
UNIT 20 GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

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20.1 INTRODUCTION

The biological difference between man and woman is generally the basis of defining them in two diametrically opposite social categories as male and female and thereby attributing to them the characteristics of masculine and feminine. This sexual difference becomes the basis of many unscientific, irrational and artificial differences between man and woman. The way these differences are produced and then rationalised is what is known as gender relationship. Thus while sex is natural and biological and one can do very little to change it, gender is a socio-cultural phenomenon and hence changes its definition, etc., according to its socio-cultural locale. A pioneering feminist Ann Oakley has tried to state this in these terms: "Gender is a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification of men and women into 'masculine' and 'feminine.'" Gender reflects the existing power relationship in any given society. The power relations in society are of unequal nature, where women are given secondary position to men. What seems to be the way out? What are some of the ways in which the solution to this massive inequality has been sought to be overcome? These are some of the issues that we shall deal with in this unit.

20.2 WOMEN AND GENDER

According to the historians of gender relations, women have been given a lower socio-economic and political status in social hierarchy. Their status is determined by the politically and economically dominant power which is quite often wielded by the male be it as an individual or as a group. In 1974 Kate Millet in her book *Sexual Politics* defined this structure of power as 'patriarchy'. The way a girl child is socialised into accepting the powerful male authority has been, one of the key themes of the sociologists and historians. Another pioneering feminist, philosopher Simone De Beauvoir in her monumental book *Second Sex* tried to unravel this aspect of our social life. There have been, therefore, serious attempts to understand, and as a Marxist and a feminist would say, to break the power relationship so that women could come out of their subordinated position to taste the freedom of opportunity, life and happiness.

Patriarchal system impinges on every sphere of a woman's life. In modern economy for example, woman, as woman, neither has easy access to the formal sectors of employment nor is there generally an equal wage structure for both men and women, i.e., women were paid less than the men for the same job. They also lack access to space and institutions to express themselves. At home, from selecting a partner to planning the size of the family, one finds, her power of decision-making is quite often circumscribed by familial, societal or community rules and norms. Finally, access to facilities of better health care and nutrition is also preferentially distributed. Women, either as girl children or as pregnant women, or merely as women, do not get the required attention. This gets reflected in the rate of mortality and exposure to illness.

In cultural arena too, from religious discourse to the portrayal in media, women quite often are reduced to the role of what is called secondsex or quite often treated merely as an object or a commodity.

20.3 DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER

Development has been differently defined as, progress, positive change in the socio-economic position of the people, a community or a nation. In the Third World and in most of the erstwhile colonised countries, it was the demand for development and a future developmental vision that defined their movement for liberation. In India, for example, the nationalist leaders had already arrived at a consensus on the developmental path that the country would choose once it gets independence. The idea of self-reliance both the ability to take independent economic decisions and follow independent path of development was shared by leaders across continents. The Marxist understanding of the primacy of economic basis of exploitation added an extra merit to such ideas. For the feminist who shared the Marxian analysis as well as politics therefore the idea of development was not something contrary to their basic programme. If development was supposed to change the economic bases on which gender relationship was defined then it was presumed that development was the preferred mode of changing those bases.. It is therefore not a coincidence that large women's movements have never been anti-developmental.

This vision of development was, however, not merely economic progress but was closely related to the political expression of independence. Democracy was: closely tied to this vision of independence. Democracy and democratic institutibns, for example, as Constitution framers of India thought, were the greatest guarantee of women's rights and well-being. As experience has shown, it is the democratic system which has provided the women space to make their individual as well as collective voice felt, No wonder that we have found that the women's voices were quite strong in the movement for restoration of democracy in Latin America, Asian and African countries.

The state occupied quite a central place in the developmental vision. First, it was the leadership of the anti-colonial movement which came to occupy the state apparatus and therefore there was some amount of a close relationship between the leadership, the state and the masses. Second, it was only the state which could have mobilised resources at such large quantum and therefore became quite crucial.

