CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S STUDIES: ITS CONCEPT AND GROWTH IN INDIA
3.1 Introduction

Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary study of women and society from the standpoint of women's lived experiences. It provides a counterpoint to the historically established theories in the various branches of human knowledge and challenges the predominantly male-centric understanding of social institutions and processes. In its essence, Women's Studies is both a perspective and a discipline: it challenges the notions of objectivity of knowledge. (Poonacha, 1999)

A body of literature that embodies the concern for women's equality and development and seeks to find explanations and remedies for the unequal position of women in the society; a set of research and analysis which enquires into the origin and basis of these discriminatory practices against women, which has come to be concisely defined as Women's Studies. (University Grants Commission, 1986).

The UNESCO meeting of experts on Women's Studies and Social Sciences in Asia held in Delhi in October, 1982 defined Women's Studies in terms of the objectives that such studies sought to achieve as:

- To promote better and balanced understanding of our societies and how they are responding to the process of change;

- To contribute to the pursuit of human rights;
• To assist both men and women in understanding, recognizing, and giving due importance to the roles actually played by women and men;

• To investigate the causes of disparity, analyzing structural factors in addition to attitudinal and cultural factors;

• To empower women in their struggle for equality and for an effective presence in all areas of society and development;

• To render ‘invisible’ women ‘visible’ and in particular the women of the most underprivileged strata. (University Grants Commission, 1986).

The *Handbook* (1998) of Women’s Studies and Development Centre, University of Delhi, defines Women’s Studies as “an interdisciplinary approach to comprehending social organizations from the perspective of women. Recognized the world over as an academic subject with strong activist potential, Women’s Studies provides its practitioners with an opportunity to join international efforts to curb patriarchal oppressions. Women’s Studies can be briefly defined as body of learning with a directed concern for women’s equality and empowerment. It seeks to find explanations and remedies for inherited conditions of inequity and injustice that women have been subjected to, while it analyses the origin and basis of discriminatory practices against women, Women’s Studies in contemporary practice enlarges its scope to promote gender sensitization of men, women and communities. Therefore, Women’s Studies is not merely studies about women or data about women, but a critical instrument for humanities and social science development in the context of social reality.”
Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule, Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune (2011) defines Women's Studies Centres as “Women's Studies is a relatively new and unique academic discipline... It is a discipline that seeks to assess and challenge the interlinked axes of oppression in society, viz class, race caste and gender. It seeks to rediscover the experiences and knowledge of the marginalized sections in history and in contemporary societies. It seeks an understanding of the material and ideological structures of women's oppression. This requires an understanding of the social, cultural, historical political and economic milieu. Thus Women’s Studies is by definition interdisciplinary.

Women’s Studies is “the pursuit of a more comprehensive, critical and balanced understanding of social reality. It’s essential components include (i) women’s contribution to the social process, (ii) women’s perception of their own lives, the broader social reality and their struggles and aspirations, (iii) roots and structures of inequality that lead to marginalization, invisibility and exclusion of women from the scope, approaches and conceptual frame-works of most intellectual enquiry and social action. Women’s Studies should thus, not, be narrowly defined as studies about women or information about women, but be viewed as a critical instrument for social and academic development” (Mazumdar, 1985).

Women’s Studies, like other recently emerging research, is a study from below. It not merely seeks information about a depressed section of the society, but also seeks to look at the social processes from the perspective of that depressed section. Such a perspective should not merely help to widen the knowledge base
regarding social processes and promote new sets of enquiries and concepts in the academic sphere, but also set in motion a set of new policy approaches that break fresh round and herald bold action by the Government, the general public and the social action group.

The objectives of Women's Studies is defined as “i) to conscientise both men and women by helping them to understand, recognize and acknowledge the multidimensional roles played by women in society ii) to promote better understanding in the process of social, technological and environmental change iii) to contribute to the pursuit of human rights, iv) to investigate the causes of gender disparities—analysing structural, cultural and attitudinal factors, v) to empower women in their struggle against inequality and for effective participation in all areas of society and development, vi) to render invisible women visible—in particular women of the underprivileged strata, and to help develop alternative concepts, approaches, and strategies for development” (Mazumdar, 1985).

3.2 Women's Studies: its origin

Women's Studies (WS) originated in the U.S. as “feminist (opposed to simply focusing on content about women or gender), interdisciplinary (rather than working within a single traditional discipline) and with its own distinctive methodological and pedagogical approaches grounded in new epistemologies;” these premises have constituted the field’s “assumptions for more than forty years”.

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However, over several decades, through debates, struggles and achievements, WS courses in the U.S. evolved to reflect an “increasingly diverse and multicultural world as well. In spite of this, the emphasis on international perspectives on women’s lives and concerns” were missing from the U.S. curricula until more recently (Mitra, Bhatia & Chatterjee, 2013).

Women’s Studies has its roots in the Women’s Liberation movement of the 1960’s. It was a period of widespread protests. Participating in these various civil rights movements women gained political experience; they also realized that none of the existing system of progressive thought, which affirm the values of freedom, justice and equality, addressed the question of women’s subordination. The underlying assumptions being 1) women’s subordination is biological and determined by the natural order 2) Issues of justice, equality and liberty are the concerns of the public sphere, i.e. the realm of politics, economy and military and 3) these issues mediated the relationship of the individual or group with the state (Poonacha, 1999).

"In response to the widespread feminist demand, the UN had declared 1975 as the International Women’s Year and held the historic world conference of women in Mexico. The UN’s plan of action drawn up that year had called for world wide research investigations, documentations and analysis into the processes in society that create structures of gender inequalities. This initiative taken by the UN was keeping with the vision encoded in the various international documents on human rights such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International

The discipline got its official sanction from the international community, when based on the recommendation made at the world conference held at Mexico during 1975, the United Nations declared 1975 -85 as the International Women’s Decade and adopted a world plan of action to establish gender equality. This decision of the United Nations was backed by the various international Documents on Human Rights which recognize the equality of men and Women.

