# BGDG-172 :  Gender Sensitization: Society And Culture
## June, 2022

***Note:*** *Answer the questions as per instructions given in each Section.*

## SECTION A

**Q1. Describe the early(tradition) discourse of work with example.**

**Ans.** We have read about early human societies which were egalitarian. Men hunted,fished and provided necessary raw materials for food and made necessary toolsfor these tasks. Women cared for the house, prepared food, clothing and lookedafter children. Women were the centre of communistic household, and she aloneknew who were fathers of her children. Things changed when human communitiesmoved from nomadic existence to living in a stable environment.

The growingsignificance of production changed the nature of communistic society. Withaccumulation of wealth, the relationship between men and women changed; forall wealth was a result of production which is a male activity. Production wasmore valued than household and household labour.

According to traditional economic theories, life is divided into economic realmand household realm. The economic realm focused on buyers, sellers, marketwhereas the household realm positioned itself on the range of unpaid work thatis necessary for the functioning of life. Items that are sold in market are onlycounted as production and hence household realm was outside the purview ofeconomic realm.

In economics, work is any activity or expenditure of energy that produces servicesand products of value to other people. Although, work can be performed withoutwages, salaries, or income, economically speaking, labor market work is strictlyperformed for pay. These terms are then tied to the term production. Work isproductive if and only if profits are produced.

The capitalist system regarded women merely as a convenient source of cheaplabour and part of the "reserve army of labour" to be drawn on when there is ashortage of labour in certain areas of production, and discarded again when theneed disappears. We saw this in both world wars, when women were drafted intothe factories to replace men who had been called up into the army and then sentback to the home when the war ended. Women were again encouraged to enterthe workplaces during the period of capitalist upswing of the 1950s and 1960s,when their role was analogous to that of the immigrant workers—as a reservoirof cheap labour(Beneria et.al,1981).

Throughout its history, capitalism has proved adept at causing patterns of laboursupply to change in accordance with demand, and this is particularly so in thecase of female labour. In all societies, and particularly in developing countries,there remain essential but usually unpaid activities (such as cooking, cleaningand other housework, provisioning of basic household needs, child care, care ofthe sick and the elderly, as well as community-based activities), which are largelyseen as the responsibility of the women. This pattern of unpaid work tends toexist even when women are engaged in outside work for an income, whether aswage workers or self-employed workers. Women from poor families who areengaged in outside work as well usually cannot afford to hire others to performthese tasks, so most often these are passed on to young girls and elderly womenwithin the household, or become a "double burden" of work for such women.These processes are also integral to capitalism... and have become even moremarked in recent years (Ghosh).

**Q2. Critically evaluate feminist approach to family as an institution.**

**Ans.** Feminist scholarship began by pointing to the wide gap between the everydayexperience of women within family and anthropological-sociological knowledgeavailable. Therefore, the immediate task that they undertook was to underlinethe invisibility of women in the existing studies (Rege, 2001, p.14).

Much feminist work has targeted the family in terms of the structure of marriage,unequal distribution of resources between men and women and gender divisionof labour. They argue that women face discrimination in access to health,education, food and clothing, son preferences within family domestic violenceand many other such issues occurring within the family structure.

Critique of Mainstream Research: Feminists pointed out that early Indiansociologist for all purposes assumed the Hindu joint family of classical, sanskriticusage as the Indian family. It excluded the family structures and kinship idealsand practices of non-Hindus, that of south and north-east India, lower castes, ofnon patrilineal communities and others. They thus ignored the various ways inwhich different kinship patterns in different regions and communities affectedthe lives of its members, especially that of women differently (Uberoi, 1993,p.39). It was only the work of IrawatiKarve in which she undertook a comparativestudy on kinship and marriage in north and south Indian families that some lighthas been thrown on differential pattern of kinship and its effects on its membersspecially that of women. Thus, mainstream studies, feminists argued failed toinform or confront practical challenge related to the institution of family in Indiaand wrongly portrayed it as an egalitarian and harmonious institution benefittingall (Uberao, 2001).

Scholars focused on the violence perpetrated on women in the name of familyhonour and showed how the rationality of the family honour subordinates womenand grants men the power to exercise control on women's self and sexuality(Das, 1996).