Economic development and political development was quite often co-terminus with the drive for modernising the state, the society and its institutions. Equality, the legal rights of man and woman, and idea of citizenship were the key to such modernisation. For example, in Egypt it was Gamel Abdul Nasser's administration which expanded the economy and brought large women work force out of their traditional working environment, guaranteed them equal rights and since 1954 guaranteed equal wages. Similarly, in Tunisia where it was the moderniser and secular president Borghuiba and in Iraq it was the Baath socialist party which tried to bring about modernisation by developing their economy. In India too it was the state which initiated the first reform measure when after a lot of debate and discussion, it reformed the Hindu Succession Act in 1956 in which women were given equal right of inheritance.

There were two predominant strategies for development followed by the less developed and ex-colonial countries. First, there was a sense of urgency in correcting the disarticulation effected by the colonial countries. Creating an industrial base for the future industrial and economic activity in this sense was a natural outcome. This prioritised the heavy industries sector and an import substitution strategy. In many countries, like India, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan and even in Iran, it was the state which initiated and supervised the entire activity through planning resource mobilisation as well as resource distribution.

The second strategy adopted was export led-growth. Followed mainly in smaller sized countries, it entailed a close linking with the global economy and specialising in the goods and services produced for the world market. This was followed mainly in the East Asian countries, Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, etc. Korean economy which was even in the 1960s was a sleepy economy could get into the dynamic fold and made huge strides.

20.4 AGENCIES OF DEVELOPMENT

There is a close link between the change of the overall status of women and the autonomy that she gains through changes in some crucial areas of her life, i.e., access to education, better healthcare, access to gainful employment and opportunity to take decisions, etc. The society, as is empirically known, does not grant these without struggle. Thus, there is a vicious circle. The three agencies which seem to help her in this struggle to break this circle and thereby help her gain the required autonomy are namely, the *individual* (she herself), the *community* that she lives in and in the modern times *the state*. In recent times there have been other agencies, the United Nations, the World Bank, and multinational aid and developmental agencies which are supra-state or multinational agencies. However, at the moment, in most places, they try and invoke primarily the agencies of self, community and the state in furthering the interests and development of women.

There is a strong belief, i.e., the libertarian, which insists that it is the individual and her merit that alone count. Any intervention by the community and the state on her behalf, they argue, proves not only counterproductive in the final analysis but also detrimental to her well-being. This proves helpful in pursuing policies, which advocate the state's withdrawal from any welfare activities. It was made popular during the early eighties with people like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan who argued for what is known as complete freedom to the individual and the withdrawal of the state from affairs of individual

freedom. Thus women too have to fend for themselves according to this logic and only the meritorious would come up.

There is another stand, i.e., the communitarian view, which has gained some popularity these days due to two factors. First, the most powerful women's movement over the last three decades have been fought by women with the help of the local communities. They have thus inspired other struggles. Second, the western aid agencies too are propagating the communitarian idea in their programmes. Quite often they are projected in opposition to *the* state. The basic proposition is that women's development and freedom lies in the community itself where rights are enshrined. It is therefore the community which should be galvanised to further the development of the women. On closer analysis, however, one finds that the natural or traditional communities in most places are bound up with patriarchal normative universe from which the women could hardly get true justice. The religious communities, village communities or even artificial communities like trade unions or other professional bodies are hardly the epitome of equality between men and women. Quite often the religious communities have made the life of women worse as has happened with the traditional Hindu or for that matter Muslim and Christian social life. The women in countries like Algeria, Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco were gaining freedom and equality under modern regimes till the Islamicists arrived in the scene in the eighties. So is the case with the Catholic communities where the women are still struggling for their sexual rights or rights of divorce. There are matrilineal communities where women possess a lot of rights but a close look would reveal that the matters of power and political decisions are controlled by men. There is also a continuous effort to wrest from women's control even the residual powers. Thus, the claim that the communitarian makes, i.e., that it is the communities which ensures real freedom for women, seems, on a careful analysis, not true to a great extent. However, the communities of women, have proved to be a successful contribution of the feminist movement. This not only gives women the much needed political and social space to express themselves freely but also paves the way for political and social mobilisation.