3.3 Women’s Studies in India

"the contemporary feminist movement in India finds its genesis in the report on the status of women which was published in India in 1975.” The guarantee of women’s equality in the constitution provided a set of standards to assess women’s situation in all its aspects. However, the committee’s report “Towards Equality”, presented a grim picture of social reality that sharply contrasted with the goals of equality laid down by the Indian constitution. The alarming decline in sex ratio, increase in violence against women, the rising illiteracy among women, and the lack of political and economic participation of women were a dismal reality (Bhatty, 2002). The comprehensive report further “highlighted that instead of changing social values and attitudes regarding women’s roles, the educational system (with a gender
bias) had contributed to strengthening and perpetuating traditional ideas of women's subordination through the curricula” (Mitra, Bhatia & Chatterjee, 2013).

The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in 1976 initiated a new program in WS with three objectives: 1) initiate policy change, 2) develop new perspectives in social science concepts, methods and theories and 3) revive the social debate on the women's question. It was against this background that the First National Conference on WS was convened in Bombay in 1981 which ultimately culminated into the Indian Association for Women’s Studies (IAWS) – a National Forum for bringing together academics, activists and policy makers concerned with women's development. In the years following, this association organized many seminars and workshops on curriculum development, syllabus revisions and research programs (Mitra, Bhatia & Chatterjee, 2013).

Women’s Studies entered the university system because of pressures from the women’s movement articulated in the First National Conference of Women’s Studies held at SNDT women’s University, Mumbai in 1981.

It was not until 1987 in the UN decade for women that University Grants Commission (UGC) of India invited proposals from universities to establish WS centers. Institutionally, the face of WS has taken the shape of research centers and Women’s Studies centers in universities. Mainly, the centers had the mandate to raise awareness, do independent research and community action. Now there are about sixty-seven such centers in different phases of development. Over the years,
the centers’ work expanded and even modified thrust areas that are ‘disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary’ (John, 2008).

In the last decade that UGC started emphasizing teaching WS courses. From the late 1980s onwards, the Indian Council of Social Science Research’ (ICSSR) and UGC have actively guided the development of WS within the university system. Now, WS is included in the UGC's list of disciplines. WS has developed into a discipline with its own distinct curriculum over the years. But the “centers are all relatively small, often with no full-time faculty, fragile and under-funded” (John, 2005). Given the uncertainty, limited funding and real marginality, a degree in WS in India still lacks the status of other degrees in humanities or social sciences (John, 2008).

3.31 Education and Development of Women’s Studies

"Educate a man and you educate one person; educate a woman and you educate a whole nation" said MK Gandhi.

Today, this thought stands true more than anything. Long gone is the time when even girls going to school was a struggle; women today want the best of education. The earliest effort to educate girls’ was made by Christian missionaries. In the city of Bombay (now Mumbai) the first school for girls was started in 1824.

The Women’s Indian Association and the National Council for Women are the two significant precursors of the premier institution- All India Women’s
Conference (AIWC), was established in 1927. The conference first took agenda on female education and later on included social transformation in its agenda realizing the fact that education alone could not effectively eradicate social evils. It can be considered as a vanguard women’s organization in the pre independence era.

After the independence the Indian government also promoted education towards building a better society. The constitution of India which was introduced in 1950, also included a number of important provisions towards women welfare, such as, Article 15(3) empowered the state to take special provisions for the welfare and development of women and children, Article 16 promulgated non discrimination in public employment on ground of sex. Article 45 imposed direct responsibility for providing education on the state.

After independence the first major step towards a comprehensive review of the education system was the establishment of the University Education Commission or the Radhakrishnan Commission which was the first body to review the education system of the country, which submitted its report in 1949, followed by Secondary Education (Mudaliar) Commission in 1952-53, the National Committee (Durgabai Deshmukh) on Women’s Education in 1958-59. The recommendations of the Hansa Mehta Committee on Differentiation in curricula for Boys and Girls in 1964 were endorsed by the Indian Education Commission (1966); well known as Kothari Commission- which was followed by the National Policy on Education which came only in 1986 with its plan of action. Both documents were revised further in 1992.
The National Policy on Education (NPE) adopted by Parliament in 1986, for the first time prescribed a new "role" for the national educational system of providing "education for women's equality," through the revision of curricula, the reorientation of teachers and planners, and direct involvement in women's empowerment.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) adopted by Parliament in May 1986 had reiterated the view that women studies involved a three-fold thrust of teaching, research and extension within the university system. The NPE had emphasized the need to gear the entire education system to a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. The target was, obviously, university students. In the NPE section "Education for Equality", it is envisaged that "the national education system would foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators and the active involvement of educational institutions... Women studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions encouraged to take up active programmes to further women's development" (Rajalakshmi, 2003).

The Indian council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and later the National Policy of Education (NPE 1986, which was updated in 1992) identified Women's Studies as a critical instrument of social and educational development.

One of the major outcome of National Policy of Education was the entry of the University Grants Commission into this field and its enunciation of guidelines
for the promotion of Women's Studies which clearly reflect the objectives of the Women's Studies movement, through the setting up of Women's Studies Centres in various universities of India in the mid-1980s.

The announcement of the National Policy on education in January 1985 and the formulation of the guidelines on Women's Studies by the UGC in 1986 represented the first phase of the legitimization of Women's Studies in the formal educational system.

In India, the National Commission on The Status of Women was set up (1972) to examine the status of women in the country and their problems. The findings of the committee, known as the Toward Equality Report, 1974 showed far beyond the most pessimistic prediction of the dismal condition of women's lives.

In response to the UN's call for action and as a result of the findings of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, the government of India drew up a draft national plan of action for women, which accorded priority to the need for purposive research in education, health, welfare and employment. The plan emphasized the need for research, to facilitate the designing of appropriate development and welfare programmes for the weaker sections of women who were adversely affected by the process of change.

The findings of the committee on the Status of Women in India showed that despite the constitutional guarantees and the developmental process in the country, the position of women had not only enhanced but even showed a declining trend, led to a spate of research for explanations. The Indian Council of Social Science
Research initiated "a programme of Women's Studies" in 1976, with a view to investigate the critical areas of information gap. It particularly sought to re-examine analytical concepts, theories and methodological approaches of the social sciences so as to rectify the intellectual marginalization of women from the field of social enquiry. This formed the beginning of an organized programme of activities in Women's Studies.

