



**BLOCK 5**  
**EMERGING DEBATES IN GENDER AND**  
**SCIENCE**



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## UNIT 13 GENDER AND GENETIC DEBATE

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### 13.0 INTRODUCTION

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Genetics is a branch of biology that studies genes, genetic variations and heredity in organisms. Even though the phenomenon of heredity was observed and noted since millennia, it was first studied scientifically by Gregor Mendel, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The science of genetics has made great strides particularly over the past century, and scientists are able to understand many aspects about how characteristics and traits are passed on from one generation to the next. The discovery of genes, DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) and its structure made it possible for scientists to understand the workings of heredity in detail. Genes hold the information to build and maintain an organism's cells and pass genetic traits to offspring. The human genome project, a multi-nation venture, completed the total sequencing of the human DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) over a 13 year period in 2003. It identified the approximately 20,000-25,000 genes in human DNA and determined the sequences of its 3 billion chemical base pairs. This has had tremendous implications for identification and treatment of diseases and in devising new cutting age treatments and therapies. The science of genetics has also contributed towards our understanding of sex and gender and the complex interplay of heredity and environment in the formation of gender identity. It has also made possible several new interventions and procedures with regard to genetic testing, gene therapy, Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) and genetic modification, enabling humans to interfere and intervene in 'natural' processes, creating some important ethical and legal issues and questions. We shall examine some of these issues from a gender lens and a feminist perspective. Feminists have closely observed and tracked these developments and their possible impacts upon the autonomy and agency of

women. As this course has attempted to show you, science and technology are not gender neutral; the relationships of power, control and dominance need to be uncovered and deconstructed.

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### **13.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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After Studying this Unit, you would be able to:

- Discuss the inter-linkages between biological and social factors in understanding the categories of sex and gender.
- Understand the ‘nature vs. nature’ debate; and
- Critically discuss the emerging genetic technologies with a gender lens.

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### **13.2 SEX AND GENDER CLASSIFICATION**

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You have already read about sex and gender in the previous course BGS 002. Let us revise it by discussing the role of biological/genetic factors and social/cultural ones in shaping gender identity. We will revisit the existing understandings of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, and the ‘nature’ vs ‘nurture’ debate. As you have learnt in earlier units, the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ have been used interchangeably and synonymously in everyday parlance and understanding. However, the two terms have distinct meanings which have been well articulated by scholars who study gender. Sex refers to the biological differences between males and females, most often in connection with reproductive organs and functions. Gender refers to the socially constructed differences between men and women that give rise to masculinity and femininity. In the 1970s, feminist scholars promoted use of the term gender to draw attention to the reality that not all differences between men and women could be explained by biology. This helped to counter many myths and misconceptions about differences between men and women which were seen as ‘natural’ or based upon their biological make up alone. Feminist and gender studies scholars showed how these differences are based upon different cultural and social meanings and attributes that are associated with being male or female rather than exclusively upon having or not having a particular set of sex organs. Thus, the culturally wide-spread notion that women are ‘naturally’ inclined towards care giving and are therefore more ‘suited’ for professions like nursing, teaching, hospitality etc. can be countered by pointing out that this is not because of their biological attributes, but cultural conditioning and socialization. Women have been assigned the role of looking after children and the home-based or domestic activities. Therefore, they are encouraged to take up those jobs that will facilitate the performance of these traditional roles. Thus, it is a gender construction of women’s roles. Women have demonstrated that they are equally competent at performing those roles traditionally associated with males, whether it be in the fields of science and technology, military, business and finance, politics and governance. The notion that biological sex predisposes people to perform certain roles and not others, has been effectively challenged and contradicted by feminists. However, over the years, the sex-gender binary has been seen to be too simplistic, and it is

increasingly being accepted that both are interconnected and interrelated. To assume that sex is exclusively the domain of biology, and gender the domain of culture, is not considered as valid anymore.

### 13.2.1 Nature vs. Nurture Debate

The 'nature versus nurture' debate is a very old one, and raises the question of what is more important in the development of human personality, heredity (nature) or environment (nurture)?

Biomedicine seems to have tilted the scales strongly in favour of biology in this debate. At the most, there is an acknowledgement that biology interacts with culture in individual experience, but by and large biology is considered to be destiny. **Nature or heredity** refers to traits that are inherited or genetic. For example, eye colour, skin type and other physical characteristics are the direct consequences of our genetic makeup. Our predispositions to respond in particular ways are driven by genetics. Certain predispositions also have genetic causes, for instance certain illnesses or health conditions are known to related to one's genetic make-up. Heredity also determines physiological differences in males and females. Some of these differences are present at birth, and some can only be observed at the time of puberty. Heredity causes girls to reach puberty earlier than boys. It also causes boys (once they have reached puberty) to have more muscle composition and be taller than girls in general.

It has been pointed out that gender differences may also be the result of the interplay of hormones. For instance, increased level of testosterone is believed to make boys more physically aggressive. Researchers have also argued that hormones may play a role in the differences observed in visual-spatial and verbal abilities among children, wherein visual-spatial abilities of boys and verbal abilities of girls are said to be slightly higher. The notion of the 'left brain'(which is associated with logic, reasoning etc) being better developed in males and the 'right brain'(associated with verbal abilities and imagination ) in females also is an example of how biology is seen to play a major role in determining gendered traits.

**Nurture** refers to the environment within which the individual is raised and grows. Environmental influences include the way the person is socialised; the values, beliefs, attitudes that they are exposed to and imbibe, all influence development. With reference to gender, we see how every culture and society promotes certain gender-specific roles and behaviours and delineates which sets of behaviours are appropriate for males and females. Gender roles and stereotypes also include those about sexuality and sexual orientation, wherein heterosexual relations (men and women as sexual partners) are viewed as 'normal' and same-sex relationships (men with men; women with women) as deviant or abnormal.

The question arises, is gender identity the result of nature or nurture? Is the role of genetic/biological factors predominant or are social and cultural factors more significant? This is a complex question which is also ethically challenging to study. Those individuals who fall outside the 'binary'

understanding of sex and gender, such as intersexed, trans-sexual or members of LGBTQI community have faced stigma and discrimination in society as earlier mentioned.

### 13.2.2 Sexing the Body

This sub-section is drawn from Unit 2, Block 1 of MWG 002. Feminists interested in the field of science who were keen to investigate ideas of sex and their possible relationship to gender. In our everyday understanding of the anatomical differences of sex, we conceive of it as something given or fixed. When we refer to women as biologically female, we have in mind one or more of the following — female genitals, an XX chromosome structure and certain female hormones. Men, on the other hand, are identified by male genitals, an XY chromosome and male hormones. But what does all this mean? How have scientists discovered and theorized these various aspects? Do all women and all men have these characteristics and in the same way? Are we clearly divided into two sexes?

There is now a large literature on these kinds of issues, and there seems to be nothing obvious about how sex works. First and foremost, it is necessary to question a naive approach to the field of science itself. It is commonplace to think of science as objective and neutral since it is studying the seemingly non-social aspects of the world, life forms, plants, animals and human beings. Especially after the widespread discovery of theories of evolution – the idea that human beings evolved at some early point in prehistory from apes – which displaced to a considerable degree religious beliefs about the origins and nature of human life, science has become the most powerful source of “truth” about us and our worlds. It is important to reflect on how research done by science is exerting tremendous influence over our understanding, including biological theories about sex and what is considered the natural development of men and women in society. Such influences may be at their strongest in western societies, but they are increasingly gaining ground in contexts like ours as well.

A good place to start would be with what makes us male and female. According to the feminist scholar of science, **Anne Fausto-Sterling**, who is a biologist and a feminist, it is actually quite impossible to somehow separate out purely “scientific” and purely “biological” characteristics. They are invariably entangled and embedded in social ideas, that is to say, our notions of gender. For instance, it seems easy to say – based on contemporary science – that a combination of external genital characteristics, chromosomes and hormonal balance determines the sex of a person. But what exactly is this combination and how does it work? There are no clear answers here. This is most obvious when it comes to trying to understand the nature of bodies where the sexual characteristics are not obvious – such as the bodies of those who are intersex (with different combinations of male and female characteristics), or when external genitals are not matched by the corresponding male or female chromosomes. Thus, for instance, if a particular body has the XY chromosome but not the corresponding male genitalia, what should be the sex of such a person? There can really be no answer to such a question. The functioning of hormones, for instance is also

quite complex, since men and women have, in fact, both male and female hormones in their systems. **Fausto-Sterling** has shown quite convincingly how scientists as far back as the 18th century onwards believed that it was necessary to maintain a clear distinction between two sexes – indeterminate sexes should be “normalized” as far as possible and brought as close as possible to one sex or the other. This belief has only been more widely criticized in very recent years. Let us discuss the issue in more detail and reflect upon how gender identity can be a complex and sensitive phenomenon.

