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## UNIT 2 GENDER- BASIC CONCEPTS II

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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This Unit introduces you to the basic concepts associated with the Programme. Wide ranges of concepts discussed in this Unit to familiarize you with those concepts and be used frequently in the subsequent Units and Courses of this Programme. The Unit discusses concepts related to the discipline of gender studies. The Unit 1 extensively explained the concepts related to Gender and Development. The present Unit further discusses concepts like Patriarchy and feminism.

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### 2.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Define the basic concepts concerning Bachelor of Arts in Gender Studies:  
and
- Explain the differences among the basic concepts.

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## 2.3 PATRIARCHY

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This term signifies ‘the rule of father’ in a literal sense. Feminist intellectuals have been articulating the determinants of dominance by the male. It also shows the subsequent oppression of women. It refers to the unequal levels of power and income that are part of the life worlds of men and women. These discourses of power are mediated through the family, sexuality, state, culture and language. The category of Patriarchy questions the biological determinism that privileges men over women. In other words, it explores the ideological constructions that structure the hierarchies among women and men. For instance, women are equated with motherhood. This perception is essentialist. It provides a peculiar way of description in which women are projected as the so-called carriers of nature. It does not address the question of the agency of women. Socialist Feminism analyzed Patriarchy and its relationship with class exploitation. Marxist feminists argued that Patriarchy is interlinked with capitalism. The ideology of Patriarchy structures the day-to-day power relations of men and women. Friedrich Engels argued that a ‘monogamous patriarchal family’ acts as an impediment to women’s liberation. It is asserted that Patriarchy is linked to the nature of oppression.

The differences in wages between men and women represent the nature of oppression. At the same time, it is also determined by the different structures of Patriarchy. According to Sylvia Walby, the dimensions mentioned above determine Patriarchy. Walby argues that forms of Patriarchy can be divided into **Private and Public Patriarchy**. A patriarch within a home who regulates women in the home represents Private Patriarchy. Public Patriarchy refers to the Patriarchy that exists outside the private domain. It exists in the public domain. Thus, women are excluded in the private and public realms. Regarding public property, women are controlled by groups rather than individuals.

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## 2.4 MATRIARCHY

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Understanding the diverse interpretations of the category ‘matriarchy’ is essential. It refers to a type of social system in which the mother acts as the head of the family. It is also argued that mothers acquire prime status through power. Engels argued that women had these sorts of power during the period of hunter-gatherer societies. There were no property rights at that period. When wealth or property started transferring from men to their children, Patriarchy emerged through regulating women’s reproduction. Thus, systems such as matriarchy withered in every respect. It questions the universality of male domination. In other words, it shows other forms of power than male domination in society. However, Patricia Hill Collins argued that black matriarchy is based on the “mythical norm of the financially independent, white middle-class family organized around a monogamous heterosexual couple’. She contended that black matriarchy is based on the idea of affluent, white-centred values. Her analysis shows the differences in the construction of the category ‘matriarchy’. Black feminists like Marry-Ann Weathers opined that perceptions about the black matriarchy are absurd and undermine their oppression.

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## 2.5 FEMINISM

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It is argued that Feminism as a social movement emerged in England during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It asserted the rights of women. Thus, it demanded the equality and rights of

women. It addressed the issues of voting, education and occupations of women. It provided a critique of the oppression of women through challenging male domination and division of labour. Thus, it raised questions about Patriarchy. Mary Wollstonecraft questioned the diverse aspects of the subordination of women through her book, *Vindication of the Rights of Women, in 1792*. During the earlier phase, feminists argued for political and economic equality for women. The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), founded in 1903, dealt with suffrage. It is essential to understand the perspectives of different streams within feminists.

Second-wave feminists considered experience as a realm of knowledge. They questioned objectivity as an extension of oppressive practices. Second-wave Feminism during the 1960s and 1970s had the assertions of middle-class women against sexist colleges. Simon de Beauvoir argued that women recognized that they were the other and the men as the subject. Women realized their oppression and oppressor. Marxist feminists analyzed the oppression of women as the consequence of social and economic systems. Radical feminists argued the oppression of women is carried out through the manipulation of their sexuality by men. Psychoanalytic feminists explore how women's subjectivity is conditioned in the sexist culture. According to Patricia Hill Collins, black women are the 'outsider within. In other words, it refers to the excluded experience of black women within the community and society. A Dalit feminist perspective shows that Dalit women undergo oppression based due to their specificities of caste and gender.

