UNIT 3  MASCULINITIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last two units we discussed two important concepts that foreground the understanding of gender in our social and cultural milieu (namely, patriarchy and sex and gender). Here, we will look at another related concept and area of study - Masculinities. As the name signifies this concept deals with the characteristics of a man or maleness and includes the traits of behaving in ways considered typical for men.

This unit will look into the emerging concerns related to the concept and the relationship between masculinity and the body. We will also examine the colonial ordering of gender and the debate on public/private dichotomy in India. You will be then introduced to the recent trends in scholarship in the area of masculinities which will help you to understand the current and the future directions of the work being done in this significant area of study.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of the concept of masculinity;
- Describe the emerging concerns that shape the study of masculinity;
- Analyse how masculinity has been seen through ordering of gender; and
- Acquire knowledge about the recent debates on masculinity.
3.3 BACKGROUND

The tagline of a well-known clothing company has been the same for decades now – “the complete man”. But, what the men in the advertisement for suiting did to become “the complete man” has changed over the years, is interesting to study. In the late 80s and the early 90s, “the complete man” was an office-goer, a chivalrous companion for his partner (of course, always a woman) who seemed to balance his moments of privacy and work pretty well. Shekhar Kapoor, with his trademark moustache and beard, is very aristocratic but business like. Sometime in the early 2000s, “the complete man” seemed to be someone who could combine the earlier “masculine” traits with domestic capabilities. He was seen cooking and taking care of his child. And this time he was also clean-shaven.

There are at least two issues of interest here. One is the idea of shifting attributes and the other is the constancy (suiting brand). The intention is clear. To be ‘the complete man’ you need to wear a suit. Without the suit one is somehow ‘incomplete’. On the other hand, what constitutes completeness - i.e., what should a complete man be doing and how he should look - seems to have changed from the chivalrous bearded hero to a more feminine looking hero tending to his house and his child. The suit of course indicates the fact that he is involved in some kind of professional work or occupation.

Let us think of another example. Look up Amitabh Bacchan’s super hit film Mard (directed by Mannmohan Desai, 1985). The word mard is tattooed on the hero’s chest while he is still a child. What does the word signify? When it was being tattooed, it definitely indicates what the hero has to become in the future. Not just any man that a male child will grow into, but a particular kind of man - like the ideal Amitabh. As the boy grows into Amitabh we know that he has indeed grown into what he is expected to be.
But what does this ‘writing’ signify? Why should it be written? Is it possible that the boy will not become *mard*? What else could the boy become? Is becoming and not becoming part of how one grows up? Is it that tentative a process? Is masculinity a destiny for men only because it is etched on the male bodies by the social world?

A striking similarity between the examples is that there is something that has to be placed on the body (the suit, an inscription) for the production of masculinity. It is clear that these examples do point to the precarious nature of the link between the body and the cultural inscription that we call masculinity. Masculinity then, is the culturally sanctioned normative idea of what a ‘man’ should be. This is not to say that like a piece of clothing or a tattoo, gender is something that can be easily peeled off.

It is an inscription that re-structures our understanding of ourselves as always gendered - we recognize ourselves as a body that is either male or female.

**Box No 3.2**

> The big question, one that would be obvious by now, that needs to be fore grounded is: “Is gender a central concern for men”. The answer would a resounding “yes”. It has been a common understanding that the study of gender is the same as the study of women and that it is of interest only for women. The centralization of the concept of masculinity challenges this notion.

The feminist understanding of the sex-gender system, which you have read about in the earlier unit, operates not just for women but also for men. This is because the system, in whatever form we understand it, works with establishing binaries - men and women, male and female, masculine and feminine.

It is not accidental that in the above listing of the binaries, the terms men, male and masculine precede the terms women, female and feminine. The ordering of the sex-gender system rests on the primacy and the power of the former set of terms. It is a system that is unevenly tilted to one side. So even when we say that men, much like women, are structured by the operations of sex-gender and of the patriarchy (one of the names by which we know this system), we need to note that this is a system that favours men. Well, mostly.