### Box 13.1: Sex Determination Tests: The Case of Santhi Soundarajan

*In 2006, **Santhi Soundarajan** became the first Tamil woman to win an Asian Games medal.*

*But after her victory in 2006, she was subjected to a disrespectful and invasive scrutiny of her biological sex. Sex tests, also known as gender determination tests, for sporting events became a prevalent practice in 1950 after the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) began physical examination, of female athletes. Initially only a physical examination of the body and genitals would determine the gender of a person. However, from the Mexico Olympics (1968) onwards chromosome tests were used to determine the gender. In 1999 blanket sex tests for female athletes were abolished but they continue to be used in specific cases.*

*When Soundarajan returned from Doha, where the 2006 Asian Games were held, she was surprised to learn that she had failed her sex test. The same sex test which had been conducted after her victory without giving her any proper information or receiving her proper consent for reasons which remain publicly unknown. The test determined that Soundarajan did not have female sexual characteristics and hence she was barred from competing in any sporting event and her medal was taken back from her.*

*One of the most controversial aspects of sex-verification tests is the fact that it is assumed that only two combinations of chromosomes – XX for female and XY for male – can exist in a body. There can be multiple chromosome variations present in a body. A woman, therefore, can have the Y chromosome cohabiting with the X chromosome. It was later determined that Soundarajan had partial androgen insensitivity syndrome (PAIS).*

*However, the very foundation on which sex tests have been conducted neglects and excludes all kinds of chromosome variations limiting itself to a chromosome binary which remain grounded on a patriarchal understanding of what gender and biological sex are.*

*The sporting world is perhaps one where the gender binary of male/female is the most visible, excluding all intersex and transgender people. The patriarchal values of ‘men are stronger/better/more physically capable’ continues to dominate the narrative for conducting*

*sex tests. (Extracts from ‘**Santhi Soundarajan and the Misogyny of Sex Verification Tests in Sports**’ by Isheeta Sharma, *Feminism in India* 25 November 2020.*

*<https://feminisminindia.com/2020/11/25/santhi-soundarajan-gender-determination-test/>*

### Check Your Progress Exercise I

Note: I. Use this space given below to answer the question.

II. Compare your answer with the Course material of this Unit.

1. What is the meaning of gender classification?

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2. Explain the Nature vs. Nurture debate in feminism.

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### 13.3 GENDER IDENTITY: TRANS-GENDERED AND INTERSEX PERSONS

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**Gender identity** is an individual's self-conception of being male or female based on his or her association with masculine or feminine gender roles. This need not always tally with one's biological characteristics.

Cisgendered individuals identify their gender with the gender and sex they were assigned at birth. Individuals who identify with the gender that is the opposite of their biological sex are transgendered. For example, persons assigned the female sex at birth may strongly identify and feel themselves to be psychologically and emotionally like males in their society. Similarly, those assigned the 'male' sex at birth may actually identify themselves as females. Transgendered people feel as if they are trapped in the wrong body. it is not a passing phase, nor is it the same as 'cross dressing'(wearing the clothing of the 'opposite' sex) for purposes of self expression or personal style. Transgendered individuals who change their bodies to align with their gender identity by going in for surgery or hormonal therapy are called transsexuals. This is a major life decision and involves expensive and painful surgical treatments. Not all transgendered persons take this route and may present themselves to society as the gender they identify with by adopting the dress, mannerisms, names etc of their chosen gender.



*“Throughout history and across different cultures, individuals with “third gender” (as well as “fourth gender” or even more varieties) have been recognized, with varying degrees of social acceptance. These include the hijra or khawaja sira of South Asia and the kathoey of Southeast Asia, who have been given legal recognition to various extents in countries such as India, Pakistan and Thailand. In addition, many Indigenous American peoples recognize individuals with third, fourth or otherwise non-binary gender roles, collectively referred to as “Two Spirit” people. It is important to note that the social and cultural meanings of these third/non-binary genders do not always correspond neatly with those of trans identity in Western societies, and there has been some concern in these countries or communities that Western transgender culture and identity may conflict with their traditional third gender culture”. (Source: Information Brief: Sex, Gender and Genetics. Personal Genetics Education Project (pgEd.org) 2019 )*

Sociological research shows us there is a strong social and cultural aspect in the way in which individuals assume a gender identity of being either masculine or feminine, or a sexual identity of being sexually attracted to either men or women. These identities are sustained by social norms and conventions. Whenever these norms are transgressed or crossed, as in the case of trans-gendered, intersexed persons, or the gay or queer persons, social stigma, discrimination, ostracism and violence may result. They may be regarded as deviants, perverts or diseased people. They may be subjected to all sorts of ‘treatments’ to ‘cure’ them. They may consider themselves as ‘misfits’ in society and feel that they have no place or value in a world that simply does not understand them.

Let us now briefly discuss intersexed individuals. **Anne Fausto-Sterling** (2000) asserts that the assumption of Western society that there are only two sexes, male and female-is inadequate. On the basis of her research with intersex or hermaphrodite children, who are born with a mixture of male and female organs, she identifies at least 5 sexes; males, females, ‘herms’ (having both testes and ovaries); ‘merms’ (having testes and some female sex organs) and fermes (having ovaries and some male sex organs). However, because of the practice of assigning a baby as either male or female, doctors make the decision based upon their assessment of the intersex baby and may even recommend surgical interventions which have scarred individuals for life (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). The famous ‘John/Joan’ case (see **Box 13.3**) demonstrates how complex sex and gender are and how difficult it is to understand whether nature or nurture are the determining factors. **Fausto-Sterling** advises against sex-assignment surgery for intersex infants and advises counselling and providing sufficient information to the family.

The variability of gender and sexuality can also be observed through the experiences of “gender and sexual outsiders” such as homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, women who do not look or act “feminine” and men who do not

look or act “masculine,” etc. Since it is not possible to verify clinically the sex of all those we meet, we can only guess it from the way they display their gender by correlating it with the culturally recognized symbols or markers of gender. Thus, gender can also be understood as a “performance which is enhanced by props like clothing and hairstyle, or mannerisms like tone of voice, physical bearing, and facial expression”. In order to “pass” as a member of a gender, these signs need to be communicated clearly. This is often a problem for transgendered and transsexual individuals and can cause them much stress and anxiety.

### BOX 13.3: The Case of John/Joan

*David Reimer was born in Winnipeg, Canada in 1965, as a male identical twin. However, as a result of a circumcision accident at age 7 months he lost his penis. Experts counseled that David should be surgically altered and raised as a girl. At age two David, known as “John” in the literature, had his testes removed and he became “Joan.” Her mother was cited in the literature as saying that Joan loved wearing dresses, hated getting dirty, and enjoyed having her hair set. As Joan’s biologically identical male twin continued to mature in a manner typical to boys, it seemed to demonstrate the dominant influence of gendered patterns of child-rearing on the formation of gender identity. Joan was being raised as a girl, her male sex organs had been surgically altered, and her transition from boy to girl seemed unproblematic.*

*However, in 1980, a BBC documentary doing a follow up on the famous case discovered that by the time Joan was thirteen she was not well adjusted to her sex assignment (**Fausto-Sterling, 2000**). She peed standing up, walked like a boy, wanted to be a mechanic and thought boys had better lives than girls. Eventually it came out that she had eventually had her breasts removed, had a surgically reconstructed penis implanted, and had married a woman and was fathering his wife’s child. Contradicting the original findings, John/Joan’s mother reported that Joan had consistently resisted attempts to socialize her as a girl. Sadly, following a period of severe depression, David Reimer killed himself at the age of 38.*

*The above case seems to suggest that the impact of ‘nature’ and the genetic make-up of the individual played a more significant role in gender identity than upbringing and socialisation as a girl. What is clear though is that the nature-nurture debate is not an ‘either-or’ matter; sex and gender are both fluid categories. (Source: Introduction to Sociology, 1st Canadian Edition. Ch.12)*

### Check Your Progress Exercise II

Note: I. Use this space given below to answer the question.

II. Compare your answer with the Course material of this Unit.

1. Define gender identity.

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2. What is the meaning of “*Two Spirit*” people?  
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## 13.4 ETHICAL ISSUES IN GENETICS

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The tremendous advances in the science of genetics have made it possible for human beings to experiment and intervene in the fundamental processes of life itself. As mentioned earlier, the completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 provided a “rough draft” of the human genetic code, with more details added almost daily. This information can be used to predict as well as treat diseases. ‘Genetic sequencing’ enables scientists to identify mutations or changes in the genes which can lead to either to genetically-based diseases or to an increased susceptibility to chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and various cancers. This gives rise to several ethical issues which scholars of gender have also paid close attention to, as they concern the issues of consent, privacy and exercise of power, all of which are feminist concerns also. With regards to **privacy and confidentiality**, the issue to be noted is how scientists, physicians, employers, insurance companies, and other interested parties may ethically use an individual’s genetic information. For instance, if a person is found to have genetic mutations that predispose them to certain cancers, this information may be used to deny them health insurance or other kinds of discriminations. In cultural contexts such as that of India, such information may create stigma and affect the marital prospects of women who may be identified as having ‘defective’ genes. Another major area of debate is the pros and cons of genetic testing, including pre-natal testing (testing of the unborn fetus in the womb). Let us discuss it in more detail.