In modern times it is the state which has most often played the crucial role in enabling the women to access those facilities and resources that facilitate her autonomy. However, the dilemma remains that when the powers inimical to women's interest capture the state, women are left to fight one more agency. This time it is superior to all others by virtue of having a monopoly over coercive authority. When the state goes to war, for example, with another state it can be harsh to the rights of women. Iraq under the Baath party rule in the seventies gave women tremendous autonomy and facilitated their development. By the end of 1970s 29 per cent of the medical doctors, 49 per cent dentists, 70 per cent of the pharmacists, 46 per cent of the teachers and university lectures, 33 per cent of the government staff and 45 per cent farm employees were women. Maternity leave was generous and pregnant women had their jobs protected. But the War with Iran in 1980 changed the state's attitude. Now they were told that they should bear five children to narrow the gap between Iraq's population (15 million people) and Iran's (47 million).

From a very prominent one to a supportive role, the state figured in all paradigms of development. In the socialist model of development, the state played not only a central role but was also the organiser and mobiliser of production in society. Market was seen to

have no role in the decisions of production. However, in cases like that of India, state was thought to be pivotal and acted as such. Here state not only acted along side the market but at the same time it played a socially emancipatory role too. On the other side of the spectrum societies like the USA where state seems to have a withdrawn role, in the final analysis it is the state which comes in basic developmental agent in both infrastructural as well as in the domain of infrastructural facilities for the development.

However, the state has a significant role to play in the developing countries: Even in the Scandinavian countries, it is the state, which has come up to mobilise the social resources to provide some of the largest welfare measures to the women, In Latin America for example, it was the state, which provided education to the largest chunk of women. Many of the West Asian countries played a crucial role in changing the status of women. Here the state has to fight the family and community ties. Iran, Iraq, Tunisia, Turkey, etc, helped to bring women out in the productive space and to attain some amount of autonomy.

In India, for example, like many other colonised countries, the leadership of the freedom movement inherited the state apparatus of the erstwhile rulers. They tried to reorient those structures into taking up the role of new developmental tasks. Gender and particularly the development of women was also considered as a responsibility of state. The women's movement in India for example till today keep forcing and demanding that the state should intervene more and more to bring equality between sexes in public places and work place, curb violence against women in both domestic and public places, and provide opportunities to women. However, the movement felt that making the state take up these tasks needs the presence of women in decision-making places and hence there are demands for guaranteeing women space in the otherwise male domain of legislature.

The idea of well-being sees an entrenched women's development in the development of her capabilities through which, it is argued, her freedom and development is ensured. These capabilities include those, which are essential for her survival as a human being also. Exploring gender and human development in India, Martha Nussbaum argues very strongly for an approach which seeks to raise the capabilities of the women and therefore their possibilities in warding off the exclusionary chances. She argues that the key to development of women is to provide them with the cover of justice because only in such a situation can these capabilities be ensured. There is a strong need for the fulfilment of what she tried to develop as the list of 'Central Human Functional capabilities'. The list includes, life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, control over one's own environment.

The fulfilment of these capabilities involves addressing the moral question too as it involves prioritising the fulfilment of such capabilities over something else. Also, it is the question of these human abilities exerting a moral claim in the political arena. The basic intuition from which the capability approach begins, in the political arena, is that certain human abilities exert a moral claim that should be developed. This begs the question as to "whom does this make the claim on?" And then one realises that for gender justice and development issues of larger society cannot be whisked away. They are as important as talking about the claim of capabilities, and there should be a democratic order to which these claims can be made.

And it is here that a humane exploitation-less society based on some normative horizon is striven for, the century-old women's movement has been a living testimony of how collective human endeavour can change the face of human civilisation from a patriarchal barbarity to a more equal and just society.