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## 2.6 POSTCOLONIALISM

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It stands for the diversity of development in the cultural realm after the Second World War. It refers to social, cultural, and economic discourse that resulted in the fall of European imperialism. Theories under the rubric of postcolonialism explore the issues related to culture, gender, identity, citizenship, race, ethnicity, language and power oppressed by the imperialist forces. Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) explored the linkages between the colonized, oppression and their subjectivity. According to him, imperialism resulted in the internalization of imperialistic culture by those subjected to it. Thus, it created economic, social, and political inferiority among them. It affected their identity. Inferiority based on economic aspects also created inferiority. It also led to race and culture. It is also associated with the language. Those who are colonized, according to Fanon, are forced to articulate in the language of their oppressor or imperialist forces. This category of postcolonialism shows the partialities based on cultures that are part of the European discourses. It shows the diverse cultures of the postcolonial conditions. It also engages with the new forms of colonialism transmitted through imperialist forces' culture.

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## 2.7 POSTMODERNISM

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Postmodernism signifies movements or trends in literature, paintings, plastic arts, films, painting and architecture. Scholars such as Anthony Giddens argued that it is associated with aspects of aesthetic reflections upon the trajectory of modernity. According to Giddens, a postmodern scholar rejects the authenticity attributed to the rationality of the Enlightenment Nietzsche and Heidegger. Scholars such as David Harvey contended that a more excellent elasticity and change in capitalism is related to the postmodern societal transitions. The term postmodernism is contested. The meaning of this term

differs in a diverse field of expressions. Linguistic abundance, stylistic anarchy and lexical exhibitionism are considered postmodern literature features. It becomes resistance against the functional element in the architecture. Jean-Francois Lyotard argues that postmodernism marks the collapse of grand narratives such as Marxism and replaces them with little narratives. However, postmodern scholarship engages with the diversity of truth. In other words, postmodernists emphasize the relative nature of truth. Thus, they abandon those which are called objective in nature. It also rejects the boundaries between high and low forms of culture. It also questions the authenticity of the author. Postmodernists also believe in the power of irony as a tool of self-reflection.

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## 2.8 NATION-STATE

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It refers to the autonomous political community with a different legal system, military apparatuses, borders, etc. It also has the head of the state. It also has distinct flags and images constructed to create a unique identity. The national anthem also provides a distinct identity to it. Nation-state was not part of classical Greece.

On the contrary, only city-states used to indulge in war. It emerged after the Germanic Holy Roman Empire failed to govern an international group of sub-states. It is argued that nation-states are also the product of external interventions. It is linked to nation-building, which is essential for creating a national identity. However, the process of internationalization challenges the formation of nation-states.

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## 2.9 TRENDS IN FEMINISM

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We have given trends in Feminism in this section concerning your learning.

### 2.9.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal Feminism is theorized as the logical expansion of traditional liberalism. In other words, liberal Feminism adapts the liberal notions of ‘individual dignity’, ‘autonomy’, ‘equality’ and ‘self-fulfilment’. Liberal feminists argued that the theoretical premises of liberalism could be practised in women’s lives. In other words, the law should give women equal rights to men. Liberal feminists criticized liberal theory that foregrounded the person’s capability to reason and argued that women could also engage with reason in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, liberal feminists challenged the bias of philosophy that was sceptical of women’s ability in the case of reason. For instance, Mary Wollstonecraft contended that women possess rationality and ‘moral responsibility. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, liberal feminists struggled for the right to property and vote. They also argued for equal educational mobility for women and pregnancy-related rights for female labourers. They also argue that women and men are similar in their ‘essential nature’. However, liberal feminists asserted that androgyny is an ideal of freedom and ‘human potential’. They contended that women experience restrictions as a group. They are discriminated against based on sex. Thus, their desires and potential are questioned in every respect. They interpret that justice can be achieved only by eradicating discrimination based on sex. According to liberal feminists, women are pushed into the field of degraded labour to exclude the realm of reason. They think that existing norms of sexuality are oppressive to women.