Family honour and purity of caste is believed to be dependent upon control overand purity of female sexuality. Family, according to feminists, plays an importantrole in maintaining this purity through socializing its members especially womento control their sexuality. Girls are expected to be feminine and not attract malegaze to remain pure. Family itself controls and punishes arbitrary behaviour inthis regard. Restrictions on mobility, maintaining purdah, stress on virginity,chastity and fidelity, stigma of illegitimacy, importance on early marriage ofgirls are all mechanisms through which family actively contributes in maintainingcaste boundaries and protects its purity and honour.

The responsibility for protection of family and caste honour that family confersits male members gives men the right to exercise power over the females.

Another such aspect of oppressive family structure that was neglected bymainstream studies was the process of gender socialization which forms one ofthe basic functions of family. Feminists argue that mainstream studies did notcritique the gendered nature of the process of socialization because mainstreamscholars agreed with patriarchal ideology and saw nothing wrong in itsreproduction.

Feminists argue that the process of gender socialization in India primarily takesplace through rituals and ceremonies, the use of language, and practices withinthe family. Gender division of labour is ingrained in children very early inchildhood. Little girls are expected to help in domestic work such as cookingand looking after infants. Boys on the other hand are reprimanded if they showany interest in the above works. They are expected to accompany their maleelders to the work site outside the home. Girls, feminist studies show are expectedto learn to bear the pain and deprivation, eat anything that is given to them, andacquire the quality of self-sacrifice. (Dube, 2001).

Feminists also point out that given the fact that son preference is ingrained inIndian families which are largely patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal in nature,girls grow up with the notion of temporary and secondary membership withinthe natal home.

Rajni Palriwala (1990) addresses household within the context of women's work.She argues that such division of labour kept women away from the market-orientedincome generating productive work thus making women economically dependenton men.

### Q3. What is sexuality? Is it a social construction? Explain.

**Ans.** A central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, genderidentities and roles, sexual orientation, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs,attitudes, values, behaviors, roles and relationships. While sexuality can includeall of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed.Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social,economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical and religious and spiritualfactors (World Health Organization, Draft Working Definition, and October 2002).

**Source: The Social Construction Ofsexuality:**

- It is commonly held that taste in food is biological, natural, instinctual andfixed. Having read Anupama's story, would you agree or disagree? Why?
- Perhaps in your answer you might agree that taste in food is stronglyinfluenced by gender, caste, class, religion and region i.e. it is sociallyconstructed.

- At Home, Anupama could not eat meat because of her gender. Her brothersand father could because they are Guptas. They might not have been non-vegetarian if they were Brahmins. It was because Anupama shifted toLucknow that she was exposed to different kinds of cuisine. And she couldtry out different kinds of food in Lucknow, because she could afford to doso.
- Anupama started eating meat at the age of 25. Also, at first Anupama wasreluctant to even try brain curry, and then began loving it.

**Diversity:** What shape our sexual desires, who we are attracted to and how we attain sexualsatisfaction varies from individual to individual. Generally, it is assumed thatattraction can only happen between men and women. However, since desire isfluid, attraction can happen between any two individuals. For instance, sexualattraction can happen between two women or between two men too.

The colors of desire are varied- it's not about who you are attracted to but whatkind of desire you feel. Normally, when people hear the word 'Sex', they meana sexual act act between a man and a woman. This might be because this kind ofsexual act is linked to lineage, reproduction and progeny, even though we knowthat sex is done not only for reproduction but for pleasure and desire.

**Pain and pleasure:** What are the terms which come to your mind when you think about the wordsexuality? Love, desire, sexual pleasure, sexual orientation, shame, taboo, pain,sexual violence, rape, hesitation, rules, norms, societal sanctions etc.

From the above description, it is quite evident that sexuality has both positiveand negative aspects. However, the positive aspects, like for example the instancesof desire and pleasure are hardly talked about. Mostly, sexuality is talked aboutin the context of pain and violence. But it is important to acknowledge the positiveaspects or the pleasure part of sexuality as well. Gayle Rubin says, "To some,sexuality may seem to be an unimportant topic like more critical problems ofpoverty, war, disease, racism, famine, or nuclear annihilation".