**Box No. 3.3**

> As is evident the world around us cannot be mapped on to these binaries completely. These binaries and the world that is set up by these operate through practices of exclusion. The case of the transgender or the *hijra* community in India is a case in point. This issue will be taken up for more discussion in later segments of the course.
A note on significant terms

Let's clearly understand the different terms before we get on with our discussion. As it would be obvious, the terms of gender difference almost always operate in terms of binary oppositions. These terms would be familiar from day to day usage. One of the binaries that will be familiar is ‘male’ and ‘female,’ another ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ and the third ‘man’ and ‘woman’. For the time being let us assume that the first binary commonly refers to a biological difference while the second denotes a cultural opposition. As we are discussing the first term in the two binaries, let us use it for our understanding that the term ‘male’ refers to someone who is biologically male and the term ‘masculine’ refers to a culturally accepted idea of how to be - the first term of the third binary - a man. That is ‘masculinity’ (derived from the term ‘masculine’) is an intermediary term between ‘male’ and ‘man’. It also curiously suggests that being male is no guarantee of being a ‘man’. The notions are at best unstable. Though we have discussed the terms in the sequence, ‘male’, ‘masculine’, ‘man’, it doesn't follow that there is temporal order that is invoked. The relationship between the terms is much more complicated. One of the propositions that this unit will make is that it is indeed this transitory space that is of central to understanding the male-masculinity-man relationship.

The category ‘masculinity’ is used in a range of ways in contemporary social sciences. It is common to associate power and violence (as in cases where war is by definition seen as masculine) with masculinity. This kind of an approach assumes that the meaning of ‘masculinity’ will remain the same universally for all times. Such an idea is untenable because there are variations in the normative ideals of masculinity in different cultures at different times. One of the fallouts of this formulation can be seen in a common enough practice of putting down assertive women by suggesting that they are un-feminine or masculine. The reasoning goes like this: if power and assertion are masculine, women who are powerful and assertive are masculine, and thus lacking in something, i.e., their femininity.

Box No 3.5

‘Masculinity’ could be understood as a normative domain within which, in a specific historic and social context, bodies (human and other) are deemed to be gendered male.

Another influential approach is to assume that the study of masculinity is the same as the study of men. This confusion is compounded by the tendency
in masculinity research to uncritically assume that the object of study is ‘men’. This produces a significant confusion. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick says that the problem is when “…an inquiry begins with the presupposition that everything pertaining to men can be classified as masculinity, and everything that can be said about masculinity pertains in the first place to men” (Sedgwick, 1995, p.12). One will have to expand our investigations to include men, women, animals, inanimate objects, and so on in our understanding of masculinity. What is available is the strict system of binaries into which bodies, objects, emotions etc. are classified. Clearly there are differing pressures of conforming to masculinity as with the case of femininity. (Even the significance of the distinctions between bodies are culturally determined and put into culturally legible binaries of masculine and feminine. Another way to put it is to say that all kinds of bodies and objects have to work with a culturally obtained binary of the masculine and feminine.) There is no way in which either men or women are exempt from negotiating both masculinity and femininity. As you can see from the above discussion it would be productive to keep the definition open so that it can accommodate differences.

Thus, narratives of masculinity take recourse to a normative notion of masculinity as a standpoint to evaluate gendered performances. To put it differently, any performance or enunciatory moment of masculinity implies a norm. Any attempt at studying the discourse of masculinity will have to undertake the primary objective of teasing out the norm that underpins it. To come back to the disjuncture between men and masculinity, it should be asserted that these moments of enunciation have to be seen as contingent and thus needing re-affirmation in the normative template.

Based on the earlier discussions of key terms in feminist theorizing, you would have observed that sex-gender as a system does not operate in isolation. Individuals are simultaneously structured by different axes of identity formation. These include caste, class, sexuality, urban/rural divide, religion, disabilities etc. The sex-gender system operates in two significant ways. One is what we discussed above - by organizing the world in binaries.

**Box No 3.6**

*Sedgwick talks about her experience during a session of chemotherapy that she had to undergo. She writes about “the many encounters in the mirror with my bald and handsome father and my bald and ugly grandfather; or the phantom conversations, more haunting than a phantom breast, in which sometimes I still hear myself challenging some imaginary sexual assailant by—what? It’s hard to piece this together—but I think what I’m doing in these fantasies is defiantly exposing my mastectomy scar, and cementing my triumph over this attacker by making clear to him that underneath the clothing and the prosthesis, really I am a man whom he has had the poor judgment to mistake for a vulnerable woman.” (Sedgwick, 1995, p. 14)*
Masculinities

The second is by making normative modes of fitting into these binaries. It is here that notions of masculinity (and femininity) work as normative principles. For someone to be a full-fledged individual in a society, he or she has to fit into these normative ideas. Here is where the ideal man in the advertisement and Amitabh Bachchan come into the picture. Some scholars of masculinity call the normative and non-normative notions of masculinity as hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities. ‘Hegemonic masculinity’ was first defined by Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee as a “particular variety of masculinity to which others - among them young and effeminate and homosexual men - are subordinated” (Carrigan et al, 1985/2002, p. 110).