### 13.4.1 Genetic Testing

Prenatal genetic screening is carried out to detect genetic anomalies in the fetus through a process called **amniocentesis**. A sample of the amniotic fluid surrounding the fetus is drawn out with a needle after the 12<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy and the cells are tested. Frequently, prenatal testing is used as a justification for induced abortion if certain genetic abnormalities are found which are likely to result in disabilities like Down’s Syndrome etc. **Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD)** refers to genetic testing of embryos produced through in vitro fertilization (IVF). A single cell is

removed from 3 day-old embryos and analyzed for certain genetic markers. If a genetic abnormality is discovered, such embryos are usually discarded. This raises profound ethical questions regarding the devaluing of persons with disabilities and their right to life. It also highlights the difficult position of the woman who is going to bear the child. While the decision to abort the fetus or discard the defective embryos may be seen as a matter of reproductive choice, they also highlight the absence of social support and protection for children born with disabilities and their families.

Pre-natal testing has also been used to determine the sex of the unborn baby, and in societies where there is strong son preference, pre-natal sex screening followed by abortion of female fetuses has become a social evil. In India, the elimination of unborn female children has led to a serious imbalance in the sex ratio which in turn leads to other social problems and increasing violence against women.

Genetic testing can also be performed in adults in order to assess for diseases and conditions that have a genetic component such as diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. For instance, the mutations in BRCA 1 and BRCA 2 genes can fairly accurately indicate the likelihood of breast cancer. Although men also may suffer from breast cancer, the issue tends to be mostly associated with women. Women identified as being at a higher risk, having a strong family history, may be advised to go in for mastectomy or breast removal surgery to prevent the onset of cancer. The significance of the breast in notions of femininity and identity is noteworthy, and making such a difficult decision can prove psychologically and emotionally traumatic for a woman (Chadwick, 2009).

#### 13.4.2 Genetic Therapy

Genetic therapy refers to inserting new genetic information into an individual's cells to replace abnormal or mutated genes in order to treat a genetically based disorder. Somatic **cell gene therapy** involves alteration of the genes of an affected individual, often only in a target organ or tissue. The modified cells are somatic cells, or non-reproductive cells and the changes would not be transmitted to future offspring. In contrast, **Germ-line gene therapy** involves the alteration of germ-line cells (sperm cells or ova) of an individual, so that the changed genetic characteristics would be passed on to subsequent generations. (Sullivan, n.d.).

Gene therapies according to some authors, may also be taken forward to 'enhance' or 'improve' human abilities or capabilities, and the idea of creating 'designer babies' with the desired characteristics and attributes may soon become a reality. In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) has become a fairly common procedure for couples who cannot naturally conceive a child. IVF enables the specialist to pre-select embryos through the process of preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) described earlier. Thus, the embryo can be screened for various genetic traits other than merely screening them for the presence of genetic disorders. This may lead to a future scenario of pre-selection of 'desirable' traits including skin or eye colour, athletic abilities, height etc. Genetic modifications done for enhancement rather than

treatment purposes may cause social discrimination and increase inequalities between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. (Ly, S. 2011) From a gendered lens, Chadwick (2009) writes:

“While the distinction between therapy and enhancement raises a number of issues, the significant question in this context is to what extent enhancement could advance the interests of women, or not; and a pertinent issue here is how an “improvement” is defined and by whom, in a social context in which gender based discrimination exists. The general point can easily be seen by looking at a historical nongenetic example, such as the practice of foot-binding to enhance a woman’s attractiveness” (p.16)

### 13.4.3 Assisted Reproductive Technologies

Assisted Reproductive Technologies refer to the manipulation of sperms, eggs or embryos in a laboratory for producing pregnancy. It includes In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), the most common procedure, and also the use of donor eggs, donor sperm, or previously frozen embryos. It may also involve a surrogate or gestational carrier. A surrogate is a person who becomes pregnant with sperm from one partner of the couple. A gestational carrier becomes pregnant with an egg from one partner and sperm from the other partner. ARTs have been touted as a ray of hope for couples who are unable to conceive naturally. However, from a gendered perspective, these technologies may not necessarily be empowering and in fact may even result in the notion of compulsory motherhood being strengthened and reinforced.

We may ask, to what extent do new reproductive technologies (IVF) reinforce heteronormativity? Do they possibly de-link reproduction from sexuality and marriage? In other words, have these technologies expanded the option of reproductive choice and rights for LGBT identified communities and individuals? The availability of these technologies is usually limited to heterosexual women, thereby excluding other gendered identities. IVF is simply a technological fix to the socially constructed notion of infertility; within the confines of marriage and biological family, it however, does not enable us to question the notion of infertility as social stigma. Hence, while technology in itself may not be gendered, its usage within particular socio-cultural contexts does propagate gendered and exclusionary mindsets and practices. The heterosexual family is upheld as the norm, to the exclusion of all others.

Assisted reproductive technologies can be conceptualized not merely as mere technology. These technologies have inter-linkages with other aspects of society such as social arrangements, patriarchy, power relations, and health issues. We need to contextualize the issues of motherhood, progeny, and the stigmatization of infertility within the framework of new developments, such as the growth of reproductive technologies in the market.

The globalization of reproduction has intensified the growth and establishment of fertility industries in South Asian countries which is further leading to commercialization and commodification of the women’s bodies, reproductive tissues and organs. The exploitation of women’s bodies has

become inevitable in this period of globalization of market and reproductive technology, hence provoking critical questions for feminist engagement. (Unit 2, MWG 001)

### Check Your Progress Exercise I

Note: I. Use this space given below to answer the question.

II. Compare your answer with the Course material of this Unit.

1. Explain Genetic Testing.

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2. What is the meaning of Genetic Therapy? Explain.

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### 13.5 LET US SUM UP

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This Unit has introduced you to some of the debates in the domain of gender and genetics. It discussed the concepts of sex and gender and the difficulty in making a clear separation between the two. It examined the ‘nature vs nurture’ debate in the light of understandings about the interactions between biology, society and culture in shaping the individual. It discussed the ethical issues around genetic testing, modification and new reproductive technologies with a gender lens, and discussed whether these technologies empower women or further reinforce patriarchal understandings of women’s bodies.

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### 13.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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1. Explain some of the key ethical issues in genetics. Give suitable examples to substantiate your answer.
2. How does genetic debate expand the understanding of gender? Discuss.
3. Differentiate between sex and gender. Offer a critical feminist perspective to explain it.

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### 13.7 REFERENCES

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## 13.8 SUGGESTED READING

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Sullivan, Dennis M. <https://bioethics.com/genetic-ethics-101>



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## UNIT 14 INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVES IN SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

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### Structure

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Learning Outcomes
- 14.2 Intersecting Differences
- 14.3 Identities, Representations and Inequalities
- 14.4 Philosophical Dimension
- 14.5 Capitalism and Productions of Neo-colonialism and Neo-imperialism
- 14.6 Questions of Self and Nation
  - 14.6.1 Intersectional Approaches: Multiple Forms of Existence
  - 14.6.2 Interlinkages between the Social Contexts and Subordination
  - 14.6.3 Politics of Race and Ethnicity.
- 14.7 Intersectionality in Indian Context: Caste, Class and Gender
- 14.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.9 References
- 14.10 Suggested Readings
- 14.11 Unit End Questions

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### 14.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous Unit, you have read about gender and embodiment. In this Unit, we will study about the interlinkages of race, caste, and ethnicity in the light of intersectionality approach. In order to understand these debates on intersectionality, we will try to explore how modern as well as postmodern departures have developed those arguments. At the same time, global and local-political transformations determine the connections between identities across the globe. The idea of communicative capitalism also structures the nature of representation of communities (Dean, 2009). According to Jodi Dean, communicative capitalism refers to “the materialisation of ideals of inclusion, participation in information and entertainment and communicative technologies that accelerate global capitalism” (Dean,2009:2). Therefore, in the end of this Unit, you will be able to distinguish the categories of intersectionality in the context of caste, race, ethnicity, class and gender identities. It has raised new questions of epistemic priority and resistance as well.

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### 14.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After studying this Unit, you would be able to:

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<sup>1</sup> This unit has been adapted from the course BSOC-107: Sociology of Gender, Unit 4: Intersectionality: Race, Ethnicity and Property written by Dr. Smita M. Patil.



- Know the meaning of the concept of intersectionality.
- Critically analyze how identities are reflected in the category of intersectionality; and
- Engage with the philosophical aspect of intersectionality raised by several scholars and disciplines including science.

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## 14.2 INTERSECTING DIFFERENCES

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Let us begin this section by looking at scholar Donna Haraway, who theorised creation of knowledge as “situated in nature” (Haraway,1991c,183-201). It is examined that Haraway’s analysis is based on “the critique of ---'god-trick 'of positivist epistemology”(Haraway, cited in Lykke, 2010: 4).The term god-trick stands for “the faceless, bodiless and context less knower ,who can detach her/himself from the world and the objects of the study, and then from an aloof and elevated position of surveillance can provide objective knowledge (Lykke,2010:5). It is observed that the foregrounding of politics of location is grounded in postmodern, philosophy of science. Feminists have criticised the positivism and argued that “knower is always ...in the middle of ...participant in and in compliance with, the analysed world, (Lykke, 2010:5). Feminism, therefore, is analysed as “post-disciplinary discipline” that “enable it to pass as a discipline and claim the academic authority of one, but which also keeps up a transversal openness and a dialogical approach to all academic discipline” (Lykke,2010:9). These debates attempt to understand the questions of feminist knowledge creation and its impact on feminist praxis. Debates on intersectionality also question the traditional, feminist practices and its claims related to knowledge creation and practice. To understand the nuances of intersectionality, let us study different perspectives emerged in relation to it.