**Fluid and changeable:** Like our food habits, sexuality is also fluid and can change. However, it mightnot be as changeable as food habits. Though not on a regular basis, but desiresaround sexuality- what I like, who I like can change sometime during life.

**Socially constructed:** What we eat, how we eat, who can eat what and why we eat are all sociallyconstructed. Similarly with regard to sexuality also there are norms which willprove that sexuality is also socially constructed. In considering the argumentthat sexuality is socially constructed, it might be useful to consider here thatwho, how, when, whom and why we desire are all strongly subjected to socialinfluences. There are well defined social norms related to all these dimensionsof sexuality.

**Difference between food and sexuality:** As you have seen that there are so many similarities between food and sexuality.However, there is a difference too. The easy way in which we can talk aboutdifferences in food is not possible when it comes to sexuality. If I don't liketandoori chicken and you like it, it might not create much differences betweenyou and me. However, if my desire or my sexuality is very different from thenorms as decided by the society, I might have to face severe consequences for it.

**Q4. Discuss gender socialization with the help of examples.**
**Ans.** Socialization is the process by which the child transforms into a social being byadhering to social values, norms, and socially desired behaviour. Sex rolesocialization is a means to women's oppression in the larger context. Stanleyand Wise argue that sex role is often understood as gender role, i.e., expressingattributes of femininity or masculinity. Family as an institution supports ininternalizing gender socialization and gender roles across cultures. Mother orprimary caretaker responds differently to the child on the basis of sexcategorization. The differential attitude includes touching, caring, and ideas aboutautonomy of boys and absence of autonomy of girls. The more parents displaydifferential behaviour like exposing children to specific types of toys, exposingto various books where pictures identify the role of mother in kitchen, projectionof gender roles and behaviour in televisions more the child will express genderstereotypes in daily life. Family and parents are seen primary agencies throughwhich gender stereotypes are communicated to the children (Stanley and SueWise).

**Q5. Discuss the forms of masculinities with suitable examples.**
**Ans.** Connell (1995) discusses the following forms of masculinities:

- **Hegemonic:** Masculinity is a form of masculinity that is dominant, expresses a successful strategy for domination of women and men. Connell refers to it as a culturally authoritative form of masculinity that supports the dominance of men and the subordination of women demanding total submission. It is also constructed in relation to various other masculinities that are affected by class, caste, race and sexuality. Although it is the dominant form of masculinity but only a few man can actually meet the standards, necessitating emergence of multiple masculinities as discussed below.

- **Subordinated Masculinity:** There are gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men too. For example, gay men are subordinated to straight men by many practices/ behaviour/attitudes. Gay men face cultural and at times economic exclusion too and are a target of street violence, workplace discrimination and personal boycotts. Such oppression makes homosexual masculinities come at the bottom of the gender hierarchy among men. Gay masculinity is the most conspicuous but it is not the only subordinated masculinity. Some heterosexual men and boys too are target of ridicule when abused as sissy, nerd, geek, mama's boy etc. as they portray an impression of feminine traits.

- **Complicit Masculinity:** The number of men who practice hegemonic pattern of masculinity (behaviour and attitude) in totality is always very small. But, majority of men gain from this hegemonic form as a sort of spill-overbonus. Here, there is no risk or fear of bearing the brunt of being in the forefront of hegemonic masculinity but these men get the advantage indirectly. Thus, they are complicit in this masculinity since it helps them to draw upon the advantage men in general gain from overall subordination of women in society.

- **Marginalized Masculinity:** Here is the interplay of gender with other structures such as class, race or caste that creates further hierarchical relationships amongst masculinities. It is a relational situation between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes, castes or ethnic groups.