20.5 CRITIQUE OF DEVELOPMENT

Beginning with the anti-Vietnam War movement to the radical students' movement: in the USA and Europe, there were other events that were changing the world in the sixties. The growing environmental activism of the late 60s in the west and the cultural revolution in China with the massacre of the communists in Indonesia and other places and the intensification of the cold war and finally the defeat of the US forces in Vietnam were shaping the face of an entirely new world. The hike in the oil prices shocked the first world economy and there seemed to be a new confidence of the Third World countries.

On the other hand, the growing awareness of the issues and criticism by the women's movement gradually began to view the existing models of women's liberation critically. Ester Boserup's work, *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, for example, was a major eye opener. It argued that economic work of the female is never accounted for in the analysis of economic activities. Thus, the Green Revolution agricultural strategy was criticised. It was argued that it focused on technology and training of men while conveniently forgetting the women whose work, quite a substantial economic activity in the fields, was considered non-consequential. On the theoretical domain it meant there were efforts to: 1) bring about changes in the way the economic activity is perceived and, 2) broaden the concerns and issues of women so as to include the women of the Third World.

It was now argued by the feminist groups and women's movement in various countries, as they took cognisance of the experience and aspirations of the *middle class* European *white women* that some of the fundamental premises of the feminist movement was too limited. Any meaningful struggle for liberation, it was argued, must take into account the problems which women in the Third World face in their day to day life. The poor women of the Third World were doubly exploited. First, they are women and secondly, they come from Third World and poor background. Thus class and gender both fuse in them. Their issues were not merely related to domestic violence or demand for sexual choices but to the very basic human development items, i.e., education, health and employment. They needed to come out of the vicious circle of poverty which prevented them from even coming out of the tyranny of tradition. It began to be argued that for the end of subordination of the female, the beginning should be made from the lower end, i.e., the poor women of the Third World.

On the other hand, there have been efforts by the United Nations since 1975 (which was declared as the women's year) to bring the issues related to women in the major international forum and discuss the issues relating to their resolution even at a global level. As a result there has been a real internationalisation of the issues of women's development and freedom. The ensuing debate, in fact, forced many states and women's movement to have a relook at their programmes and priorities.

The Indian case is worth considering as it has made major contributions. The women's movement flourished during the anti-colonial struggle. The fact that the constitution had accepted equal rights to vote other equalities was a vindication of the fact that national movement had accepted the basic ethos of equality in 1947 itself. The focus of post-independence movement was to get the state involved more and more into the development programme in such ways as not to let women lag behind. It is for this reason they attacked the government to shed its welfarist approach. Since the mid-1970s, however, one can see two broad terrains in the women's movement. One that was part of the larger political economic movement and demanded more state's action in the issues of women. The other were the autonomous groups which took specific issues of women and organised people along those issues. Soon sharp divergences began to appear as one could see that the autonomous groups began attacking the development role of the state.

There have been strong criticisms of the idea of development. The ideas of modern industrialism, nation-state, and the scientific world view are closely associated with the idea of development which was the newest of all. The criticism came that all of them have worked against women. They have, it is argued, increased inequalities and deprived women of whatever control they earlier had over the resources of community or family. It is the modern state and its agencies which were supposed to have taken over those rights and powers. Similarly, the critique pointed out that the massive industrial complexes are antithetical to the women's interests. Technical complexes and technological world militates against some of the basic features of women's nature and interest. Thus the stream of environmental activism and one stream of feminism mingled and created a strong critique which came to be known as eco-feminism. Some of the feminist authors have shown India's Green Revolution as a classic example of how development was anti-women.

In the 1950s to the late 1970s, the Green Revolution swept the world. It focused on increasing food production through expanding the area under production and increasing yields from those areas already under production by using faster maturing and higher yielding seed varieties and higher inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. It resulted in dramatic increases in food production, and increased standard of living in some regions (increases in housing, electricity, transportation, etc.). Critics of the Green Revolution have pointed out that it has brought uneven distribution of benefits and its emphasis on new technologies in fact was creating more inequality between men and women. This also resulted in monoculture which meant less variety and therefore dependence on the market thereby making the lives of women more difficult than before. Similarly, with monocultures, crops also have become more vulnerable to pests, droughts, etc., and thus not only there is reduced food security at the local level but also environmental hazard such as increased salinity, etc, began to affect the life of the people. And in all this women were a major casualty.