There are different perspectives that explain the definitional nature of intersectional approaches. According to Lykke, there are intersections between gender, sex, forms of power and identities. Categories such as gender, sex and power are interlinked in nature. At the same time, categories of gender are positioned as “untenable”in nature (Butler, cited in Lykke,2010:32). It is further analysed that categories of gender, sex and sexuality need not be analysed in isolation. These categories should be analysed based on their interlinkages. Scholars like Judith Butler demonstrated the ways in which categories such as women, gender, and sex as something that create “normativity”and “exclusion” (Butler, cited in Lykke,33). Idea of “normative” refers to the prescription and establishment of norms (Colman,2009:514). Exclusion of certain sections happens on the basis of their gendered identities as well. Nonetheless, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa argued that Anglophone distinction/resignification between socio-cultural gender and biological sex needs to be understood as a relevant perspective to understand gender and sex binaries (Puig de La Bellasca,cited in Lykke,2010:44).Thus, the various modes of intersectionality are complex in nature .These categories of intersectionality are subjected to various critiques from social sciences and humanities. In the next section, we will map the intersectionality approach in the backdrop of debates on identities, representations, and inequalities.

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## 14.3 IDENTITIES, REPRESENTATIONS AND INEQUALITIES

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It is critiqued that sciences like medicine, biology, psychiatry, sociology and anthropology have created “sexist, racist, ethnocentric, nationalist and class-privileging classifications” (Lykke,2010:36). In other words, the aforementioned disciplines were biased towards certain sections in the society on the basis of sex, race, nationality and class. It is noted that intersection has deepened the relations between gender and class (Butler,cited in Lykke,2010:37). Scholars such as Rosi Braidotti have always discussed the context of intersectionist approaches. Braidotti analysed that “feminist figuration is a politically informed account of an alternative subjectivity” (Braidotti, cited in Lykke, 2010:38). Feminist understanding is political in nature, and it accommodates alternative subjectivity. The term “subjectivity” stands for “the self-conscious awareness of subjects” (Abercrombie, Stephen and Brian,2000:350). It refers to “an alternative subjectivity articulated in a figurative form that points to ways out of hegemonic, gender-conservative discourses about gender/sex in its intersections with other sociocultural categories” (Lykke, 2010:38). Thus, intersectionist approaches are significant to analyse the variations of power and normativity. In addition to this, Nina Lykke shows us that it is a tool to measure “power-laden relations” (Lykke,2010:51). The feminists have started exploring the intersectionality’s across the axis of gender, ethnicity, race and so on and further it leads to “mutual construction and transformation” (Lykke,2010:31). However, intersectionality is analysed as a “process rather than structure” in relation to “poststructuralist feminist theory” (Lykke,2010:51). Post-colonial and anti-racist feminism, as Nina Lykke stated, “often seem to ignore gendered power differentials” and also “argue critically against white, western, middle-class feminist discourses that tend to leave issues of racism and neo-colonialism out of sight”(Lykke,2010:53). Therefore, it is important to know the larger, theoretical traditions that can be analysed in the background of the arrival of intersectional approaches. For instance, scholars such as Chandra T. Mohanty attempted to debunk the hegemonic nature of western feminism.

It is analysed that Mohanty “helped to establish a space for critical analysis of intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and geopolitical position” and it is further analysed that Chandra T.Mohanty “turned a critical gaze on middle-class feminist slogans about global feminism and geopolitical position”(Mohanty,cited in Lykke, 2010:53). Broadly, Mohanty criticized the stereotyping of “third-world woman “as the “the ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family oriented victimized other of white-western feminism” (Mohanty, cited in Lykke, 2010:53). It is also conceptualized that intersectionality wishes to be differentiated from “liberal and relativistic notions like multi-culturalism” (Mohanty, cited in Lykke, 2010:55). In other words, intersectionality should move beyond the logic of appeasement of various communities in the name of multiculturalism. Diverse groups of feminists respond to intersectionlist approach in various ways. For instance, postcolonial and anti-racist feminists. Lykke, emphasize on “the dynamic interplay between societal in/exclusions, majorization/

minoritization and mechanism of dominance/subordination “and, for them, “the concept of intersectionality should not be collapsed into the liberal and relativist concept of multiculturalism” (Lykke, 2010:55).

The concept of “transnational feminism” also has enriched “postcolonial theorizing of intersections” (Mohanty, cited in Lykke,2010:55). It is noted that transnational feminism has challenged the multicultural, liberal feminism by emphasizing “on the intersectionality of gender, class, race, ethnicity...not only within the framework of single nations but also against the background of transnational relations: economic-cultural hegemonies and power differentials among nations” Mohanty, cited in Lykke, 2010:55). Thus, one can understand that “how Cultural Studies of masculinity have...given lot of attention to multiple masculinities based on race, class, sexuality, nationality and so on” (Halberstain,2010:65). Intersectionality thus attempts to differentialize itself from essentialization of identities. On the contrary, it critiques the bias that are inherent the dominant feminist approaches and practices that never addressed the relations between various dimensions of oppression and subordination within the hegemonic project of feminism. In the next section, let us try to know the philosophical aspect of intersectionality.

### Check Your Progress Exercise I

Note: I. Use this space given below to answer the question.

II. Compare your answer with the Course material of this Unit.

1. Discuss the concept of intersectionality given by any two scholars.

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2. What is understood as “intersecting differences”?

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## 14.4 PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSIONS

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The intersectional approaches are considered as a critical and theoretical tool to unsettle the existing, complex forms of hierarchies. Lykke analyzed that there are three important “clusters” of intersectional approaches. Primarily, it is the “explicit feminist understanding of intersectionality” (Lykke,2010:68). For instance, those theories like that of Kimberle Crenshaw which is “explicitly use the concept of intersectionality” (Lykke,2010:68). It is described as the “implicit feminist theorizing of intersectionality “of theories that deploy intersections “without using the concept ‘intersectionality ‘as the mainframe of interpretation” (Lykke,2010:68). Moreover, it is also illustrated as “feminist theorizing of intersectionality under other names, theories that concentrate on intersections, but while using other concepts and frames than intersectionality” (Lykke,2010:68).

According to Leslie McCall, intersectionist approach is “the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies in conjunction with related fields, has made so far ‘and “...as itself as a category of analysis” (McCall, cited in Lykke, 2010:70). McCall further categorized intersectionalist approach into three divisions such as “anti-categorical, intra-categorical and inter-categorical approaches” (McCall, cited in Lykke, 2010:70). Anti-categorical approach, according to McCall, subvert the categories firmly believing that ‘social relations’ and “subject formations” are “irreducibly complex that categorizations will always be reductive” (McCall, cited in Lykke, 2010:70). On the other hand, intra-categorical intersectional analysis attempts to map “neglected points of intersections” (McCall,cited in Lykke,2010:70). Inter-categorical approach tries to map “relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality among multiple and conflicting dimensions” (McCall, cited in Lykke, 2010:70).

Scholars such as Crenshaw also analyzed the intersections of gender, class, and race through the marginalization of women from the racist spheres of work (Lykke,2010:71). Kimberle Crenshaw analyzed the “power differentials around gender, race, and ethnicity” and termed it as “structural intersectionality” (Lykke, 2010:71). Crenshaw also interlinked such nuances of power to that of “political alliances and coalitions “and categorized them as “political intersectionality” (Crenshaw, cited in Lykke, 2010:72). Iris Marion Young also analysed how Crenshaw explored “structural and political intersectionality through the notion of seriality” (Young, cited in Lykke, 2010:72). Thus, Iris Marion Young analysed the imbroglio of oppression through the notion of seriality.

### **Check Your Progress Exercise II**

Note: I. Use this space given below to answer the question.

II. Compare your answer with the Course material of this Unit.

1. Write about the philosophical aspects of intersectionality by feminist scholars Kimberle Crenshaw.

#### 14.4.1 Poststructuralist Approaches to Intersectionality

Let us now study the poststructuralist approaches to intersectionality. Feminist thinkers Dorothe Staunes articulates on intersectionality as “meaning making process on a subject level” (Staunes, cited in Lykke, 2010:73). Staunes is influenced by social constructionist psychologists like Margaret Wetherell and Janet Mayben. It is analysed that individuals should not be taken as “cultural dopes ...acting out of homogenous cultural personality (Wetherell and Mayben, cited in Lykke, 2010:74). So, the individuals are structured by the impact of meaning-making acts on their lives (Lykke, 2010:74). Staunes emphasized on ‘doing of intersectionality’ as the “doing of the relations between categories, the outcome of this doing results in either troubled or untroubled subject positions” (Staunes, Lykke,2010:74).

As Nina Lykke and Baukje Prins significantly shows us the postmodern interpretation of intersectionality. Baukje Prins differentiated the systematic and constructionist ways of intersectionality. According to BaukjePrins, constructionist intersectionality as a category has the potential to capture the shades of intersectionist identity construction. On the contrary, Prins also analysed the systematic intersectional approaches as interlinked ways of class, gender and race. For Prins, these methods of intersectionality explore “the detrimental effects of the subordinate poles of gender, race and class and simultaneously to problematize the dominant poles of these binary oppositions, such as masculinity, whiteness and middle-classness” (Prins, cited in Lykke, 2010:74-75). Prins admitted that these particular intersectional approaches cannot unearth agency and subjectivity. It also examines the intersecting points of subordination. So such diverse groups are analysed as “passive bearers of the meanings of social categories” (Prins,cited in Lykke,2010:75). Prin’s category of constructionist, intersectionist approaches emphasize on the productive nature of power in Foucauldian sense as well (Prins, cited in Lykke, 2010:75).