**Q6. What is the relationship between patriarchy, capitalism and the maternal body? Explain in detail.**
**Ans.** Although our main focus here will be to look at motherhood in Indian contexts, it would be useful to first locate Indian motherhood within a larger cross-cultural framework. Given the fact that most contemporary societies are influenced, to various extents, by patriarchal norms, mothering continues to be conceptualized from male-dominated perspectives across the world. Such perspectives influence the way mothering and the maternal body are understood and experienced as lived realities.
The objectification of women's bodies in patriarchal cultures can result in efforts to make the body conform to certain cultural expectations and beauty myths(such as the emphasis on being thin or light-skinned). In terms of maternal bodies, this has specific implications. Feminist scholars in the west have noted that maternal bodies are 'disciplined' into conforming with set patterns of behavior and appearance. In the US, for instance, some feminists, like Eva Feder Kittay, and Jana Sawicki have emphasized the impact of patriarchal control and power on women's bodies, pregnancy and childbirth. In contemporary times, these larger power systems may include capitalism, racism and other forces. These larger forces impact how relations and identities get defined at the micro level. For instance, the unpaid work performed by mothers (including childcare and housework) may benefit both patriarchy and capitalism. This is because women's unpaid housework sustains male dominance as well as provides economic benefits to one part of the population at the expense of the other. When seen from this perspective, it is not patriarchy alone that is responsible for the oppression of women and mothers; rather, patriarchy works together with other repressive forces, such as capitalism, racism and casteism. In each of these hierarchical systems, those with less power become the victims of various kinds of oppression. Based on our analysis, we could then say that women are one such category victimized by the collusion between patriarchy and capitalism. This perspective helps us to see how motherhood is located within these larger structures of power. It also tells us that in order to question some of the negative ways in which mothering roles impact women, we would need to begin by interrogating the larger power structures to which women and men belong.

**Q7. What is marginalization and informalisation in work?**

**Ans.** Women's advantage as workers is because of their lower wages and their inabilityto oppose poor work conditions. In a globalised market this ensures the countryremains attractive and competitive for foreign investments. Globalization hascreated new possibilities for exploitation of women workers through low wages,denial of rights to organize, migration to urban centres of production and restrictedor poor living conditions for migrant workers. Thus, globalization has led tosocial and economic marginalization of women workforce. Women are found tobe over represented in informal sector because of the flexibilities of work involvedin such occupations and activities. These are advantageous for women also, giventheir reproductive and care giving roles in the form of unpaid labour. These societalexpectations from the women are exploited by the employers to maximize theirprofit. Thus, women workers form the backbone of informal economies incountries across the world.

**Q8. Describe Reproductive and Child Health Policy (RCH).**

**Ans.** One of the major challenges posed by the international organizations andadvocates of women's health movements is towards integrating public healthand human rights principles under the comprehensive RCH policy. The mainfocus of this programme was to transform the conventional family planningprogramme into a rights-based approach in which equity and empowerment ofwomen can be ensured within the public health programme. However, there is awider gap between the public health perspective and ensuring rights and equityof women. Many health programmes often failed to deal with the socio-culturaland economic condition of the society in which both health care providers andclients are located. Therefore, in many cases the implementation of reproductivehealth and rights agenda became a complex issue.

As Datta and Mishra rightly argued, after six years of India's commitment toreproductive and child health policy, still the policy faces a lot of challenges interms of understanding the concept of reproductive right. There is a lack of publicunderstanding in viewing reproductive health in terms of women's rights. InIndia, advocating for reproductive health actually faces challenges for thefollowing reasons;

- Advocating for reproductive health and rights needs a pro-active approachfor implementation.
- The concept of reproductive health continues to evoke discomfort amongthe women's group, policy makers, and health practitioners.
- Despite the RCH policy promise towards women's health rights, still thegovernment remains committed towards the demographic goals.
- Concepts like 'rights' and 'health' have been seen as complex subjects bypolicy makers and the programme managers while implementing the RCHpolicy in the field.
- The concept of bringing child health along with reproductive health to someextent has been unable to address the issues women as independent of theirmaternal role and responsibility.
- RCH programme to some extent has the principle of target-driven familyplanning approach, as it continues to exclude the single women from therange of services.
- RCH programme is largely an expansion of the existing MCH/FP packagewith additional services like termination of pregnancy and, towardsprevention and treatment of reproductive tract infections and sexuallytransmitted diseases.
- ICPD has limited women's health to the issues of safe abortion and thewomen's reproductive rights to the extent of making choice overcontraception.