The first National Conference on Women's Studies which was convened in Bombay in 1981 strongly recommended the incorporation of women's question in the university curriculum, in different disciplines. This conference was followed by the UNESCO Regional workshop on Women's Studies in Social Sciences in Asia, held in 1982. This was collaborative effort by UNESCO, ICSSR, UGC and the Centre for Women's Development Studies. It initiated further steps towards developing Women's Studies in Indian universities, to promote research on issues concerning women and to incorporate themes on women's problem in the curricula of the universities.

3.32 Women's Studies in the University System

One of the important aspects of Women's Studies in India is its successful institutionalization as a higher education programme within the universities and colleges with curriculum for teaching and research focusing on women and women's issues.
The 1987 is the year of first establishment of seven Women’s Studies centres in the university system. In 1986, the UGC issued guidelines to universities, which provided a definition, objectives and framework for programmes and financial assistance. The guidelines emphasized the dimensions of teaching, training, research and extension. Two models were suggested namely Women’s Studies cells within the departments of colleges and centre’s for Women’s Studies as independent units, with the status of a department in the university.

The SNDT Women’s University pioneered the entry of Women’s Studies into the Indian university system. The university, established in 1916, aimed at the establishment of gender equality through education. It established the Research Centre for Women’s Studies (RCWS) in 1974 to undertake research, teaching, documentation, publication and community outreach activities aimed at gender equity. Apart from policy, theoretical and field action research, the RCWS has contributed significantly to the publication of teaching learning materials and the training of college/university teachers in Women’s Studies.

The RCWS soon became the model adopted by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, for the development of Women’s Studies centres within Indian universities.

Around this time two more institutions, the Institute of Social Studies Trust (founded in 1976) and the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), established in 1980 were also established mainly to undertake new research on women in the context of socio-economic and political transformation.
Until the 1980s, the number of institutions committed to carrying out Women's Studies programmes was very minimal. But discussions on the scope and objectives of Women's Studies were already taking place in various platforms. The ICSSR committee defined the main objectives of Women's Studies programmes as research on the socio-economic conditions that affect women's lives and thus generate new data and analysis that add new knowledge and also a critical perspective to the social science disciplines. Similarly, in 1979, a group of Women's Studies scholars in their first discussions on the nature and scope of Women's Studies defined its objectives as "transformation of spheres of knowledge production" with the "new academic search to organise knowledge on various aspects of women's situation resulting in changes in perspectives about women's contribution to society and their needs and problems in the context of modernisation, development and social change" (Anandhi & Swaminathan, 2006).

A cursory glance at some of the early discussions on what constitutes Women's Studies make it clear that in the formative years Women's Studies was envisaged as "interventionist" within higher education and not as a 'discipline with a course or curriculum or teaching methods. It was largely perceived to be a "critical instrument in the educational process". The first National Conference on Women's Studies held in 1981 defined Women's Studies as a "critical perspective" and an intellectual pursuit in understanding social reality and not as a discipline or as a separate programme. Instead, it recommended an integration of the women's question in all disciplines. For the first time, in a joint seminar organised by the
IAWS and UGC in 1985, the importance of founding separate Centres for Women’s Studies within institutions for higher education, to carry out research and teaching in Women’s Studies was emphasised. In conceptualising the role and status of the Women’s Studies centres, it was emphasised that they should be "independent and parallel to the department and faculties" in order to avoid "structural constraints and delays" in coordinating research and teaching. It was believed that by instituting Women’s Studies, the educational system would be made accountable "to expand the social concern against injustice, marginalisation and oppression of women". Towards this, the centres for Women’s Studies were expected to play a "catalytic role" in motivating the entire university community to address issues that concern women's development. Though Women’s Studies was conceptualised primarily as a research and teaching agenda to be carried out at the institutions for higher education, there was considerable anxiety to make it relevant to the outside community. Especially, in the 1980s, as the women's movement gained momentum, Women’s Studies researchers, teachers and students were urged to link their scholarship with action programmes of women's groups in order to make it relevant outside the academic community. When the CWDS was founded as a research institute to undertake research on women, its founders "tried to balance research and action in their agenda" (Anandhi & Swaminathan, 2006).

In fact, at phase III these centres are expected to become a resource or nodal centre in their regions with a special mandate to carry out outstanding academic works in Women’s Studies. At the third phase, the centres are demanded to be
"strong academic centres of teaching and learning, generating new thinking and knowledge on feminist theory and offering Women's Studies courses". In other words, by the time a centre is placed at the third phase, it appears that it is expected to convert its entire extension works or outreach programmes into academic activities such as drafting syllabi, etc. (Anandhi & Swaminathan, 2006).

Women's Studies was introduced in the Indian university system, with the hope that the existing gap between knowledge and practice can be bridged. Women's Studies is therefore not just an academic discipline, but also a means by which social action is initiated.

**Provision for Women's Studies in the Five Year Plans of Government of India**

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has promoted, strengthened and given direction to the Women's Studies programmes in the country since the VII Plan period of Government of India. Women's Studies Centres have been established in the University System in the VIII, IX and X Plan periods. They have contributed significantly to the expansion of Women's Studies teaching, research and field action. The guidelines for the XI Plan have taken a broader view of the Women's Studies.

Development of women has been receiving attention of the Government right from the very First Plan (1951–56). But the same has been treated as a subject of welfare and clubbed together with the disadvantaged groups like destitute, disabled, aged etc. The Second to Fifth Plans (1956-79) continued to reflect the very same welfare approach, besides giving priority to women's education and launching
measures to improve maternal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children and expectant and nursing mothers. The shift in the approach from welfare to development of women could take place only in the Sixth Plan (1980-85). For the first time the sixth five year plan included a separate chapter on ‘Women and Development’. Accordingly, the Sixth Plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a special thrust on the three core sectors of health, education and employment.

In the Seventh Plan (1985-90), the developmental programs continued with the major objective of raising their economic and social status and bringing them into the mainstream of national development. The UGC invited proposals from a group of universities for organizing centres for Women’s Studies as priority area during the VIIth Five Year Plan period.