## 2.9.2 Marxist Feminism

Marxists considered class one of the key categories to explore all forms of societal oppression. They explored the relationship between the sexual division of labour of women and capitalism. Marxist thinkers such as Eli Zaretsky contended that the emergence of capitalism is accompanied by the 'sharp split between the economy and family'. As a result, women are marginalized from commodity production. Marxian analysts emphasized the nature of women's labour. At the same time, they differentiated the women in the capitalist class and working-class women. According to Friedrich Engels, the oppression of women is ingrained in the interests related to capital. It is embedded in a class-based society. Engels argued that men transformed the traditional kinship system into a patrilineal. Thus, the question of matrilineal ways of life is sabotaged in every respect. Engels said it resulted in the subversion of mother rights and the 'world-historic defeat of the female sex'. He also emphasized that monogamy is more economical than sexual. Marirosa Dalla Costa and Selma James argued that women's work in the home provides freedom to male workers. In other words, he can work for a long duration. Thus, he assures the existence of capital and proliferates the rate of **surplus value**. The following arguments are essential to understand the central tenets of Marxist Feminism. It is argued that feminist analysis does not understand history and the materialist approach. According to Heidi Hartmann, materialist interpretation showed that Patriarchy is part of social, psychic, and economic systems. Marxists also investigated the everyday lives of women under capitalism.

On the other hand, earlier Marxists such as Engels, Kautsky, Lenin and Marx argued that capitalism co-opts women into the wage-labour system. They perceived that it would destroy the sexual division of labour. Mariarosa Dalla Costa argued that women should claim wages for housework. Dalla Costa considered it a struggle against capital. Dalla Costa asserted that the struggles of women are revolutionary not because of their feminist nature but due to their anti-capitalist nature. However, Heidi Hartmann argued that capitalists, including men, husbands, fathers and so on, appropriate women's labour.

## 2.9.3 Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminists emphasized the re-interpretation of the category, such as the public sphere. They provided historical and conscious readings of sexuality and economic and political dimensions of child care. Social structuring of childbearing became one of the critical aspects in their intellectual investigations. Socialist feminists focused on the historical materialistic approach of conventional Marxism. According to Juliet Mitchell, socialist feminists deploy feminist interpretation of Marxist discourse to explore 'feminist questions to feminist answers'. They argued that there are linkages between racism, capitalism, imperialism and male domination and demanded eliminating those ideological forms. Thus, they debunked the relationship between capitalism, male dominance and the consequential-capitalism-driven division of labour. Socialist feminists analyzed the masculine and feminine character types. They assert that 'the existing social systems condition gender structuring 'of women's bodies. Thus, they challenged the Marxian notion of alienation by stating that men only experience alienation. In other words, women do not experience alienation. Therefore, the idea of alienation is male-centric. They are defined as accruing to the interests of men.

### 2.9.4 Psychoanalytic Feminism

Feminists like Juliet Mitchell provided new readings of the perspectives of Sigmund Freud. She argued that psychoanalysis explains Patriarchy. It does not provide **reductionist alternatives** to the power of the male. The perspectives of Melanie Klein influence feminists. She mapped the children's relationship with their mothers. Feminists adapted their perspectives to understand differences based on gender. They argued that psychological dimensions are gendered and sexed. Feminists like Kate Millet argued that Freudian theories served conservative interests by providing a reductionist analysis of women. Judith Butler is conscious of the assumption of compulsive heterosexuality in psychoanalytical feminist writings.

### 2.9.5 Black Feminism

Black Feminism deconstructed the white Universalist biases of the dominant Feminism. Thus, it is a rupture from the hegemonic forms of Feminism. Black women struggle against racial, sexual, and heterosexual forms, including class oppression. Black feminist argues that they gain their perspectives from the historical realities of the struggle of Afro-American women for their survival. However, they emphasized the intricacies of sexual and racial identity. Hence they formed National Feminist Organization in New York in the year 1973. They were also connected with movements related to Civil Rights, such as Black Nationalism, Black Panther, etc. It draws its basic premises from the personal lives of Black women. However, they place their movements within the modern economy and Black politics. Thus, it is contended that race and gender are related to their political repression.

