The Hierarchy is rigid and unaltered followed by the strict varna model:



The caste system in India has undergone considerable changes over the years. Endogamy and ritual avoidance of contact with members of so-called lower castes were considered critical for maintaining purity and discrimination was not so easy to do away with. A.R. Desai as: In trains and buses one occasionally rubbed shoulders with members of the depressed classes... should not, however be supposed that caste had vanished (Desai 1975:248). In the mill there may be no open discrimination of the kind that exists in the villages, but experience of private interactions tells another story. Parmar observed... They will not even drink water from our hands and they sometimes use abusive language when dealing with us. This is because they feel and believe they are superior. It has been like that for years. No matter how well we dress they are not prepared to accept certain things (Franco et. al. 2004:150). Also, I.P. Desai's study (1976) of untouchability in Gujarat analyses both the ideological and behavioural changes taking place on the pollution-purity matrix of interaction.

Activities characteristic of caste system are of 3 kinds-

- 1. Segregation and definition-** activities which distinguish castes from one another and define them as distinct groups on the basis of their name, distinct beliefs about their origin, diacritical elements in ritual especially life crisis rituals for e.g. death, marriage.



- Complete break between different caste in kinship
- Marriages are endogamous
- There is residential segregation i.e. different residential areas and streets for upper caste and untouchables.

- 2. Interdependence-** castes are interdependent based on two principles:

(a) Division of Labour: certain tasks (sacred/profane) are to be performed by a particular caste only.

(b) Each caste has differential access to political power as force is concentrated in the hands of one caste and this serves as sanction on the integrity of the system.

- 3. Hierarchy** – hierarchy is entailed by differential access to political power and not by division of labor.

However, deconstructing differentiation of caste brings forth the discussion on gender-also as part of the exclusion with its own specific traits. The question is gender under the caste hegemony undergoes a double differentiation of exploitation and oppression.

Class and Gender

Gender can emanate from a class and thus, very briefly, just the central ideas of Marx, Weber and that of, functionalism are discussed. Marxist theory relationship to means of production to that of Weber's life chances to Durkheimian cooperation entails classes. To study them independent would engage questions such as women are devoid of means of production such as land or factories as they are owners of their wageless labour and this puts them in negative life chance of disprivileged position in markets. The status earned from economy can also become the basis of political power and social esteem, whereas, even the functionalist argue inequality as general presupposition universal presence of social stratification.

Ethnicity and Gender

The notion of ethnic minorities or majority groups involves more than mere numbers (Giddens). Significantly, this holds true for women at large of 'discrimination' or 'disadvantaged' as a group. While the intensity of discrimination varies widely, it would not be wrong to state that in all societies women are disadvantaged in relation to men. Matrilineal societies like this are often cited to rebuff the idea that women in all societies are discriminated. However, recent writings have shown how even among a matrilineal society like the Khasis, control of property and decision (the private domain) often resides with the male head (brother instead of the husband). Therefore, womens' movement invoked the sense of solidarity and 'belonging together' has matter of social fact of some consequence. Perhaps this new perspective has emerged a matter of crucial significance for women's' movements. The point being made is that perceiving women as a minority is a step in recognition of their disadvantageous position.

Conclusion

Currently, the Caste and Class within Gender Mainstreaming attempts to address a large number of the above mentioned issues, while keeping alive contemporary debates. The proposed discipline will address concerns related to the above issues along with those related to inclusion and exclusion. Establishing the area as a formal discipline will further help in emphasizing the importance of women's and gender studies as disciplinary areas of study in contemporary society, and in further strengthening academic activities already being carried out and proposed within the Gender Studies in the school.

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