The Eighth Plan (1992-97) with human development as its major focus played a very important role in the development of women. By the end of the Eight Plan 22 centres were established in the universities and 11 cells in colleges.

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) made two significant changes in the conceptual strategy of planning for women. Firstly, empowerment of women became one of the primary objectives of the Ninth Plan. Secondly, the plan attempted convergence of existing services available in both women specific and women-related sectors.

In the Ninth Plan, not only extension activity but advocacy was also identified as a priority area for the centres to concentrate upon. In that, the guideline emphasised "partnership and clustering" and networking with various organisations. Accordingly, the centres were also placed under various phases for funding, etc. For
instance, it was required of these centres in their phase I to concentrate on "networking" which could also mean focusing on extension activities and outreach programmes. During the 9th plan, 13 new centres were established. Orientation programmes for new centres were planned and refresher courses in Women's Studies were offered at specific Women's Studies centres.

During the Tenth Plan, universities and colleges with special reference to women/girls'/girl children were the major target group and beneficiaries as per the guidelines under the scheme. The UGC centres are expected to follow the objectives of translating the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) initiated during Ninth Plan, into action, identify well defined objectives and goals in areas of prime and potential interest and strength of the centre and to concentrate and consolidate by creating essential and critical infrastructure and facilities including faculty and human resources. Identifying target group the centres were to prepare consolidated and well defined strategic action plan on activities and programmes within a time frame. The UGC, under the scheme, has been supporting thirty-four Centres for Women's Studies including thirteen Centres, created during the IX Plan period.

In the Tenth Plan, the UGC has funded 51 Centres in the Universities and 16 Centres in the Colleges, under this scheme.

During Eleventh Plan there were 67 Women's Studies Centres (WSCs) established in various universities and colleges in the country. In the last four decades, Women's Studies has gained in academic stature and developed a rich
constituency by supporting University Women's Studies Centres and facilitating them to become teaching and research departments in the University System. Further, the thrust is to develop field action projects for action, research, evaluation and enhancement of knowledge and partnership across boundaries of caste/class/religion, community and occupations. To meet these ends, the new focus emphasizes mentoring, partnership and clustering as well as orientation and training workshops. The thrust is to involve many more people and many more organizations in the network as well as to ensure the focus and the quality of this newly emerging discipline is maintained.

**Role of UGC**

In order to promote Women's Studies and to translate the component of empowerment of women, the University Grants Commission has been playing a significant role in the venture through the creation of Centres for Women's Studies (CWS) by implementation of a scheme on "Development of Women Studies in Indian Universities and Colleges".

In 1985, a national seminar organized by the University of Delhi on "Perspectives and organization of Women's Studies units in Indian Universities" sponsored by the UGC and initiated by Indian Association of Women Studies. The seminar defined the Women's Studies, discuss the need for alternate methodologies of research and training and prepared a model curriculum for the under graduate courses in social sciences. Above all it discussed the methods of organizing
Women's Studies centres/cells in the universities and colleges, their location and functions.

The inter disciplinary character necessitating the Women's Studies the autonomous nature of the Women's Studies centre, and their equidistance from various faculties/departments in the universities /colleges so as to enable them to play an independent, catalytic role and their role to actively intervene to influence and modify the functioning of the universities came out strongly from the seminar.

Earlier to that in 1983 the UGC had written to Vice-chancellors to consider ways of integrating women's issues and concern in the teaching, research, and other activities of different disciplines. The University Grants Commission appointed a standing committee to introduce Women's Studies within the universities In December 1985; the standing committee of Women's Studies of UGC had recommended specific organizational structure and formulated a action plan for the UGC to initiate activities on Women's Studies in the universities and colleges. It identified seven universities from various parts of India to play a leadership in curriculum, preparation of material, human resource development and also research in women studies. Following this recommendation the UGC extended financial assistance and invited proposals for curriculum development in women studies, both for the undergraduate and post graduate courses from the seven universities of Banaras, Delhi, Kerala, Punjab, Ranchi and Surat. The UGC also invited proposals from these universities for organizing centres for Women's Studies as a priority area during the seven five year plan. (Kaushik, n.d.)
In 1986 the Parliament adopted a National Policy on Education (May 1986), which included a section on ‘Education for Women’s Equality’, giving a new mandate to the country’s educational system and recognizing Women’s Studies as an instrument for the empowerment of women. (Sharma, 2002)

The support provided by UGC to the establishment of Women’s Studies centres/cells since the Seventh Five Year plan has led to the visibility of Women’s Studies in the university system. The UGC schemes on Women’s Studies identify that this discipline is a critical input to promote better understanding of women’s contribution to social processes within the societal, technological and environmental changes and their struggles and aspirations. The various centres are involved in investigating and removing the structural, cultural and attitudinal causes of gender discrimination and thus empower women and make them proactive and effective partners in national and international developments. The four dimensions in Women’s Studies and research which are under support of UGC are:

i) Research to advance the frontiers of knowledge, develop human resources and produce teaching learning materials.

ii) Teaching to change present attitude and values of male and female to one of concern for gender equality by addressing biases and deficiencies in curriculum and teaching practices.

iii) Training of teachers, decision makers, administrators and planners to facilitate them to play a positive interventionist role for gender equity and,
iv) Extension or direct involvement of institutions in women’s development activities among the community.

UGC has earmarked the following activities to be performed by the UGC supported Women’s Studies Centres. The major roles and functions may take place in many directions including:

i) Teaching & Training

ii) Research

iii) Extension

iv) Documentation, Publication, Dissemination and Transmission

v) Advocacy

vi) Seminars & Workshops

vii) Networking & Coordinating with other Agencies

viii) Monitoring & Review

The centres for Women’s Studies were designed to act as catalysts for promoting and strengthening Women’s Studies. They have been instrumental in incorporating Women’s Studies in different courses, have facilitated research on socially relevant subjects, have provided consultations to scholars, and have helped in evaluating projects, documenting experiences and networking within and outside the university system. Centres like Research Centre for Women’s Studies, SNDT
Women’s Studies entered the university system with the establishment of the Research Centre for Women’s Studies (RCWS) at the SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai. SNDT Women’s University is the oldest institute of its kind in India. In the course of its long history, it has contributed significantly to the promotion of higher education for women. The introduction of Women’s Studies in the SNDT Women’s University aimed at providing women with space to conceptualise, document and preserve their knowledge for posterity.