For instance, the rape of a black woman by a white man is political repression for them. At the same time, they are conscious of the challenges such as capitalism and imperialism. By claiming their position on the liberation of Black, they argue that if one is not accessible, how can one liberate others? Hence, they are liberating black men too. Therefore, they provide a critical dimension to their struggle against racial and patriarchal domination. Black feminists positioned themselves as the most oppressed, marginalized and degraded communities. Middle-class Black women are represented in Black feminist writing as the agency that can create consciousness among poor black women by establishing communes. For instance, Patricia Hill Collins, one of the most pioneering black feminists, argues that black women are the 'Outside within' their community and the dominant –non-black-white community. Black feminist thus offers a powerful critique of multifaceted aspects of race and gender.

### 2.9.6 Ecofeminism

Ecofeminists explore the oppression of the environment and women. The environment and women are the two categories that are essential to undermine male dominance. French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne introduced this term in 1974 to show the capability of women in the upsurge of an ecological assertion. At the same time, it considers the perils of the dominance of human beings and men on Earth and women. It questions the cultures that undermine the existence of nature and women. Thus, ecofeminists demand political action to challenge those biases that question women's and nature's authenticity. It is observed that nature is undergoing rapid changes due to the exploitative –science and technology and industrialized society. Simultaneously, women are oppressed by the hierarchical trends emerging from capitalism and Patriarchy's conglomeration. Thus, it results in the negligence of the labour of women in the home

and the acceptance of men's labour in the market systems. It is essential to understand the formative periods of Ecofeminism. Activists within the peace movement in the United States of America started to reflect on the correlations between racial discrimination, military domination and classed based inequalities. It evolved during the period of second-wave Feminism. They also theorized that Science and Technology (S&T) are patriarchal and masculine. Biotechnology-induced research created problems in nature. At the same time, reproductive technology affected the lives of women. Mies and Shiva argued that the aforementioned technology-driven changes exploit women for the mere purpose of production. Thus, women started agitating against different forms of exploitation of nature. The fundamental premise of ecofeminists focuses on the notion that a woman represents nature due to their role in biological reproduction. Women are theorized as someone intimate with nature due to their reproduction capability. Thus, women and nature are oppressed through the vicious circles of male dominated-technological discourses. As mentioned earlier, women and their linkage to nature have political implications vital to their articulations against the forms of dominance.

### 2.9.7 Womanism

The category of womanism questions the stereotyping of women that characterizes women as girlish, frivolous, irresponsible and so on. It represents a particular knowledge within the Afro-American feminist ideologies. It appropriates the black folk culture influenced by the dialogues between black mothers and their female children. Alice Walker argued that acting "womanish" is like "acting like a woman". According to Alice Walker, Womanism explores the philosophical investigations of Afro-American women. It is linked to their intellectual growth. Women encourage love and sexual/asexual engagements among women. Simultaneously, she argued that there is no element of separatism in Womanism. As an intellectual cum experiential discourse, it engages with aesthetes, sprits, struggles and so on.

### 2.9.8 Postmodernist feminism

It is argued that feminism and postmodernism question forms of hegemonic knowledge such as scientific rationality and causal enquiries. It is also theorized as mutually "complementary" and "corrective". It explores the differences that exist between men and women. The postmodernist critiques of the meta-narratives are considered productive in gender studies. In response to postmodernist debates, feminists argue that power and forms of inequality can be analyzed in the context of language. Postmodern feminists theorized women as the other. They were criticized for their abstract and detached bourgeoisie identity. Postmodern feminists in North America and France engaged with the writings of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida. Postmodern feminists such as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous played a vital role in the debates on postmodernist Feminism. Kristeva and Irigaray deployed the Lacanian reading of Sigmund Freud to explore the pre-oedipal condition, i.e., the relationship between mother and son. Kristeva explored the diverse maternal aspects. Irigaray emphasized the sexed identity of women. Helene Cixous introduced the term 'feminine writing' and its specificity from the 'canonized masculine writing'. Thus, she questioned the reductionist patriarchal language. Some scholars argued that "women" and "patriarchy" are essentialist categories. They explored the representation of femininity and masculinity in print and visual culture. At the same time, they argued that most of the great theoretical explorations on Patriarchy still need to understand the historical and cultural transitions related to diverse aspects of women's lives.