However, there are historical accounts on intersectionality of gender/sex. British feminist scholars Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix says that “genealogies can be traced back to the nineteenth century”. They highlighted upon the conflicts between gender and race through feminism and anti-slavery movement in the USA (Brah and Phoenix, cited in Lykke,2010:76). Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix were influenced by the Sojourner Truth’s perspectives on black women and feminism. It is also analysed that socialist women

activist too analysed the connections between gendered locations and class (Lykke,2010:76) For instance, Russian socialist scholar, Alexandra Kollontai focused on the relations between gender and class and raised critique to “bourgeois feminist identity politics” (Kollontai, cited in Lykke,2010:77). Kollontai reflected on the category of “new woman “as the “woman from both bourgeois and working class who take up the modern ‘position of wage labourers in capitalist society “and fight together against patriarchal oppression (Kollontai, cited in Lykke, 2010:77).

Nina Lykke’s endorsed scholars such as Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis who offer a contemporary interpretation of intersectionalist approach. Scholars such as Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval Davis argued that “All three divisions (based on gender, ethnicity and class)...are affected by and affect each other and the economic, political and ideological relations in which they are inserted...it is not a question therefore of one (division) being more ‘real’ than the others or a question of which is the most important”(Anthias and Yuval-Davis, cited in Lykke,2010:79). Thus, it clearly points out that the ‘three divisions ‘determine diverse domains of ‘social relations. Further, it is analysed that the multiple methods that can lead to significant investigation with specificity. Consequently, for Floya Anthias and Yuval-Davis “each division exists within the context of others and that any concrete analysis has to take this in to account” (Ibid). As discussed earlier, Nina Lykke calls this kind of theorization as “the implicit feminist theorizing of intersectionality” (Lykke,2010:79). There is strong division between Cultural Studies and writings of Beverley Skeggs, Angela McRobbie and Anne McClintock. For instance, Anne McClintock provided a cultural cum historical account of race, gender and sexuality in relation to colonialism (Lykke,2010:80). There are elements of intersectionality within the writings of feminist science studies which can be read in the works of Donna Haraway and British feminist biologist, Lynde Birke (Lykke, 2010:80-81).

In addition to readings of intersectionalist approaches, eco-feminists such as Val Plumwood introduced the category of “earth others, i.e, the world of animals, plants and minerals” (Plumwood, cited in Lykke, 2010:81). Hence the impact of post-humanities on feminism has strengthened its understanding of the intersections between human and natural sciences (Asberg,cited in Lykke, 2010:81). Black feminists such as Combahee River Collective in their classic “A Black Feminist Statement “deployed the term “interlocking oppressions”as an exhortation to fight against oppression on the basis of race, sex and class (Combahee River Collective, cited in Lykke,2010:83). On the other hand, Science and Technology Studies (STS) scholar, Ingunn Moser’s notion of interference is analyzed as an “alternative to intersectionality in her (Moser) study of relations to gender, class and dis/ability” (Moser, cited in Lykke, 2010:84). Scholars such as Peter Wagner has discussed the limitations of philosophy in analyzing the reality while discussing about linguistic turn (Wagner,2003:168-79). The next section attempts to understand the epistemic nature of interesectionist approach in the changing context of political economy.

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## 14.5 CAPITALISM AND PRODUCTIONS OF NEO-COLONIALISM AND NEO- IMPERIALISM

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Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge argued that “Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analysing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes in social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves” (Collins and Sirma,2016:2).

One of the significant perspectives on intersectionality in which a number of scholars have attempted to analyse intersectionality in the context of wealth-gap across various social markers of communities (Collins and Sirma, 2016:15). In other words, it is observed that the wealth gap has to be understood beyond going the category of class. It is analysed that “When civil rights activists speak about race, they are told, they need to think about class as well. When anti-racist feminists focus on the problems of gendered racism, they are also told to include class. So...when formulating class inequality, one should have race and gender in view as well. *Capital is intersectional*. It always intersects with the bodies that produce that labour. Therefore, the accumulation of wealth is embedded in the racialized and engendered structures that enhance it” (Eisentein, cited in Collins and Sirma, 2016:16). Intersectionality, therefore, is analysed as a conceptual tool which has the potential to analyse “global capitalism”(Collins and Sirma, 2016:18). Therefore, solidarity across social movements can be achieved through intersectionist approach (Collins and Sirma, 2016:29).

Intersectionalist approach, for Collins and Sirma, has two, major aspects. It is theorized as a critical inquiry and categorized as a “critical praxis”. According to Collins and Sirma, “Intersectionality as a form of critical praxis refers to the ways in which people either as individuals or as part of groups produce, draw upon, or use intersectional frameworks in their daily lives-as everyday citizens with jobs and families as well as institutional actors within public schools, colleges and universities, religious organizations and similar venues”(Collins and Sirma, 2016:32). It is further analysed as something which can be internal as well as external to academy. It thus operates in the form of critical inquiry. Hence, intersectionalist approach as a critical praxis and critical enquiry transcends the “scholar-activist divide” (Collins and Sirma, 2016:32).

Sociologist, Bornie Thornton Dill described intersectionality as “the intellectual core of diversity work” (Dill, cited in Collins and Sirma, 2016:34). Dill examined the interlinkages between critical investigation and critical praxis as central to the solidarity between social actors (Dill, cited in

Collins and Sirma, 2016:35). It is opined that “what I (Dill) take from these interviews is that work at the intersections is an analytical strategy, approach to understanding human life and behaviour rooted in the experiences and struggles of disenfranchised people. It is also an important tool linking theory with practice that can aid in the empowerment of communities and individuals”. Dill shared the aforementioned perspective in relation to the respondents of her pioneering study on intersectionality (Dill, cited in Collins and Sirma, 2016:36).

The following section analyses the fragmentation of the homogenous construction of self in relation to multiple social/political subjectivities in relation to nation-state. Societies that have fought against colonialism are becoming the subjects of neo-colonialism through various political and economic ideologies. Thus, the empire is being re-casted across the various life worlds. The section captures the connections between self, nationalism, and intersectional approaches.

### Check Your Progress Exercise II

Note: I. Use this space given below to answer the question.

II. Compare your answer with the Course material of this Unit.

1. What is the meaning of *capital is intersectional*? Explain.

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2. What is understood as critical praxis?

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## 14.6 QUESTIONS OF SELF AND NATION

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Traditional understanding of body politic and nation are discussed in the epoch shattering genealogy of social theory. Such transition has redefined the old understanding of self and nation. It has produced rigorous understanding of the plural nature of self and nation. This section critically evaluates the major articulations in particular context of self and nation. Intersectionality has also become part of policy making (Manuel, cited in Collins and Sirma, 2016:45). For instance, The Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (IBPA) initiative, designed by the Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy at Simon Fraser University is one among such initiatives.



Democratisation of policy making knowledge among the stakeholders is ingrained in such initiative (Hankivsky, cited in Collins and Sirma, 2016:45). Social justice organizations that are working on genetic technologies and Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, Texas industrial areas foundation etc. are considered as organizations that believe in intersectional praxis (Collins and Sirma, 2016:44). Realm of According to Collins and Sirma, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights conceptualized social justice in intersectionalist fashion. Intersectionalist approach is also impacting the discourse of human rights (Collins and Sirma,2016:45).

Intersectionalist approach is also explored in the context of pedagogy. Sociologist Nancy Naples has analysed the pedagogical possibilities of intersectionality in the essay “Teaching Intersectionality Intersectionally”. Nancy created a course that explores the nuances of the intersectionalist approach. Similarly, the course was aimed to create grounds for intersectional pedagogy. According to Nancy, “few scholars discuss how to place different intersectional approaches in dialogue with one another.... I (Nancy) wish more scholars who assert intersectional analysis for their work would make their methodology explicit” (Naples, cited in Collins and Sirma, 2016:46). Naples deployed her course as a means to create interlinkages between philosophy of methods and practice. Naples draws her inspiration from the works of feminist sociologist, Dorothy Smith. Naples analyse the oeuvre of Dorothy as one of the most rigorous methodological grounds for research based on intersectionality. Therefore, Nancy Naples argues that there is certain “intersectional feminist praxis” in the work of Dorothy Smith that espouses the knowledge - based which is usually absent in institutionalized academic cultures. Such approach also shows the embedded nature of theory within the space of practice (Naples, cited in Collins and Sirma, 2016:46).