Brief Description to Some Pioneering Women’s Studies Centres in India

Women’s Studies Centres are now made at par with other academic departments of the universities leading to Master Degree, M.Phil and PhD degree. Some of such pioneering Women’s Studies Centres in India are briefly described below, which are organized in chronological order:

♦ Research Centre for Women’s Studies, SNDT Women’s University

<www.rcwssndt.org/>

A pioneering institution established in 1974, the Research Centre for Women’s Studies (RCWS) at SNDT University, Mumbai, is the largest and oldest of its kind in India. During its 39 years of existence, its contribution to the development of Women’s Studies has been largely recognized, both nationally and internationally.
Since its inception, the RCWS has undertaken several research projects with generous grants from national and international donor agencies, with a very broad-based research focus which has led to theoretical studies (some of which have had policy implications) and action based projects. It has also contributed to the development of Women’s Studies curriculum and training manuals. It has a well-established publications programme, including a quarterly newsletter; and it reaches out into the larger community through its regular seminar series and networking programmes. It was in recognition of its contribution to the development of Women’s Studies (specifically in research, curriculum and faculty development programmes) that the University Grants Commission (UGC) identified the RCWS as a centre of excellence during (the 9th Plan period) with the mandate of providing the necessary leadership for the development of Women’s Studies.

The RCWS envisages its role as a catalyst of social change; the various components of the programme, namely research, teaching, community development, networking and dissemination are not sought as separate, but rather as inter-linked components of a cohesive whole. Drawing from each other these various components will enrich the entire programme and initiate a process of change. The target group of these multi-pronged interventions is women at the grassroots, activists, students of Women’s Studies and other disciplines, policy makers and others.

♦ The Centre for Women’s Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi

<www.cwds.org/>

It was established on 19th April 1980, in the middle of the International Women’s Decade, by a group of men and women, who were involved in the
preparation of the first ever comprehensive government report on the ‘Status of Women in India’ entitled ‘Towards Equality’ (Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, (CSWI), Government of India) and who were later associated with the Women’s Studies Programme of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The Advisory Committee on Women’s Studies of the ICSSR recommended the need for an autonomous institute to build on the knowledge already generated, but with a wider mandate and resources to expand its activities in research and action. The recommendation was accepted by the ICSSR, and communicated to the Women’s Bureau of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India.

A few months later, under the leadership of late Prof. J.P. Naik, the CWDS was registered under the Societies’ Registration Act, 1860 in New Delhi and started functioning since May 1980, with a small financial grant from the Vikram Sarabhai Foundation, under the Chairpersonship of Dr. Phulrenu Guha and Dr. Vina Mazumdar as the Director. In 1984-85, on the recommendation of a visiting committee appointed by the Indian Council of Social Science Research, CWDS began to receive an annual maintenance grant from the ICSSR and became recognised as one of the Research Institutes supported by ICSSR. The Centre’s own in- house journal Samya Shakti, began in the mid-1980’s, (later renamed as Indian Journal of Gender Studies) initiated a debate on the role of Women’s Studies within higher education. Women’s Studies M.Phil course is also conducted by the school.
The Women's Studies and Development Centre (WSDC), University of Delhi

Established in 1987 as a response to University Grants Commission's call to address women's issues in higher education. The Centre was one of the first seven Women's Studies centres established by UGC. In the history of 35 years, the centre has made long strides in the direction of Teaching, Research and Development. The Centre is the focal point for women's and gender studies in the University. The activities of WSDC place women and gender at the centre of its inquiry focusing mostly on multidisciplinary perspectives of class, caste, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, age. It also addresses several other contemporary socio-political issues concerning women. Teaching and research has gradually become the prime focus of the Centre.

The Centre offers short term courses on Women's Studies for undergraduates, graduates and post graduate: 'Certificate Courses in Women's Studies' is offered at colleges for under graduates. A course titled *Gender and Society* for graduates and 'Advanced Certificate Course in Gender Studies' for post graduates is run by WSDC.

Apart from these short term courses the centre undertakes many research projects and other extension activities. It regularly offers University Grants Commission's Refresher Course in Women's Studies for teachers. The centre also organizes gender sensitization programs, community action, lectures, workshops, seminars and conferences regularly. WSDC has networks with different faculties.
and colleges of Delhi University, Women’s Studies Centres across the country, different foreign universities, United Nations and its constituent bodies, Government bodies, voluntary organizations.

♦ The Department-cum-Centre for Women’s Studies and Development, Punjab University

<http://cwsd.puchd.ac.in/>

The Department-cum-Centre for Women’s Studies and Development was originally set up as a Centre for Women’s Studies and Development in 1987 with Prof Pam Rajput as its Founding Director. It was one of the first seven centres set up by the University Grants Commission in 1987. On the basis of its excellent performance, it was one of the six Centres placed in Phase III by the UGC. In the year 2009, it has been upgraded to the status of a full-fledged Department of the University and is now referred to as Department-cum-Centre for Women’s Studies and Development.

The Department seeks both to interpret Women's experiences as well as to change Women's condition, through a transformation of consciousness, social forms and modes of action. It seeks to interrogate the entire system of socio-economic-political and cultural subordination of women as well as influence, reshape and recast dominant ideologies. It visualizes itself as a catalyst to transform an unjust, inegalitarian society into one where gender justice and equality would be the norm.

It serves as a resource and nodal Centre for the region and true to its mandate, has developed as a strong academic Centre of teaching and learning,
generating new thinking and knowledge on feminist theory and initiating courses in
Women’s Studies.

The Department-cum-Centre has taken a lead in the region in introducing the formal degree programmes in Women’s Studies. The programmes continuing at present are: M.A. in Women’s Studies and Ph.D. Programme in Women’s Studies.