## SECTION B

**Q9. Discuss social attitude and stereotypes about disability.**

**Ans.** Historically, persons with disabilities have always been regarded with a mixtureof fear, horror and disdain, almost as if they were sub-human. They have beenportrayed as freaks, helpless victims and a lifelong burden for family and society.Even in religion and mythology, negative traits have been attributed with formof deformity, be it Manthara, the hunchback in the Ramayana or Shakuni, the"lame" of the Mahabharata. Indeed, the law of karma decreed that being disabledwas a punishment for past misdeeds. Such constructions of the disabled by thenon-disabled leads to the

marginalisation and disempowerment of a wholepopulation group. At the same time, such negative stereotypes are internalisedby the disabled people themselves. This leads to passivity, dependency, isolation,low self-esteem, and a complete loss of initiative. Pity, segregation, discrimination,and stigmatisation became normalised in the management of persons withdisabilities.

In India, the dominant attitude towards persons with disability is that of pity.

This reflects in social policies which are based upon charity and welfare. Medicalrehabilitation including distribution of assistive aids and appliances such as braces,crutches, hearing aids etc., special schools, vocational training in low-endoccupations and sheltered employment have been the pillars of state policy forthe disabled right from the colonial period. Furthermore, they have never beenregarded as a politically significant group and hence their issues and concernshave not been taken up seriously by the political class. As many of them arehidden away from public view and denied access to education and socialexperiences, they have not been able to come together in a big way and maketheir presence felt in public life.

Things began to change marginally after 1981 (International Year of DisabledPersons) when the issue of disability was opened up at the national level. Thechanging international climate focussing on human rights and empowerment ofmarginal groups impelled the government to make some policy changes such asreservations in educational institutions and employment. But real progress in theform of concrete legislation to deliver the promise of equality of opportunity andsocial justice only came in 1995 with the passage of the Persons with Disabilities(Equal Opportunities and full Participation) Act. Other legislation soon followed.One of the historic international policy documents in recent times was the UnitedNations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disability (2006) which wasalso signed by India in 2007. This signalled the introduction of a view of disabilityas a human right and development issue rather than simply a matter of charityand welfare. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) which has nowreplaced the 1995 Act, is in line with this view. Several disability rights groupsand NGOs have emerged in recent times and disability related issues are beingincreasingly included in the curricula of educational institutions.

**Q10. Describe what is gender-based violence.**
**Ans.** The term gender-based violence (GBV) is used to distinguish violence thattargets individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender fromother forms of violence by individuals and collectivities. It includes acts thatresult in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm. A threatof such acts, coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty are also forms of gender-based violence. Such gender-based violence might occur within the family, inthe community during "peace times" or times of conflict, or by state agents. Itmay be perpetrated by family members, acquaintances, strangers or intimatepartners including husbands.

While violence is a traumatic experience for anyone – man, woman or child –gender-based violence is predominantly inflicted by men on women and girls byreason of their gender. It impacts women's dignity, security, sexuality,reproductive capacity and their right to control over their own body (autonomy),apart from its over-arching impact on physical and mental health of women.Gender-based violence stems from the power inequality between men and women,exacerbated by socio-economic, cultural and structural inequalities.

A thin line of distinction exists between gender-based violence (GBV) andviolence against women (VAW), though the two terms are often conflated andused inter-changeably. Though VAW includes any act of GBV against womenand girls, the term 'gender-based violence' acknowledges the gender dimensionsof the violence, both from the perspective of perpetrators as well as victims.GBV is a term that is used to distinguish violence that targets individuals orgroups of individuals on the basis of their gender from other forms of violenceby individuals and groups. Such gender-based violence might occur within thefamily, in the community during "peace times" or times of conflict, and by stateagents or non-state actors. It may be perpetrated by family members,acquaintances, strangers or intimate partners. The term GBV is therefore broaderand more inclusive.

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**Q11. Do you think that objectification of women happens in India? Explain.**
**Ans. Objectification of women in the media:** Objectification is the representation of women in media as an object rather thanas a whole human entity. This happens in many contexts including advertisementsand cinema. Feminist scholars say that the objectification of women involvesthe act of disregarding the personal and intellectual abilities and capabilities of afemale; and reducing a woman's worth or role in society to that of an instrumentfor the sexual pleasure that she can produce in the mind of another. Media oftenportrays women in vulnerable and easily overpowered situations. Some imageswill focus only on a part of the body, a leg, a neck or a headless torso thatconstitutes objectification and introduces the concept of Fetishisation. It intendsto reduce women to disembodied parts of their anatomy.