### 2.9.9 Postcolonial Feminism

The intellectual tradition of postcolonialism influences postcolonial Feminism. Postcolonial scholarship scrutinized the impact of the formerly colonized state and its reproduction of new forms of the colonial past. Thus, the culture of colonialism is mediated through the neo-colonial or postcolonial life worlds. However, postcolonial feminists who hail from decolonized regions analyzed their gendered body politic within the gamut of newly formed nation-states. In other words, it helped them to re-think the determinants of gender, citizenship, identity and nationalism. Educational interventions of postcolonial feminism subjected the colonial interventions and their role in structuring the agency of the native women. Postcolonial feminist scholars debunked the gendered and Eurocentric biases of the colonial intelligentsia. Thus, they revisited the exoticization of the colonial past, the colonizer’s gaze on the colonized and so on. Women’s productive and counterproductive roles were also analyzed to understand their locations within the domination of the colonizer and oppression of the colonized. At the same time, feminists also addressed the questions related to sexuality, race and gender. It mapped the colonialism and subsequent oppression of women.

### 2.9.10 Dalit feminism

Dalit Feminism emerged as a critique of the value-free, dominant, mainstream feminist trends in India. Dalit feminists emphasize that Dalit women are oppressed based on social factors such as caste, gender and class. Thus, they challenge the dominant feminist framework, which focuses on class and gender.

Dalit feminists established an autonomous organization called the National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW) in 1995.

They draw the energy from Jotirao Phule, Savitrabai Phule, Shahu Maharaj, Babasaheb Ambedkar, and those who engage with the anti-caste movement. Dalit feminists argued that caste is interlinked with the oppression of Dalit women. For instance, Indian society is based on the hierarchy of caste. Occupations in India are divided based on caste. It can be seen in occupations such as manual scavengers, cobblers, etc. Dalit feminist situates their critique by engaging with the multifaceted unequal status of Dalit women. They raised the difference between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ Patriarchy as a fundamental premise of their critical inquiry into dominant Feminism. According to them, ‘internal’ Patriarchy refers to the oppression of Dalit women by Dalit men.

On the other hand, the ‘external’ Patriarchy deals with the oppression of Dalit women by the dominant /non-Dalit / men and women. For instance, victims of rape as Dalit women, bonded Dalit women labourers undergo internal and external patriarchies. At the same time, they argue, Dalit women have the authenticity to represent themselves in politics. However, Dalit feminists assert that the question of agency is essential for the overall development of the lives of Dalit women. Thus, they also deploy the writings of Dalit women, such as autobiographies, to foreground their distinct and stigmatized socialization.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. What is Ecofeminism?

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## 2.10 LET US SUM UP

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This Unit provided various fundamental concepts related to undergraduate programme in gender studies. The author have mentioned these concepts in the subsequent Units to explain theories and contemporary issues related to gender studies. It is essential for you, as learners, to understand these concepts clearly. It will help you to relate these concepts later in this course and other courses in this Programme.

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## 2.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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1. Explain Patriarchy briefly.
2. What is postcolonialism?
3. Explain liberal, Marxist and socialist feminisms in detail.
4. Explain Dalit Feminism, postcolonialism and Womanism.

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## 2.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check your progress exercise 1

Ecofeminists explore the oppression of the environment and women. The environment and women are the two categories that are essential to undermine male dominance. French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne introduced this term in 1974 to show the capability of women in the upsurge of an ecological assertion. At the same time, it considers the perils of the dominance of human beings and men on Earth and women. It questions the cultures that undermine the existence of nature and women. Thus, ecofeminists demand political action to challenge those biases that question women's and nature's authenticity. It is observed that nature is undergoing rapid changes due to the exploitative –science and technology and industrialized society.

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