♦ Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women’s Studies Centre, University of Pune

<http://www.unipune.ac.in/snc/womens_studies_centre/>

The Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women’s Studies Centre established in 1987 in University of Pune, which is known for its commitment to excellence and innovation.

Mahatma Phule and Savitribai Phule started the first school for girls in 1848 in this city. Savitribai Phule is the first woman teacher of modern India. Ever since, whether it was the debate on education for women or widow remarriage, Pune has occupied a central place. The Women’s Studies Centre, University of Pune is known for its research in the following areas.

- Social History of 19th and early 20th Century Maharashtra from a Gender Perspective.

- Feminist Theorization: Global and Local Issues

- Conceptual Issues in Gender, Caste and Culture

- Debates/Issues in Gender and Minority Communities in India
• Engendering Mainstream Disciplines: Theoretical Perspectives and Strategies

• The teaching Programmes of the Centre involves

The centre conducts various courses such as MA in Gender. Culture and Development Studies, One year PG interdisciplinary diploma, PG certificate course, and undergraduate interdisciplinary certificate courses in Women and Development Studies.

♦ School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University

<http://www.jaduniv.edu.in/view_department.php?deptid=150>

Beginning its journey in January 1988 with Professor Jasodhara Bagchi as founder-Director, the School was recognised by the UGC in February 1989. The University Grants Commission recognised it as the Nodal Centre for Women’s Studies in the Eastern Region during the IXth Plan period. The School remains the most widely known within the region and also nationally.

In the 1980s and 90s the chief concern of the school was to integrate women’s experiences, issue, problems and perspectives into other branches of knowledge. The attempt was not only to add a women’s perspective but to transform traditional disciplines through considerations of gender. The development of a feminist perspective went hand in hand with attempts to empower women. The School also aims at dispelling contrived barriers raised by traditional academic disciplines experimenting with new forms of interdisciplinary.
A major objective of the School has been to promote a dialogue between academics and activists, social work and policy making. By facilitating research and extension work, their aim is to enhance the visibility of women and gender issues within the academic community of the University and indeed in wider society. They have also worked towards creating a platform for sensitizing government agencies, members of the academy and activists.

♦ Women's Studies Research Centre, Calcutta University

<http://www.caluniv.ac.in/academic/women.htm>

Established on April 1, 1989 with financial support from University Grants Commission, Women Studies Research Centre at the University of Calcutta is an interdisciplinary research unit. From the very beginning, WSRC is dedicated to the cause of gender sensitization programmes as well as serious academic research. It is also engaged in micro-level field studies, and generation of awareness programmes. It has also made sincere attempts to include Women's Studies as part of the curricula.

The activities carried out at the Centre are multi-faceted. Besides being involved in various fields of research on women, seminars and workshops are conducted regularly on different topics, sometimes in collaboration with other organizations. Research publications are an important aspect of WSRC. The centre has also conducted lots of short term certificate courses and also provide refresher courses. WSRC has started M.Phil degree course from July 2005.
Centre for Women’s Studies came into existence in the University of Mysore during 1989. The Centre was started with the objective of promoting gender equity through Research, Teaching, Training and Advocacy. The following are the specific objectives:

- To sensitize people to acknowledge and appreciate women’s roles in society.

- To raise public awareness about gender discrimination and the unequal status of women and men, by arranging workshops, seminars, conferences and extension activities.

- To disseminate information regarding women’s participation in different fields of life.

- To teach Women’s Studies as a discipline from Women’s perspective.

- To develop a resource centre on women for the use of academicians, activists and the public.

- To act as consultative and resource agency on women’s rights, gender sensitization for governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

CWS Mysore is one of the few centres to introduce Post Graduate Diploma in Women’s Studies and two years Post Graduation in Women’s Studies.
has been instrumental in the incorporation of women component in the curriculum of various disciplines like Sociology, Economics etc., in the University, and degree colleges and has played a major role in introducing Women's Studies as a discipline in the Open University at Mysore. The Centre has developed wide contacts and association with NGOs, Government departments, colleges and activist groups and has been participating in various programmes for sharing and awareness-building. It has conducted a number of gender sensitization and outreach programmes in both the urban and rural areas.

♦ The Centre for Women’s Studies, Avinashilingam Deemed University

<http://www.cws-adu.org/>

This centre is sponsored by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi and was initiated in August 2000. The Centre has carried out the work in the areas of gender equity, economic and self reliance, education, women’s rights and awareness activities. The Centre has evaluated various developmental projects and has generated a wide array of resource materials for disseminating in the community. It has multidisciplinary collaboration and a close network both within and outside the University system.

Along with a number of short term courses the centre offers M.Phil and Ph.D. in Women’s Studies from 2009 onwards, A choice based paper on Women and Development is offered for the undergraduate students of the University.
Women’s Studies & Research Centre, Banasthali University

Women’s Studies and Research Centre was established under Xth Five Year Plan at Banasthali University in July 2005. Teaching, Training, Research and Extension/Out Reach activities are being undertaken under the Centre.

The major thrust area of research undertaken by the center so far are reproductive health, gender budgeting, child marriage, women’s sports etc. Centre has been playing its incessant efforts to inculcate gender's perspective in almost all activities undertaken by Banasthali University.

Academic programmes offered by the centre are: foundation course entitled 'Women in Indian Society' for all undergraduate students, one compulsory interdisciplinary paper entitled Women’s Studies' for all social science students at post graduate level, P.G. diploma in 'Women & Human Rights' and Master of Social Work (MSW).

Women’s Studies Centre ,P. G. Department of Home Science, Sardar Patel University

Women Studies Centre at Sardar Patel University was established in March 2005 and started functioning fully since August-September 2005. The identification of priorities for Women’s Studies Centre at Sardar Patel University is based on the fact that the university is a rural-based one established with the aim of uplifting the educational level of the local population, neighbouring towns and interior villages.
Proximity to urban settings such as Baroda and Ahmedabad has led to greater exposure in a section of the local female population here while the other half remains largely backward in all respects. In this background, the major aim and objective of the centre is capacity building in women.

- Centre for Women’s Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad


The Centre for Women’s Studies (CWS), at the University of Hyderabad, is an interdisciplinary programme in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Performing arts, Communication, Management and the Natural Sciences.