As Harry Brod suggests, “... non-hegemonic masculinities must always be simultaneously theorized along two axes, the male-female axis of men’s power over women within the marginalized grouping, and the male-male axis of non-hegemonic men’s relative lack of power vis-à-vis hegemonic men” (Brod, 1994, p. 89). This does not mean that we can have a prior map of the hierarchies in a given society, be it caste, class or sexuality on which we can map the question of masculinity. The formulation of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities helps us to understand that hierarchies are not just between men and women but also between men and men. Anyone who does not fit into a culturally sanctioned form of masculinity is seen as lacking. Following from this we could propose that men and women need to be understood, not in a simple structure of power and powerlessness, but as placeholders of both power and powerlessness simultaneously.

In this context, one of the important issues to note is that a notion of crisis is central to the representations of masculinity. This can be explained by a simple example. Think of the moments from your life or from films that you have watched or books you have read where you have heard one person ask another, “Are you a man?” What are the circumstances that invariably occasion such a question? It is when the person to whom the question is asked is seen to lack something, when he (more or less always it’s a he) has to do something to demonstrate the fact of his masculinity. The notion of crisis should be understood as a discursive one. It is only when one measures oneself with a normative ideal that the notion of ‘crisis’ emerges. After learning about the notion of crisis, let us look into the concerns that emerged with the concept of masculinities.

3.4 THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONCERN WITH MASCULINITIES

The focus on men as gendered and masculinity as socially produced has been a concern for many from the 1960s and the 70s. Parallel to what is often referred to as second wave feminism; there were attempts to think about the significance of gendering for men. One form this took was the
formation of groups - especially meant for understanding consciousness raising efforts, which were associated with the feminist movement. Drawing energy from the feminist critique of patriarchy, such groups tried to argue that men are as much structured by patriarchy as are women. They often called themselves pro-feminist. They attempted to organize workshops which dealt with issues such as domestic violence and male parenting. The US based National Organization for Men against Sexism (NOMAS) is a contemporary version of such efforts. On the other end of the spectrum were organizations that argued that men have lost their power because of feminism and that there is a need to go back to foundational notions of masculinity. They often invoked mythology and heroes from these mythologies to talk about ideal masculinity. *Iron John*, a book written by the American poet Robert Bly, who used to organize workshops for men based on his ideas, is an example of this (Bly, 1990).

The men’s groups who aligned themselves with feminism based their arguments on their critique of patriarchy as a structure which organized man-woman relationships. Recognizing the fact men were at an advantage in society, they made two kinds of arguments.

One, they asked for a more democratic organization of gender based on mutual respect.

Two, they asked that the ideal notions of masculinity were indeed harmful for men as their inability to show emotions and to perform designated roles as the breadwinner of the family were psychologically disabling.

The emergence of the civil rights movement which foregrounded race as a significant vector in society and the political mobilization of sexual minorities complicated the picture further. If the ‘pro-feminist’ men’s organizations foregrounded the hierarchy between men and women, the focus on race and sexuality (as also of class) pointed to the hierarchies that existed between men. This was also the time when ‘women’ as a monolithic category was coming under considerable stress. All this led to a complex picture of gender which could no longer be studied outside its intersections with race, sexuality and class in the west and caste, religion etc. in India.

**Check Your Progress: Activity**

*Check your local newspaper for marriage advertisements. Look at the ways in which men and women are described. Make a list of attributes that are most commonly found. Does this tell us anything about how masculinity (and femininity) is understood?*
In common sense understanding of gender performances, it was assumed that the body is not central to men’s ways of looking at themselves. Grooming was seen as the preserve of women, and it was assumed that material conditions were more important as far as men are concerned. It is also a common perception that in recent years men have been much more openly interested in their looks. This thinking is based on the explosion of images of well groomed men in advertisements in various media, popular cinema and so on. Men who are comfortable with these images of themselves have been given the name ‘metro sexual man’ by the popular media - a term which has had a short but visible life. Most of these men, undoubtedly, are urban. Men’s interest in fashion is not just a recent phenomenon as discussions of metro sexual men indicate. The lower class-caste aspirations have often been visualized through fashion statements. Though the dominant cultures have thought of such performances of masculinity as tasteless, the political significance of such performances needs to be underscored. A good example of such an analysis could be found in the discussion of the Tamil film Kaadalan (dubbed into Hindi as Humse Hai Muqqabala, directed by Shankar, 1994) by Tejaswini Niranjana and Vivek Dhareshwar. They contrast the representation of Dalit male body, which displays and performs consumerism and fashion, with the modernist ‘tasteful’ style of the upper caste hero of Mani Ratnam’s Roja. The fashioning of the body of the Dalit man is read here as determined by its location in the hierarchies of caste and frames of fantasies that it engenders (Niranjana and Dhareshwar 2000). It is an ordering of consumption and of fashion as legitimate and illegitimate that makes for the different kinds of visibilities of the body of Prabhu Deva (the hero of Kaadalan) and that of the metro sexual man.