**Q12. Define Double Burden in the context of women's work. Give an example.**
**Ans.**The entry of women into the labour market has not meant any lessening ofdomestic chores. Most women are still solely or mostly in charge of houseworkand child care. In order to fulfil all their responsibilities at the workplace and athome, women end up working longer hours. This phenomenon is called 'doubleshift' or 'double burden'.
Let us read about more issues affecting women's employment.
**Migration:** Women constitute a growing population of the workers who migrate to urbancentres or to other countries where their work is better paid. Most commonlythey work as domestic helps, nursing personnel or in leisure industry.

1. There is a close relationship between informalization of employment andmigration. Various reasons contribute for migration. We can list the reasons formigration as following:
1) Decline of primary sector economic activities contributes for rural urbanmigration.
2) Workers migrate from one nation to other on short- and long-term contractsin search of better opportunities.
3) Internal conflict and war contribute for international migration.

**Social Protection:**Increasingly 'flexible 'labour markets have reduced workers' rights to unionizeand thus has led to worker's weakened bargaining power. As a result ofglobalisation work has become more in secured as jobs have shifted from formal,legally regulated large firms to smaller and informal establishments and home-based work. These jobs are often more accessible to women but lie outside of theprotection of labour laws and social benefits. Part-time workers in the formalsector too face these insecurities.

**Q13. Explain sexual harassment at workplace.**
**Ans.** Sexual harassment at the workplace is an important issue related to the safetyand dignity of women at workplaces. It is an expression of male power overwomen due to patriarchy. It is often an extension of violence against women ineveryday life, targeting and exploiting the vulnerability of women at theworkplace.
The land mark Vishaka judgment by Supreme Court 1997 defined sexualharassment as "any unwelcome sexually determined behaviour such as physicalcontact, a demand or request for sexual favours, sexually-coloured remarks,showing pornography and any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbalconduct of a sexual nature." The Supreme Court also noted that the sexualharassment is the violation of basic human rights of women. The judgment alsoprovided guidelines for employers to redress and prevent sexual harassment atworkplace. It also provided guidelines for the employers to make a discrimination-free working environment for women employees. The judgment said that it wasthe duty of the employer or other responsible persons in work places to providewomen with a safe working atmosphere, to prevent sexual harassment as well asprovide mechanisms for resolution of complaints through the establishment ofcomplaints committees.

The court further directed that every workplace must constitute a committee forreceiving and inquiring into complaints of sexual harassment. As per the directivesof the court, every such committee should consist of members of whom at least50% are women. A chairperson of the committee should be a woman. An externalmember from a social work / non-profit organization has to be appointed in thecommittee. Along with above said steps, the following preventive steps need tobe taken by the employer. These are

- discussing the issue affirmatively in workers' meetings and employer-employee meetings;
- prominent display of guidelines to create awareness of the right of womenemployees;
- prominent display of members of the complaints committee and their contactdetails;
- The employers are also responsible for formulating an anti-sexual harassmentpolicy; and
- Constitution of a complaints committee to investigate, mediate, counseland resolve cases of sexual harassment.

**Q14. What is functionalist approach to family?**

**Ans. Functionalism:** Functionalism states that family forms the basic institution of every society andis universal in nature. Through its various functions, family meets the functionalpre-requisites of the society and helps maintain its equilibrium.

This theory is based on the understanding that the biological imperatives ofmotherhood predispose women for indoor work, whereas the greater physicalstrength of men leads them naturally into the provider role.

The most basic relationship within the family is that of mother and child basedon the physiological facts of pregnancy and lactation. Therefore the mother isprimarily responsible for rearing and nurturance of the child whereas the fatherplays an indirect role.

Functionalists propose that the wife is required to give direct help to the husband'swork. She is expected to adjust and assist the husband in meeting the variousdemands the occupational sphere places on him.