Struggles related to social justice and various forms of inequalities result in various forms of violence. It is observed that the diverse and complex nature of violence can be studied through intersectionality (Collins and Sirma, 2016:48). For instance, Kimberle Crenshaw’s article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Colour” articulates that intersectional approach and praxis are essential to address the “violence against the women of colour”. This kind of an intersectionalist approach through using its rigorous analysis about the relations between race, class and gender exposes the pitfalls of non-intersectionist thinking (Crenshaw, cited in Collins and Sirma, 2016:49). Some of these initiatives address the larger dimensions of violence based on intersectionalist approaches. For example, organization like the One Billion Rising for Justice, Centre for Intersectionality and Policy Studies at Columbia University, African American Policy Forum (AAPF), radical anti-violence forum like INCITE etc. conducted pioneering melanges of theory and practice across the lines of intersectional approach (Collins and Sirma, 2016:49-55). The following section reflects on the nature of intersectionist approach that deals with multiple realities.

### **14.6.1 Intersectional Approaches: Multiple Forms of Existence**

The previous sections unfolded the open-ended nature of the intersectional approach in analysing the diverse forms of existential predicaments and life worlds. Intersectionist approaches thus intervene in certain form of rethinking and detach itself from the heuristic tendencies of grand narratives. Intersectionist approach is conscious of its possibilities related to their understanding of the plural nature of societies. At the same time, they are aware of the limitations of this particular approach. Thus, intersectionist approach does not project itself as a metanarrative. On the contrary, it investigates the various forms of power and equations of communities across the globe. The following section demonstrates the various relations between social contexts and subordination.

### **14.6.2 Interlinkages between the Social Contexts and Subordination**

As we discussed in the earlier sections, social contexts become the unavoidable premise in analysing the various relations of domination and subordination. Hierarchies across various societies are gaining momentum according to the aspirations of communities, individuals and ideologies. It also has led to new forms of resistance and foregrounding of self-respect and identities. We have read an articulation related to social context, domination and subordination in the context of theoretical approaches and practices related to intersectionality. The following section examines the intersecting points of race, caste, ethnicity which is linked to theoretical interventions and praxis.

### **14.6.3 Politics of Race and Ethnicity**

Conflict between the old and the new social movements, political parties, forms of civil society etc have created new language of political articulations. These articulations have been shaped by globalization and deglobalization (Bello,2004). Postmodern scepticism towards metanarratives transformed the sphere of global politics. Conventional understanding of race is being replaced by the questions related to post-racial society. Anti-caste movements in India have carved own space after the post-Durban Conference (Visvanathan, 2001:2512-16). Debates on ethnicity is being re-read beyond the clash of civilizations. The conventional understanding of state is being questioned by the new perspectives on state and economism. Hence the classical theory too being critically analysed for its lack of rigour in engaging with the various dimension of globalization. Global theory has created its own political vocabulary by not returning to the potentials of classical theories (Browning, 2011).

In the next section, we will study the ways in which the question of intersectionality is inherent in some of the theory as well as praxis-oriented perspectives from India.

## 14.7 INTERSECTIONALITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT: CASTE, CLASS AND GENDER

Indian society is unique due to its complex, social stratification. Hierarchy and differences are articulated through the various forms of caste, class and gender. In the pre-independence period, Savitribai Phule and Mahatma Jotiba Phule are the first the intellectuals who explored the interlinkages between caste, class, gender and region (Sarma, cited in Collins and Sirma, 2016:3-4). If we read the existing available work written by them, we can argue that the intersectionality approach of caste, class and gender was addressed by them through praxis. Let us read some more scholars who discussed the Indian debates on class, caste and gender in succinct manner. Gopal Guru articulated the larger context of dalit women's assertions around the category of difference as a response to the projection of difference by the dominant women's movement. Guru further differentiated the external as well as internal facets that determine dalit women's articulations. This debate was raised in relation to the Beijing conference. The emphasis is on the internal as well as external factors that decide the nature of such domination/subordination of non-dalit/dalitmen/women. Internal factors, according to Guru, are the patriarchal dimensions within the dalit community that legitimize the oppression of dalit women. External factors are non-dalit aspects that normalize the oppression of dalit women (Guru, 1995: 2548-50)

Dalit feminism thus departed from the mainstream, hegemonic Indian feminism for not considering the relations between caste and gender and draws energy from Ambedkar's work. Dalit feminist standpoint, for Sharmila Rege, refers to the agency that is grounded in the struggles and praxis of dalit women. Similarly, the dalit feminist standpoint does not detach itself from other collective struggles for recognition and self-dignity. It has to engage itself with broad spectrum of struggles. In other words, non-dalit feminist can identify with the theory and praxis of dalit feminists by re-positioning themselves as dalit feminists. It is also analysed that such dalit feminist standpoint should not lead to divisive, identity politics that subvert the larger dimensions of the emancipation of dalit women (Rege, 1998: 39-46). However, intersectionality, for Irudayam S.J, Aloysius, Jayashree P. Manghubhai and Joel G.Lee, is essential to unveil the multifaceted nature of class, caste and gender dimensions of lives of dalit women.

Gender and class questions operate through the labour and social location of dalit women. Untouchability accelerates the discrimination and violence via the intersections of class, caste and gender. Sexuality of dalit women is being controlled through the re-socialized versions of Brahmanic patriarchy (Aloysius, Jayashree and Joel, 2006: 47-57). Dalit women do problematize the culture through their voices against Brahmanic patriarchy. According to Susie Tharu, writings of dalit women on the caste and gender provides cogent account of caste patriarchy than the reductionist understanding of patriarchy in hegemonic, women's writings. Through such kind of critical interventions, Dalit women writers and intellectuals are re-articulating dalit predicaments as well as women's predicaments in rigorous fashion (Tharu, 2014:152-59). Thus, caste, class and gender determine the ideology and practice of

patriarchy. Democracy is being challenged through the fractured nature of gender quality and caste. The aforementioned perspectives demonstrate the nature of intersectionist deliberations grounded in Indian context. One can argue that the intersectionality approaches in Indian framework changed the discourse of Indian feminism and other disciplines as well.

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## 18.8 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit, you have read the historical and epistemological trajectory of intersectionality approach. It deals with various forms of inequality. We discussed the social and political dimensions of intersectionality approaches. We have read its methodological nature as well. Moreover, this Unit explains the intersectionality approach in the context of political economy. It also shows us the plural as well as global re-readings of intersecting identities, and distinct nature of life worlds of diverse communities. It makes us understand the approaches of intersectionality in Indian context.

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## 18.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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- 1) Explain how different scholars on intersectionality approaches explored from the perspectives of identities, representations, and inequalities.
- 2) Discuss the relationship between the global debates on intersectional approaches.
- 3) Analyse the nature of dalit feminism in comparison to dominant feminism in order to understand intersectionality approaches.

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# UNIT 15 CONSTRUCTION OF RACE, SEXUALITY, AND CASTE

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## Structure

- 15.0 Introduction
- 15.1 Learning Outcomes
- 15.2 Intersectionality as a Conceptual Tool
  - 15.2.1 Intersection of Gender, Race and Sexuality
  - 15.2.2 Race and its Misconceptions
  - 15.2.3 Eugenics, Gender and Race
  - 15.2.4 Race and Sexuality
- 15.3 Race, Caste and Sexuality: Reading Through Literary Texts
- 15.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.5 Unit End Questions
- 15.6 References
- 15.7 Suggested Reading

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## 15.0 INTRODUCTION

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Humans live in a society which is governed by various socio-cultural and political categories and these categories affect their lives in different ways. To a significant extent, the social and cultural setting into which an individual is born determines her/his approach to life and society. Thus, the given society with its distinctions and complexities of governance determines an individual's attitude towards life. The societal distinctions based on social, economic, or political grounds are either resented or recognised by the members of the given society. By and large, the socio-cultural distinctions result in oppression, which in turn benefits one group while the group is suppressed. It is due to the social oppression that each and every society is stratified into groups based on race, class, gender, sexuality, caste, etc. Social oppression camouflages life and defines that its winners as meritorious and more deserving. Through these types of systems individuals in superior positions benefit from it. In this Unit, you will learn about the notion of multiple marginalisations on the basis of race, gender and sexuality. It will also introduce you to the concept of intersectionality and its significance to understand the interconnection between gender, race and sexuality.

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## 15.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After studying this Unit, you would be able to:

- Understand the basic concepts related to race, caste and sexuality;
- Engage with the debates related to race, caste and sexuality in the context of gender;
- Explain the concept of intersectionality and its significance with gender;



and

- Analyse the interconnections of race, caste, sexuality and gender in larger socio-cultural settings.

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## 15.2 INTERSECTIONALITY AS A CONCEPTUAL TOOL

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Intersectionality is a key concept in gender studies because feminist scholars played a key role in its early development which you have already read in the previous unit. Gender Studies has come a long way in its universal acceptance as an academic discipline. The concept of "gender" has played a definitional role in its development in early years. Today in the similar manner, the concept of intersectionality has come to constitute its basic content and form. This concept emerged out of the internal critique of white liberal feminism offered by black feminists and feminists of colour. It was argued that liberal feminists have universalized their position and have produced a hegemonic politics of white western liberal feminism. In one sense it is very much an extension of the logic of feminism as a critique of patriarchy. Patriarchy as one knows is constitutive of not only gender, but also race and caste. What the concept of intersectionality did is that it unpacked its many layers and constituents neatly tucked into the feminists epistemology of the liberal and socialist kind. It started by enlisting the experiences of women within capitalist patriarchy as important elements of epistemology in research.