It is a standalone centre collaborating with different faculty and schools. The University had a Women’s Studies Cell that has been operational since 1984, that has now been upgraded to a Centre from June 2007 onwards. This was alternatively located in the School of Social Sciences and the School of Humanities. The Centre offers M.Phil and Ph.D. programme in Gender Studies.

3.32.1 Women’s Studies Centres in the Universities of North East India

- Women’s Studies Research Centre (WSRC), Gauhati University

[http://www.gauhati.ac.in/page.php?cat=Centre&id=Womens%20Studies%20Research%20Centre>

In North East India Gauhati University pioneered in the establishment of Women’s Studies Centres, with the establishment of Women’s Studies Research
Centre (WSRC) Gauhati University. The Women’s Studies Research Centre, Gauhati University is a UGC sponsored Research Centre, established in 1989.

The major objectives of the centre are

- to create awareness on women’s issues
- to assess women’s contribution to the social processes
- to find out women’s own perception of their lives, the broader social reality and their struggles and aspirations
- to assess roots and structures of inequality in the society and their struggles and aspirations.

The Centre has been recognised as the nodal Centre for the North East by National Assessment and Accreditation Council, (NAAC), and also by the UGC for carrying out the UGC scheme for Capacity Building of Women Managers for Academic Leadership in Higher Education in the NE region.

The M. Phil. course in Women’s Studies has been started from 24th January, 2009 in Women’s Studies Research Centre, Gauhati University.

The course offers the specializations such as -Women and Media, Women and Politics, Women and Education, Women and Literature, Women and Psychology etc. The Library of WSRC is a specialized research resource centre for a comprehensive collection of published and unpublished material on Women’s / Gender Studies / Women’s issues. A complaint cell against Sexual Harassment at
workplace has been constituted by the University as a proactive measure against any such incident. The cell functions under the aegis of the WSRC, G.U.

The department of Women’s Studies, Gauhati University was established in the year 2009. MA and Ph.D. courses in Women’s Studies are run under the department of Women’s Studies. It works in tandem with WSRC and the department and the centre supplements each other’s work.

- **Centre for Women’s Studies (CWS), Dibrugarh University**

  <http://dibru.ac.in/page.php?cat=Centre&id=Womens%20Studies>

  The next centre established in the North East Region is *The Centre for Women’s Studies*, Dibrugarh University. The Centre for Women’s Studies, Dibrugarh University, is one of the U.G.C. approved Women’s Studies Centres in the country. It is the second such Centre in the North East region. It was established in 1998 with a UGC grant under the IX Plan and received UGC approval in November 2004. From the beginning the centre has been engaged in research, training, documentation and dissemination and extension work on issues relating to women and women’s empowerment both among the academic community and also in the wider society. In the session 2005-06 the centre has also started teaching activities by offering a one-year part time Post-graduate Certificate Course on Women’s Studies (PGCCWS). This is the first course of this kind in the region. The centre has also introduced Ph.D. Programme on Women’s Studies from the Academic Session of 2009-2010. The Centre is housed in its own premises in the Research Complex, Dibrugarh University. The Centre has a well stocked library and the library caters to
the students, researchers and teachers of Dibrugarh University and also provide membership to the teachers and researchers of affiliated colleges. The centre has also helped in the formation of and maintains links with Women’s Studies and Development Cells (WSDC) in the colleges affiliated to Dibrugarh University.

- **Centre for Women’s Studies (CWS), Nagaland University**

  *Centre for Women’s Studies* in Nagaland University was established in the year 2007. The centre has conducted a number of short-term courses in the areas of Data Collection, Research Methodology on gender studies and also organizes seminars, trainings and programmes on Gender Sensitization. Conducts computer training for young girls and takes up collaborative research works in collaboration with state sister organizations in the areas of women trafficking, role of women in GDP etc. Currently the centre is in IIrd stage of development and acts as facilitator for research in areas relating to women and gender studies with special emphasis on issues related to women in Nagaland.

- **Women’s Studies Centre (WSC), Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh**

  *Women’s Studies Centre* of Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh is an *UGC* supported centre in North East India established in 2009. The centre has no separate infrastructure and attached with the department of education. The centre is in its first phase and still expecting proper financial support from UGC for infrastructure and staff development.
Tezpur University has always been a conscious supporter of women's right and is gender sensitive. This is reflected in the involvement of a number of faculties who have undergone training on empowerment and gender issues. The university has conducted various programmes and training on women's issues. To name a few, capacity building programmes sponsored by the UGC. Some of the lady faculties have been selected as trainers and master trainers for such programmes.


The centre has recently been renamed as Changraprobha Saikiani Centre for Women's Studies which functions as a centre to coordinate and promote studies on women belonging to the diverse socio-cultural milieu of a multicultural North East India and the assimilation of women from marginalised tribal / non tribal and ethnic groups through outreach activities such as field study, advocacy, workshops to enhance awareness and to train manpower to conduct research in women studies. The centre aims at connecting, coordinating and constructing a community of women who would significantly contribute towards meeting objectives of gender sensitization and empowerment in this region.
Women’s Studies Centre (WSC), Tripura University

<http://www.tripurauniv.in/index.php/notice/centre-for-womens-studies.html>

The Women’s Studies Centre, Tripura University is a UGC sponsored Centre under Tripura University, established in 2011 dedicated exclusively to research and advocacy on women's issues. The Women's Study Cell functioning under the auspices of Tripura University since 2006, engaged in carrying out these activities is now empowered to act as full-fledged research centre. The major objectives of the centre are:

- To generate awareness about the role of women in society and civilization as a whole
- To assess women's contribution to the social processes
- To find out women's own perception of their lives, the broader social reality and their struggles and aspirations
- To assess roots and structures of inequality in the society and their struggles and aspirations

Women’s Studies centres in the university system are very well engaged with research and extension and information dissemination activities, through which these centres are contributing towards the development of the Women’s Studies not only as a academic discipline but also acts as agents for social awareness and development.
3.33 Research on Women's Studies in India

"History is His Story; Women need to write her story"

One of the major aspects of women's question is the under-representation of women in the history of nation building and without knowing the history, future generations of women should have to start from scratch to seek out their liberation.