The post-independent development in many a ex-colonised countries was also seen from the prism of socialism. It was argued that development was leading to a capitalist development which does not augur well for women as it was argued that capitalism is not only antithetical to gender justice, development which is leading to capitalism, but also not conducive to women's well-being. They show as vindication of their point, the wide spread practice of female foeticide in some of the relatively more developed states like Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat in India.

It was argued that during the 1950s and 60s development was considered merely a technical problem of raising productivity by technological input. It is said to have been lacking both political or ideological and even policy dimensions whereby women and children could be brought under the rubric of development. When women were included they were more often than not confined to the reproductive roles which was a stereotypical western understanding of the Third World women; No agency was given to women to voice their own understanding and concerns. At a more basic level they argued that initial concern for equality between women and men **was** based on the enlightenment ideals of a liberal western world which did not take into cognizance the women of the Third World. Here they were not only countering the male dominance but also poverty and other forms of exploitation and inequality. Thus, the concern in **even** what emerged as the feminist studies also began shifting to "poor women" and poverty alleviation **rather** than, the welfarist or pure humanitarian concerns. Women were now constructed as "vulnerable," as "victims," and as "invisible." Scholars and policy makers argued that one of the major reasons for the failure of different development projects was precisely this invisibility.

20.6 FROM WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT TO GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

The result of the criticism of development was that by 1986, at the end of the United Nation's initiative in which Indian experience and women's movement also had a contribution, there should be large scale and conscious effort to involve women into the development process and be given access to the formal sector of the economy. Its rationale was that development was failing because it is failing to take advantage of the labour of half of the population- that is, the labour of women. As a prescriptive analysis, income-generation and micro-enterprise projects become popular focus. Women's tune began to be seen as "elastic", in other words they **have** time to take on new projects. Thus, the incorporation into formal or **informal** sector as workforce was seen to be a solution to the vicious circle in **which** the women were.

At the strategic level, the Women in Development (WID) approach focused on women as a group and sought to address the exclusion of women **from** the development process. It emphasised that if development would only incorporate and include women's productive capacity, it would be much more efficient. Since the 1970s the world is no more the old world. Global environmental concerns, issues of smaller communities living in far off places like the villages in the Himalayan hills, or the Andean villages in South America or the Chiapas in Mexico or in the **African** continents, etc. were coming to fore in the discourse on development. The issue of power relationship, key to the **decision-making** process, also was gradually coming into open even in the discussion of women's issues. Starting with the German Greens, the concerns began to take shape in the women's movement as well as movements of different local communities in Asia; Africa and South America. From 1974, the women in the Garhwal Himalayas (India) got engaged in a long struggle against the felling of trees **by** Government contractors. As forest was key to the day to day livelihood in which it was women who **had** to struggle most, it was the women of the area who pioneered the movement. It was not a feminist movement so to say, but a struggle for livelihood, for a better and humane development. Soon the protest embraced other issues

but the protest which soon attracted outside attention became a focal point in concern over the livelihood issues which were intimately connected with the planning process and developmental concerns. Similar struggles dotted the South and Latin America where the 1970s was also the phase of a very bitter and powerful democratic upsurge as well as popular movements. Neo-liberal reforms had failed to provide a better life situation or employment opportunities and the end of the 1970s saw economies after economies in Latin America plunging into economic and financial crisis. The women became the greatest sufferers of these developments. As a result there grew a strong reaction to the idea that development itself is not a solution. Suspicion of the state too has surfaced in many quarters. Thus critique of component of development has taken the shape of a critique of development itself. A multitude of feminist movements across the world also added to the experience. They showed the deep negative impact of developmental work by the State or multinational agencies were doing on the lives of females at the local level. These experiences then got transferred into the theoretical domain.