In many cultures the muscled and chiseled body is seen as a significant attribute of hegemonic masculinity. The significance Activity: Make a list of images that are in the first glance masculine. Make another list of images that are in the first glance feminine. Make a chart of the reasons why something (human being, animal, objects) appeared either masculine or feminine. Write a note about the salience of this distinction and the attributes that you have identified and classified.

Activity: Compare these two iconic images that most of you would be familiar with. In what ways do these images tell about masculinity
of this imagery needs to be underscored, without forgetting the pitfalls of universalist assumptions of hegemony, that we discussed earlier. From the wrestler’s body to the six and eight packs of Shahrukh Khan and Amir Khan respectively, such a representation is common around us. In this way of thinking about ideal forms of masculinity, the visual aspect becomes very central.

Judith Halberstam (1998) argues for the need to delink the assumed relationship between the visual component of masculinity and its relationship with the male body. Discussing images from American literary and film culture, she suggests that the normalized link between masculinity and the male body needs to be challenged. Men and women are often marginalized on the basis of them not conforming to visual frameworks of masculinity and femininity. She further discusses how gender is troubled by the everyday performances of cross dressing and transgender communities.

Check Your Progress:

*How does the hegemonic form of masculine identity differ from alternative masculine identity? Explain in your own words.*

3.6 COLONIAL ORDERING OF GENDER AND THE PUBLIC/Private dichotomy in India

One of the earliest works that critically used the concept ‘masculinity’ in India was by Ashis Nandy, who argued that British colonialism should be understood as the employment of the masculine power over the feminine (Nandy, 1983, p. 4-11). Nandy argues that the colonial ordering of sexual difference was based on an understanding that *purushatva* (manliness) was superior to *naritva* (womanliness), which in turn is superior to *klibatva* (femininity in men) (Nandy, 1983, p. 52). Gandhi on the other hand, argues and understood sexual difference as *naritva* being superior to *purushatva*, which in turn is superior to *kapurusatva* (failure of masculinity) (Nandy, 1983, p. 53). Nandy further argues that, whereas earlier nationalist movements like Tilaks’s, (who attempted to resurrect Shivaji), tried to articulate indigenous masculinities in opposition to colonial machismo, Gandhi tried to elevate femininity as the foundation for his anti-colonial politics.

Nandy’s work has been critiqued by many scholars as being essentialist in that it attributes gender to the colonizer and the colonized in a stable and
unchanging way and by positing a binary of masculine/feminine to represent another problematic binary of West/East. Taking issue with Nandy’s position, Mrinalini Sinha argues that it is indeed a fact that colonialism operated by continuously negotiating notions of masculinity but that it would be fallacious to think of these notions as fixed (Sinha, 1995). The attempt to theorize masculinity as a site for political negotiations helps Sinha present topography of ‘masculinity’, which by definition cannot be thought of as singular. For her, “… colonial masculinity points towards the multiple axes along which power was exercised in colonial India; among or within the colonizers or the colonized as well as between colonizers and colonized” (Sinha, 1995).

Another contribution of Sinha’s work is the idea that masculinities are not fixed; rather they need to be asserted and performed again and again. She takes up some of the key controversies in colonial India during the last decades of the nineteenth century such as the debates around the Age of Consent Bill to argue that notions of masculinity governed colonial relationships in India. She provides a historical map textured with the history of first wave feminism and the discussion on homosexuality in Britain, by suggesting that, “the figures of the ‘manly Englishman’ and the ‘effeminate babu’ were thus constituted in relation to colonial Indian society as well as to some of the following aspects of late nineteenth century British society: the emergence of the ‘New Woman’; the ‘remaking of the working class’; the legacy of ‘internal colonialism’; and the anti-feminist backlash of the 1880s and 1890s (Sinha, 1995, p. 2).