Early feminists had developed tools to uncover or reveal the strategies of mainstream masculine epistemology which subsumed the experiences of women and concealed the exclusionary tactics of liberal politics. At the level of construction of knowledge, the intersectional approach includes and differentiates the experience of repression suffered by black women and other marginalised groups. It provides it a definite epistemological standpoint. **Angela Davis** coming from the critical theory background underlined the significance of the oppression of black people and women in feminist theorizing. The term "intersectionality" was coined by **Kimberle Williams Crenshaw**, a Black feminist scholar in 1989. She offered a critique of administration of law in the USA for failing to acknowledge Black women's unique experience of racism and sexism as a simultaneous process and prejudice. She clearly argued that differences between the experiences of white and black women exist and that there is no category of universal woman. Racism and sexism is mixed in its oppressive outcome for black women as they reinforce each other. The same can be argued in the case of caste in India. The oppression a dalit women faces is categorically different from that faced by a sawarna women. Thus, any law that does take this difference into consideration, it cannot deliver justice to these women. Though the concept was developed in the field of law, soon it found reverberation in other areas of feminist theorizing. Now intersectionality as a theoretical concept rooted in the social experience of marginalized groups stood for considering the notion of difference equally seriously. The universal experiences must be made sense only through the consideration of the

uniqueness of the particular.

It traces its roots to the oppression of women of colour in the societal framework, gradually extending its scope to other aspects of social identity in relation to oppression. It is defined as the interrelated nature of social organisations, such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group. It is a theoretical framework for understanding the discrimination and privilege inherited by a person because of a combination of factors or the socio-political identities upon her/him. It is, thus, used to identify the privileges and discriminations faced by people due to the combination of certain socio-political factors including race, caste and sexuality.

### 15.2.1 Intersections of Gender, Race and Sexuality

The development of studies in Black feminism in the 1970s bears proof of the intersections between race and sexuality. Writers such as **Toni Morrison**, **Audre Lorde**, **Alice Walker**, and **Patricia Hill Collins** advocate the intersections of this thought. Texts on Blacks and feminism such as *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) by Frederick Douglass, a former slave, and *A Room of One's Own* (1929) by **Virginia Woolf**, focused on the problems of Blacks from the male point of view and white women respectively. Sexual oppression and exploitation of the Black women remain unchanged even within the newly conscious, Black families and communities. Thus, the Black feminist thought, in a way, interrogated the masculinist biases in Black thought and the feminist biases in the feminist theory. Patricia Hill Collins defined Black feminist thought as “specialized knowledge created by African-American women which clarifies a standpoint for and of Black women” (1990:40). It addresses issues of oppression of Black women in the family as well as at the workplace. It also addresses the issue of the portrayal of Black women as matriarchs, ‘mammies’ and the exploitation of Black women as sexual objects.

#### *Defining race and racialization*

This section is adapted from Unit 3 of the Course MWG 004: Gendered Bodies and Sexualities. ‘Race’ refers to genetically transmitted characteristics such as skin colour, facial features, hair texture and body type that are supposedly associated with distinct groups of people (Turner, 2006, p. 490). The concept of race existed only nominally prior to the late 18th Century, at a time when European colonisation of the new world was at its peak (Darity, 2008, p.2). Early science’s attempt in confirming ‘natural differences’ are now discredited for their scientific content and for their role in creating and stabilizing racial stereotyping. The extension of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution to social Darwinism helped reproduce the myth that some groups (emphasising race) were at a ‘better’ stage of evolution than others, and it was only ‘natural’ that they were going to dominate certain other ‘less fit’ groups and races (Borgatta and Montgomery, 2000, p. 2330). Racialisation occurs when differences between human beings are simplified and transformed into discrimination that has social, political, cultural and psychological significance (Dominguez, 1994). For instance, when we treat

white-skinned persons as being superior to dark-skinned people we are attaching extra values to different skin colour. Racialisation is sometimes reproduced through colonisation ideologies, institutions, social practices and even in linguistic practices. Hence, it can be understood that race, racialisation, and racialized body are all interlinked and products of social institutions and practices. Let look at some of the misconceptions which are associated with the notion of race and make some groups privileged over the other in the next section.

### 15.2.2 Race and its Misconceptions

There are many misconceptions about race. This section will examine some of the more prominent misconceptions: the scientific construction of ‘pure races’, the social construction of race and its effects, and Jewishness as ‘race’.

***The Scientific Construction of ‘Pure Races’*** -Race as a matter of biological phenomenon, gets communicated into the public discourse with the growth of modern science. Race as a biological fact was severely challenged in the post-war period. To quote David Skinner, “social science became increasingly suspicious not just of the argument that biology determined race inequalities but of any attempt to discuss race and biology together” (2007, p.933). Hence, the construction of scientific racism was challenged within the discipline of sociology. According to Skinner (2007), in the past the certain movement such as Darwinism and eugenics had played a significant role in the construction of modern notion of ‘race’, in which scientific knowledge, perspectives and methodologies have negatively reinforced the divisions among people as natural, fixed and absolute. Science that not only has viewed race difference as an objective biological category but also put barriers towards human capabilities, mobility and behaviour. Intermixing over centuries has meant that ‘pure races’ do not exist anywhere in the world. People of different ‘races’ have in common as much genetic similarity as people of the same ‘race’. This is because genetic differences between individuals do not correspond to different racial characteristics (Bruce & Yearley, 2006, p.252). Each criterion for creating a typology of races would result in a different grouping of races. For example, the epicanthic eye fold is supposedly the distinctive feature among East Asians, but with a consistent application of this criterion the San Bushmen of South Africa would also be classified as East Asian. To illustrate further, skin colour helps distinguish some Norwegians from the Masai’s of East Africa. But it also distinguishes Norwegians from the Turks, both of whom are considered ‘white’. So also, skin colour distinguishes Masais from the San Bushmen (both the Masai and the San Bushmen are native to Africa), whose olive complexion has a closer resemblance to the Turks than the much darker Masai’s (Borgatta and Montgomery, 2000, p.2331). Therefore, facial features, skin colour, hair texture cannot be criteria in making racial categories.

### ***Social Construction of Race and its Effects***

Though science failed to prove convincingly that there was any basis for racial difference, it did generate a variety of social beliefs that people of one race may be superior to those of another. These socially constructed ideas

have had a major impact in the real interactions between people of different regions. While contemporary genetics confirms that phenotypical traits such as skin colour, facial features, curliness of hair, or body type are no guarantee of genetic similarity, racial categories are often a creation of people's beliefs and not products of nature (Turner 2006, p. 490). Separating humans into races continues to have consequences for persons belonging to different groups. Race has significance because people think it exists and act accordingly. Racial distinctions gain meaning when people attach significance to them. Race continues to have uneven consequences on life-chances, health, and probability of being jailed for people of different races (Darity, 2008, p. 2). Let us look at the specific case of misconceptions involving Jewish people and the question of race.

### 15.2.3 Eugenics, Gender and Race

Eugenics is the idea of maintaining purity of race. In different contexts across the world, women have been burdened with the task of maintaining purity of races. Birth control measures have been often identified as methods by which the purity of a race can be maintained. Kline provides details of the relationship between the female moron (Goddard used the term 'moron' to describe people with a mental age of eight to twelve in the context of racial discrimination and equated with feeble-mindedness among women) and the ideal of a better race by referring to the panic of female promiscuity in turn of the century America (see Stubblefield, 2007, p.177). While quarantining of the female 'high-grade moron' was initially considered as an effective strategy to keep the race pure, soon sterilisation was seen as the appropriate measure of curtailing female promiscuity as even the middle classes were identified as being susceptible to this infecting presence (Kline, 2001). This form of eugenics is prevalent in the history of the world in many cultural contexts where the threat of some form of human defect has motivated the implementation of female sterilisation – for instance, the case of female leprosy infected patients in leper homes and hospitals in many parts of India in the first half of the twentieth century. Other examples of racialisation of the female body include: racialisation of birth control and racialised tests of contraceptives.

**Population Control:** In USA, in 1950s and 60s, women of colour were subjected to forced sterilisation in different parts of the country. Sterilisation was seen as a cure for poverty and overpopulation. It was also an attempt to prevent certain sections of society from reproducing so as to maintain the pure race and class of people. Forced sterilisations were also underway during the Emergency in India between 1975 and 1977. The number of sterilisations in the country between 1974 and 1975 was 1.354 million, 2.669 million for 1975-76 and 8.261 million for 1976-77. Large scale vasectomies were performed by forcing men into sterilisation camps. Though the sterilisation drives focused more on men, the greater responsibility for family planning was placed on women.

**Racialised Testing of Contraceptives:** Contraceptive testing in poor populations continued into the latter half of the twentieth century. Evading

medical ethics, makers of injectable contraceptives such as Norplant and Depo-Provera conducted trials in countries like India and Brazil. Various hazardous contraceptives have been promoted in developing countries and for women of colour and indigenous women. There was severe backlash from feminist groups in both contexts as women were not informed about the harmful side-effects of these injectable. African-American women's activists groups in the US believe that medical ethics are flouted by medical institutions and pharmaceutical companies as they test contraceptives on women without their knowledge. An American national activist group that calls itself 'INCITE: Women of Colour Against Violence' carries on its website the following warning:

***QUINACRINE: A DANGEROUS FORM OF CHEMICAL STERILIZATION THAT CAN BE ADMINISTERED DURING A PELVIC EXAMINATION . . . WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE. (Source: <http://www.incite-national.org/index.php?s=124> accessed on 22 July 2012)***

#### 15.2.4 Race and Sexuality

You have so far discussed the interrelation between gender and race. Now, we will be covering another dimension, i.e., sexual practices which are shaped by the racial construction.