All these have led to what in the theoretical domain began to be referred to as Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm. This would advocate not to look at women as just to be there to be inducted into some developmental programme but argue for looking at development as something completely different from how it has been perceived so far. It would argue for closer look into the structures of decision-making of development. One of the premises was that the paradigm that dictated development was defined and structured along patriarchal lines and quite often based on western models too which structurally are incapable of taking into account the concerns and issues of the non western women and hence paradigm has to be shifted.

One stream within this talked of autonomous spaces to be given more importance. It emphasised that self-reliant development is not possible within established structures which were definitely patriarchal. The large developmental and modernising projects were seen as more often detrimental to women's development and well-being and at the prescriptive level they favoured small, local and participatory projects where women's voice could be more decisive. Hence, instead of large governmental projects, small is argued to "beautiful and effective".

Empowerment of women was thought to be the only way to ensure their participation in their own development and this in turn was possible only when the concentration were to be small with an effective local level development vision. Thus, at the execution level it favoured non-governmental initiative which it was thought could bring in more of the participatory approaches, focused on small-scale women-only projects, to assure participation and prevent male domination. At the level of political struggle an autonomous movement of women has been projected as the only possible way to achieve more power to the women.

In this understanding, the crucial feature has been the attack on the idea of the traditional understanding of the domain of Private and Public in which women's work as well as life has been compartmentalised. It has been argued that in the final analysis this dual domain is instrumental in/women getting exploited on a daily basis. The male argument of being breadwinner rests on his work on the public domain. The women's work in the private

domain is economically not even valued and if she works outside as well, only the outside is valued. Therefore, the notion of public/private help sustaining an exploitative gender division.

The premise of this approach is also that women are "poor" and "victims". It somehow ignored a more dynamic analysis of the way the male domination is established by ascribing gender roles in the society. It spent quite a lot of energy attacking western models of development, capitalism and power relations. There have been shifts in the GAD in recent years and now people assert the need to investigate relationships among gender ideology, the sexual division of labour, women's subordination, and the operation of social, political and economic power. It draws on both the perspectives of the north and the south and emphasises the global diversity of women's experiences and interests. Influenced by the writings of "Third World" feminists, it acknowledged the need to understand gender relations on the ground. It emphasises the global inequalities and global systemic crises. It seeks to empower women through collective action in grassroots women's groups.

Shift is accompanied by a newly emerging notion of power which saw power relations not merely in grand scale between male and female but it argued that the relationships negotiate on everyday basis. Thus the struggle for the well-being of women has also to be on a day to day basis and on a micro level. The construction of the ideology of gender and assignment of gender roles is dictated by the power relation in the society and its negotiation, has also to be westing this power.

The consequences of these have been the increasing voices which argue for empowerment as the basic approach to women's issues. Emerging from the south are voices of Bina Agarwal, Vandana Shiva, Arturo Escobar, Maria Mies, etc.

At the strategic level GAD focused on women and men in relation to one another. GAD sees the subordinate status of women to men as determined by society as the core problem that needs to be addressed, and believes that focusing on women in isolation does not address the power issues that are at the core of the problem. For more information, see Kabeer (1994), who provides a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the evolution of the field of Women in Development to Gender and Development (GAD).

20.7 GENDER, DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE

Gender equality, equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and political and other prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

One of the most crucial issues that face the women's question today is the relationship of larger political processes, the idea of justice and the role of women. There is no confusion today that the agency of women has to be there in their own well-being and that the women's well-being is something on which even male's well-being depends. This close relationship has been reflected in the very high human development indicators from several states in India, like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Tamilnadu, etc., where a general improvement in the conditions of health of women has led to the general improvement of health of both male child and female child.

However, the political processes are extremely and quite crudely male-centred. Thus, another vicious circle presents itself. To make the political processes and spaces attuned to the female presence also, institutions of male dominance, ownership patterns, decision making monopoly, etc., have to be weakened. Here one key component, one agrees, is democracy where the voting rights give the ultimate decision-making power to women. No wonder that in many a country it is the women who are in the forefront of movement to bring democracy in that country because existentially one can see that it is the democracy which is the greatest guarantee of women's well being, and independence. As Amartya Sen has pointed out, "freedom in one area fosters freedom in other area as well".