The culturalist formulation, a la Nandy, has been forwarded for the study of masculinity outside the colonial period. These works set out to discuss male subjectivities and end up producing grand narratives of Indian masculinity based on sweeping generalizations. For instance, amidst easy slippages from ‘Indian sexuality’ to ‘Hindu sexuality’, Sudhir Kakkar argues that it is in the struggle between lust and celibacy that male subjectivities are formed in India (Kakkar, 1989). He claims that the mother becomes at once the desired and the dreaded in this narrative (Kakkar, 1989, p.129-140). However, the argument favoring an ‘intrinsic character’ for ‘Indian masculinity’ appears to break down if we attempt an unorthodox juxtaposition of the argument with the work of historians such as Tanika Sarkar who have looked at a similar mother-son dynamic as deployed by the nationalist discourse. Here the deployment serves to imagine the ‘mother nation’ in the form of the Mother Goddess rather than present itself as a cultural trait of Indian masculinity (Sarkar, 2001).

Kakkar’s argument suffers from his reliance on the truth-value of the narratives (the testimonies of his patients) that he is analyzing, and from his lack of attention to the historical locations in relation to the contexts of such tropes. He also presents the anxiety about the loss of semen as an important constituent element in this narrative. The latter argument, one
that is now commonly referred to as ‘semen anxiety’, has been central to many studies on notions of masculinity in India, especially in an important work on wrestling (Alter, 1992). The explanatory frameworks that are employed in these writings seem to be based on a misplaced belief in the central role played by Hinduism in shaping male subjectivities in India. These works, in attempting to explain a cultural construct with more or less essentialist ideas about Indian culture and psyche, miss out on the complexity of everyday structures of gendered performances that exist outside of, and at times even untouched by, nationalist or culturalist discourses.

The earliest writings on masculinity in the context of India were within the discipline of history. Works on modern history have effectively suggested ways in which notions of masculinity (and indeed, femininity) were important nodes for the organization of power in the colonial context. One of the most significant of these is the work of Partha Chatterjee, who has argued that the disappearance of the ‘women’s question’ in the mid nineteenth century was caused by a discursive organizing in the nationalist framework, of the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ as masculine and feminine domains respectively (Chatterjee, 1989). He further argues that the separation of spatial domains was effected by constructing a series of binaries such as material/spiritual (or, cultural), world/home etc. to populate the binary between the masculine and feminine domains. This allowed the nationalists to argue for spiritual/cultural superiority while conceding the fact of material inferiority with the West. In focusing on how certain notions of womanhood came to be understood as the ideal in the colonial context, Chatterjee points to a crucial connection significant to our understanding of the discourse of masculinity. This connection gets established in the colonial period in the context of Bengal. In Sinha’s work, which we read above, squarely places masculinity as a trope that gets linked to colonial administration. A number of historical studies such as one on hunting in colonial South India (Pandean, 1996) have taken as given the connection between ‘masculine’ and ‘public’.

Check Your Progress: Activity

See Anand Patwardhan’s film Father, Son and Holy War and write a note about how he tracks the deployment of masculinity in the Hindutva rhetoric. Also note how the notion of a ‘crisis in masculinity’ is constantly invoked. Write a note about this discourse of masculinity in conjuncture with the two images that was discussed above.

In this regard Charu Gupta’s work on the history of Hindu militancy in colonial Uttar Pradesh needs special mention. She presents a rich archive of pamphlets, news reports, and popular literature of the time, which demonstrate how the Hindu revivalist discourse of the period negotiated
their position of power vis-à-vis the Muslim through gendered metaphors (Gupta, 2001). In a similar vein, the studies on present day communal conflicts help us think through the link between masculinity and the public domain. Though Chatterjee’s distinction between private and public derives from the history of Bengal, the discourse of gender that he has identified seems to have had resonance in other parts of the country although with some important variations. The reform period in Kerala in the early years of the twentieth century was a moment of engendering, when a certain set of qualities were represented as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ (Devika, 2007). The discourses of social reform which concentrated on community formation through caste and community organizations and on uplifting themselves through modern education, engagement with new economic systems and raising the status of women, inadvertently established the normative roles for men and women in Kerala. Devika’s work brings out an element of performance in the notion of the ‘masculine’ public and the ‘feminine’ private by complicating spatial metaphors. She argues that it was possible for a woman to be in the public but necessarily as a private being by adhering to certain norms and through participating in certain activities that were deemed ‘feminine’.