**'The Down Low'**- The 'down low' is a term used to refer primarily to African American men who are secretly having sex with other men while maintaining heterosexual relationships or marriages. Included within this concept is a racialized depiction of men who have sex with men, as well as an understanding of masculinity because these men are assumed to not be effeminate and may perhaps be portraying hyper-masculine depictions such as the 'homothug'. Another significant aspect of the down low is that these men do not construct themselves as gay or bisexual, but as heterosexual men (O'Brien, 2009). The term 'down low' was used within the black community in the US in the 1990s to refer to men who were having sex with anyone other than their wives or girlfriends. In the 2000s, however, it has come to refer to the sexual practices of men who have sex with men. In this social context, as Jodi O'Brien (2009) remarks, the term 'down low' is used to morally discredit black men because of the impact their behaviour has on 'innocent' black women. In the United States, more white men may identify themselves as homosexual or bisexual than black men. This is a likely indicator of the social privilege that white men experience when compared with black men and men of other racial groups. In terms of health, this also means that white men who identify as homosexual or bisexual are able to access HIV testing more easily than men who identify as homosexual or bisexual but belong to other races. O'Brien contends that men on the down low are also not likely to inform their female partners about the sexual risks the latter might be subjecting themselves to; the likelihood of increased susceptibility of these women to STDs is thus higher.

### Check Your Progress Exercise I

Note: I. Use this space given below to answer the question.

II. Compare your answer with the Course material of this Unit.

1. Define race as a socially constructed category.

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2. What is understood as “The Down Low”?

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### 15.3 RACE, CASTE AND SEXUALITY: READING THROUGH LITERARY TEXTS

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Society, both traditional and modern, are stratified on the basis of various complex factors, such as race, caste, gender, sexuality, etc. This creates layers of oppression which operates both at the macro (government, judiciary, media, education system) and micro (home, family, social interactions in everyday life) levels in society. Social oppression, thus leads to the marginalisation of a particular group and with time it is so marginalised that it is internalised by the society as natural. Race as a social category, thus, came into existence in the ‘white’ world, in particular, the USA, as a result of racial discrimination of the white people over the Black population. Other examples of such marginalisations are not rare in human history based on gender and sexuality. Apparently, with social revolution of different kinds, studies related to sexuality came into prominence in the United States following the Stone Wall Riots (1969) in New York. Accordingly, race and sexuality studies, as individual disciplines have drawn critical attention in the last six decades, but, in the recent past, Western academia has focused more on the interactions between race and sexuality based on the common grounds of subjugation, oppression, and subordination. The marginalisation of individuals is not limited to race, gender, and sexual preferences alone, and is not specific to the USA either, but spreads to different geographical and cultural landscapes. For instance, in India, social discrimination has been historically persisted due to the prevalence of caste system. The caste system is based on the ideology of purity and pollution and draws parallels with race studies on the basis of discrimination it practiced what are birth and descent based. In recent years, much of literature and cultural theories have shifted the focus on race, caste and sexuality. These theories continue to grow and

have then become dominant intellectual pursuit in the literature and social science disciplines.

Each of the terms, *viz*, race, sexuality, and caste, has been defined individually but a close analysis of these three reflect a similar kind of social construction around them, based on the notion of superiority, marginalisation, identity formation, and discrimination, giving rise to intersectionality studies. With the growth of Critical Race Studies, Queer Studies, and movements like the Black Aesthetics, Harlem Renaissance, Stone Wall Riot, the emergence of the minority or marginalised groups are explored in recent scholarship to negate the historical errors, and to provide rights and privileges to individuals denied to them based on discriminations.

Discrimination based on the colour of skin and ethnicity traces back to the sixteenth century when the Black population was enslaved by the Americans in the New World. An analysis of the history of slavery reflects that the Africans were bought to aid in the establishment of an American colony. The features which characterised a black slave life included inhuman working conditions, frequent tortures, and legal penalties, auction of children, sexual exploitation of Black women, the breakup of Black families, and the abusive relationship shared by the Blacks and the Whites. Slowly, organisations to fight slave tradition were formed in the 1790s, and on 02 March 1807, a legislation was passed which banned the African slave trade. Accordingly, with revolution and social mobilisations, different literature describing the miseries of the slave population also came into prominence. Phyllis Wheatley (1753-1784) was one of the first known Black women poets, who presented the life narratives of slavery.

Parallels can be drawn between the oppression faced by the Blacks in the Western context and by the Dalits in the Indian context. In India, dalit communities have been marginalised because of the caste system which divides people on the basis of the work done by them. The practice of untouchability is a product of the caste system which has been prevalent through the ages in India. Phule's book *Gulamgiri* (1873) criticises the caste system in India and draws parallels to the Americans who have worked for the liberation of the American slaves. Similarly, Ambedkar in his *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) critiques the Hindu religion and its texts as malecentric in nature and thus suppressing women's interests. Gandhi worked towards abolishing the caste practices in India. In one of his articles, published in *Young India*, Gandhi says, "I do not believe in caste in its modern sense. It is an excrescence and a handicap on progress. Assumption of superiority by any person over any other is a sin against God and any man. Thus caste... is an evil" (*CWMMG* Vol.46:302). Apparently, the caste system, and racial discrimination bear similarities in the way one group oppresses the other based on their class and occupation and the other based on the colour of the skin respectively. It is important here to note that, while the Black and the Dalit suffer oppression, it is the women on both sides who are doubly oppressed, first as a Black or Dalit, and secondly as a woman. And if they happen to be homosexuals, then they suffer a triple oppression.

The rise of Black feminism and Dalit literature especially by women are filled with instances of lived oppressions that shake the very foundation of humanity. We find that factors such as race, caste, and sexuality are interlinked, and the emergence of studies in the field of Blackfeminism, queer theory, elaborately reflect the intersectionality of the principles of oppression, subjugation, and subordination of the less privileged people by those acquiring privilege in the given society. Somewhere behind these interconnecting and intersecting identities of race, caste, and sexuality, are the definitions of normativity defined by the society.

In the last few decades, with the emergence of a set of critical theories and the promotion of liberalism, the theme of race, sexuality, and caste has come to the fore through literature, movements and popular culture. While race and sexuality as literary and cultural themes are found both in Eastern and Western literatures, the theme of caste is mostly reflected in Indian literature. Dalit literature, as a category, reflects the oppression prevalent in India due to the caste system.

In the Indian context, works by Dalit women writers present the oppression and subjugation that the prevailing caste system has imposed upon them. *Untouchable* (1935) by Mulk Raj Anand, *Joothan* (1997) by Om Prakash Valmiki, Sharan Kumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* (2003) and *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* (2004), Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs* (2008), and Bama's *Karukku* (2012) are literary and cultural texts that present the inherent system of caste oppression in India. For instance, *Karukku* (2012), delineates the theme of oppression faced by Dalit women in different stages of their life. Bama compares the life of a Dalit woman in Indian society to the double-edged stem of a palm leaf. She describes how as a child she had to face discrimination in school because of her caste eventually leading her to feel humiliated for being born as an untouchable. In her memoir, she highlights how Dalit women are misbehaved by the Naicker, who belonged to the upper caste. Bama says that the Naicker children were taught to disobey the Dalits right from the beginning. The Naicker even did not recognise the Dalits even if they were educated. Such types of instances are replete in her memoir, where we find her constantly fighting against the caste system in order to have an identity of their own.

“My history is my mother's life, ... My mother is an untouchable, while my father is a high caste,... I am condemned, branded illegitimate” (Limbale2007:ix). This quote from Limbale's *The Outcaste* (2007) shows the Dalit's quest for identity. The caste system similar to the race system in the West oppresses and marginalises the people based on descent and colour, and sexuality as a social category adds to these oppressions and marginalises the individuals away from the mainstream society. The incidents of discrimination and oppression highlight a brutal and direct exercise of power, where the intersections of race, caste, and sexuality, do not leave any space either for expression or dissent.



## Check Your Progress Exercise II

Note: I. Use this space given below to answer the question.

II. Compare your answer with the Course material of this Unit.

1. What is understood as doubly oppression?

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2. How does dalit literature articulate women's oppression? Discuss with the help of relevant texts.

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## 15.4 LET US SUM UP

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The Unit discussed the concepts of caste, sexuality, race in relation to gender. These concepts have been discussed within the framework of intersectionality. The discussion of intersectionality becomes significant in the area of gender studies as it helps to renew a sense of justice for marginalised people of colour, caste and sexuality. The Unit also analysed concepts of race, caste and sexuality through literary texts and narratives to be able to build critical scholarship in the area of gender studies.

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## 15.5 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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1. How do race, caste, and sexuality intersect, and in what ways are they responsible for the construction of the present society? Illustrate with examples from everyday life.
2. How and in what ways are the principles of race and caste similar?
3. How do gender constructions differ in relation to race and sexuality? Explain with the help of suitable examples.

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