Development is seen as the only way possible to bring out a positive change in the status of women and change gendered exploitation. Indian developmental experience has been a shining example of this. What is now referred to as Nehruvian vision is based on the development. In India for example at the time of independence the political equality between men and women was considered as a matter that was settled. Thus it was only economic equality that was sought after. Despite criticism, development has improved the condition of women a lot.

Over the years in India the welfarist approach and the pressure of the movement and other autonomous groups have provided a major corrective to the attitudes of the state and the male. During the 1980s efforts were made to make gender an important component in development programming. This was the beginning of the 30 per cent reservation for women at the local level administration, i.e., panchayats, so that they could enter into the decision-making domain. The issue of 30 per cent reservation for them in the parliament and state legislature then was taken up but is still mired in controversies and debates and pending before the Indian parliament.

Economist Amartya Sen called development as freedom where development is the way to provide capabilities to women to bring out her fullest self. This is, as is argued, to be done through providing literacy, health and other basic facilities that give her the wherewithal to change her economic standing in the family and society and thereby improve her position in order to wrest decision making powers too. In the Indian development phenomenon, development as a philosophy of progress has assumed that with asset formulation, etc., women would have greater freedom than in traditional society. Third World development discourse from the very beginning believed that it was poverty and quite often the woman's economic and social exclusion that deprived her of any role in decision-making. This strengthened the patriarchy system and women's exploitation was accentuated due to the extreme poverty.

The Indian development experience can show that through the development process there has been a revolutionary change in the basic indicators of women's lives. The indicators like education, health, or life expectancy does not simply reflect the well being of the woman involved, but as commented by many an economists or sociologists, its fruits are shared by the coming generations too.

20.8 SUMMARY

Gender refers to the social classification of men and women into masculine and feminine and reflects the existing power relationship in any given society. It is a socio-cultural phenomenon. Women have been historically given a lower socio-economic and political status in society and this continues in modern society, Democracy and development are two main areas by which the state has to progress in order to modernise the state, society and institutions in order to guarantee equal and legal rights to both men and women. In this respect women too have put their effort in the movement for restoration of democracy and subsequent development.

There are three agencies of development which are regarded as important in the struggle for women's rights. These are the individual, the state and the community. All these should play a role in ensuring the well-being of a woman and the development of her capabilities and her freedom. But it has been argued that while development focusses on technology and training of men, the economic work of women is never accounted for and was considered non-consequential. All ideas of development usually work against women, increasing inequalities and depriving them of whatever control they had over the resources of the family and community. As a result of this criticism the United Nations decided that there should be a conscious effort to involve women in development and give them access to the formal sector of the economy. This was the Women in Development (WID) approach. To this was added a multitude of feminist movements showing the negative impact of the work done by the state or multinational agencies on the women at the local level. These experiences were transferred at the theoretical level and began to be referred to as the Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm. It advocated a look at the decision-making structures of development which was structured along patriarchal lines and often based on western models incapable of taking into account the concerns of the non-western women. Thus what can be done is empowerment of women to ensure their participation in their own development, focus on small scale women-only projects to avoid male domination and in recent years the need to investigate relationships among gender ideology, women's subordination and operation of social, economic and political power. GAD has been focussing on men and women in relation to one another.

Gender equity entails the concept that all human beings be it men or women are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and political and other prejudices. Their different behaviour and aspirations should be valued and favoured equally and they would be treated fairly according to their respective needs. Development is seen as an important way to achieve this.

20.9 EXERCISES

- 1) What is development and how does it help in ensuring the **rights** of women?
- 2) Identify the agencies of development. How do they contribute towards bringing women out into the productive arena?
- 3) Has development been anti-women? Comment.
- 4) Write short notes on: i) Gender Equity and ii) Women in Development (WID) **Approach.**