It is in this historical juncture that our present day understanding of gender seems to have materialized. If we take up any number contemporary instances for analysis, we can see that the popular discourse on gender is founded on this colonial logic. It needs to be noted that the distinction between the private and the public is central to the ordering of gender to the extent that this public/private dichotomy and the men/women binary are constitutive of each other. Women in the public are a threat to the social order (unless like these days when domestic economy forces some amount of leniency in the matter) as is the case with men in the private. In the last unit of this Block you will read in greater detail about the Public/Private dichotomy. Before concluding this unit let us briefly look at directions taken by some recent scholarship.

**Check Your Progress: Activity**

Have you ever wondered when we think of cooks in the public (chefs in hotels) we think of men and when we think of cooks at home, we think of women? Clearly, it seems that cooking is not an inherent quality for women.

Think up a list of instances (both from news, stories and personal experiences) where women have attempted to be visible in the public. How many instances of the reverse (men in the private) can you think of?
3.7 RECENT SCHOLARSHIP ON MASCULINITY IN INDIA

‘Masculinity’ has become a central area of concern for researchers in India in the last decade. Unlike the earlier work that was historical in nature, recent research seems to favor the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. These studies are mostly ethnographic in nature and attempt to shed light on aspects of masculinity that have hitherto received scant attention. Most of these works centralize the experiences of men as gendered beings and talk about the nature of the intersection of power and powerlessness in their everyday lives. Sanjay Srivastava’s research on working class masculinities in urban India is significant in this regard. He looks at the specific modes by which sexuality is negotiated in the metropolis in the context of consumption practices, with examples from pornography and popular magazines, and institutions like sex clinics. (Srivastava 2004, 2007).

Other significant works in the area of men and masculinities are those of Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella on the practices of masculinity in Kerala (Osella and Osella, 2006), Deepak Mehta on communal conflicts, archives and masculinity and on the body, ritual and masculinity (Mehta, 2000) and Radhika Chopra on supportive practices among men (Chopra, 2003). Another significant domain of research on masculinity has focused on popular representations in cinema (Vasudevan, 2004 and Gabriel, 2004) and calendar art (Jain, 2004). T Muraleedharan’s work on homosociality in the films of the Malayalam star Mohanlal (Muraleedharan, 2001) and his subsequent work on the subversive play of homoerotic desire in Malayalam films (Muraleedharan, 2005) alerted us to the interesting ways in which dominant texts could be read against the grain by using political standpoints. His work suggests that popular culture is often laden with material for analysis of marginal masculinities and marginal desires.

A series of seminars under the title ‘Exploring Masculinities: South Asian Traveling Seminar’ were organized by the documentary filmmaker Rahul Roy for AAKAR (New Delhi) and supported by UNIFEM. The seminars were held in a number of locations in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. Apart from making two significant documentaries on the question of masculinity, Rahul Roy has also written ‘A little Book on Men’ which introduces the concept of masculinity.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

We have seen from the discussions above that the word male doesn’t tantamount to be used as man or masculine. The relationship is based on much more complex understanding of male-masculinity-man relationship. In contemporary social sciences, masculinity is commonly associated with power and violence, assuming that the meaning of masculinity will remain the
same generally for all times. This notion is untenable because there are disparities in the normative ideals of masculinity in different cultures at different times. Another approach which has been cliqued assumes that the study of masculinity is the same as the study of men. There is no way in which either men or women are exempted from negotiating both masculinity and femininity. Each ideal invariably reproduces the other in negative terms. By now you know that the sex-gender as a system does not function in seclusion but are simultaneously organized by different identity formation such as caste, class, sexuality, urban-rural divide, religion, disabilities etc. Masculinity has become a central area of research in India in the last decade in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. The ethnographic oriented work by such researchers as Sanjay Srivastava and others, demonstrate the significance of a gendered analysis of men’s lives.

3.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Define masculinity and discuss it in Indian context.

2) Discuss various emergent concerns with reference to the concept of masculinity.

3) Critically analyzes the statement “British colonialism should be understood as the employment of masculine power over the feminine”.

4) “There is no way in which either men or women are exempted from negotiating both ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’. Discuss in the context of what you have read in the above unit.

3.10 REFERENCES


Masculinities


3.11 SUGGESTED READINGS