Research in Women's Studies programmes has ranged from critique and reconstruction of theory to developing new frameworks for identification and analysis of information both quantitative and qualitative. The WSCs need to experiment with interdisciplinary research using a range of methodologies. Purely academic as well as action research are encouraged by UGC. Collaborative research, regionally/nationally, is promoted as this, would not only contribute to knowledge building but also academically strengthen the WSCs in the process.

An overview of the achievements of Women's Studies in India during the last quarter of a century indicates that recovery and translations of lost writings by women in different languages has been one of the most positive outcomes of this movement. Women's Studies scholarship has recovered texts dating back to the ancient period, which provide extraordinary source material for not only litterateurs, but for students of intellectual, cultural and regional history. In the last few decades, several oral narratives of women in the peasant, tribal and dalit struggles have been documented, giving new insights into the history of modern India.

"...Through these studies, the centres not only evolved more accurate ways of measuring women's contribution to society, but also legitimised what were
otherwise considered ‘non-formal’ sources of information like oral history, personal narratives etc. Besides individual research, many of the centre also encouraged joint and interdisciplinary one’s-different ways of doing research. All this was part of the larger attempt to move women’s issues from periphery to the centre.” (Jain and Rajput, 2003, p. 31)

The Women’s Studies movement has made some major breakthroughs in the content of research as well as in the methodologies employed. Oral history and personal narratives have come out as the major sources of information in Women’s Studies and case studies has become major research outputs in the field.

In the inception phase, Women’s Studies was logically seen as a part of the humanities and social sciences streams. However, it has moved beyond these limits - to engage with science and technology with particular reference to reproductive technologies, genetic sciences, agriculture, medicine and other disciplines.

University Grants Commission has identified some of the research areas for Women’s Studies centres to take up research projects in such areas. Some of such areas are:

➢ The invisibility, distortion and marginalisation of gender as a category of analysis in mainstream disciplines and their canonization,

➢ Collaboration with Film Studies is expected to be beneficial for Women’s Studies. India is the largest producer of films (in many languages) in the world, which certainly have a social impact, particularly on women’s lives. Mass Communication and Research on
the expanding visual media have led to significant films documenting women's history.

Since the publication of the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI), the discipline of Demography became integrally connected to the twin movements of Women and Women's Studies and debates on the declining sex ratio as evidence of marginalization of the majority of women in Indian Society. The Indian Census of 2001 revealed an internal shift in the sex-ratio trend. "Missing Girls" replaced "Missing Women" – during the decade (1990s) dedicated by the SAARC Summit to the Girl Child. This is an area that requires urgent exploration, field action, action research, and other types of research and advocacy efforts.

The emergence of the International Conventions on Human Rights, Women's Rights and Child Rights has increased the importance of legal studies for specialists as well as for general education. Women's Studies must promote interaction with these new legal aspects of social existence.

Some of other UGC suggested areas are:-


ii) Women and the Political Process, with special focus on women in PRIs

iii) Science, technology and women; with special focus on women and reproductive health.
iv) Forms of violence both public and private against women and girl children.

v) Women headed households and women as major family earners.

vi) Migration and Displacement – internal and international.

vii) Women in the organized and unorganized labour force.

viii) Interlocking of gender, caste and ethnic inequalities

ix) Gendered character of caste and communal violence

x) Feminist theories in the Indian context and the critical reconstruction of concepts of work, power, autonomy, patriarchy, class-caste, sexuality, sex-work among several others.

xi) Gender and Cultural expressions: Oral, printed and audio-visual forms

xii) Women's Rights within the new legal discourse of Human Rights.

(University Grants Commission, 2012)

Since Women's Studies as a subject has developed its own unique research methodology, These Women's Studies centres regularly conduct different workshops on Research Methodology on Women's Studies to promote quality research.

It is proposed by the UGC that the field action, research, documentation, teaching and extension activities to be undertaken by the WSCs should build upon each other to consolidate certain areas of specialisation. It is, therefore, suggested by
the UGC that, besides extension education, which is educational activity in outreach work, other activities to be undertaken should be field action projects, advocacy or policy development and research, the latter being frequently commissioned by various agencies or Government, such as evaluation of programmes, special surveys, all India co-ordinated projects, etc.

Research including field oriented project work is an important activity of these centers. Researches should be based on solving problems of women relating to their social, economic, education, health, psychological, political participation etc. Some other thrust areas as recognised by UGC during its Tenth plan are as follows:

a. The new economic policy of liberalization, globalization, privatisation and its impact.

b. National, global priority, thrust areas and various women issues and steps for solution

c. Women in the Panchayati Raj /District/ Block system; problems, limitations and role.

d. Women Health and child development

e. Domestic violence against women

f. Trafficking in women – national and international

g. Women’s writing and literature

h. Women empowerment
i. Infrastructure and facilities

j. Family and women

k. Indian Women (Nationally and Statewise)
   - Survey on the present day status of women including literacy, state policies for women, laws protecting women.
   - Access to higher education and extension and continuing education.
   - Roles, functions and image of women in present day media, national dailies and TV.
   - Freedom (age wise, level, economy), Women Rights, Human Rights, Gender Rights.
   - Major communities of women and strategies for action.
   - Sexual harassment and preventive roles and Legal awareness and strategies for action.
   - Security and safety of Women.
   - Heath care and precautions.
   - Labor force (organized & unorganized sectors).
   - Widows, old age women, girl child & social security.

l. Electronic Media for the promotion of Women's Studies.

m. Courses in Women's Studies needed with community development.
n. Natural disaster, calamities/flood/drought affected women and solution.

o. Misuses of functional autonomy by women and their possible demerits.


q. Role of Women’s Studies Centers in promotion of Health and Child development followed by Community development.

UGC recommends that the objectives and goal of research should be to support policies, planning and empowerment to women and to create better strategies and need based planning for upliftment including gender equity, consolidate infrastructure and facilities of research in various sectors concerned to Women’s Studies and their issues.

In undertaking field action projects and action research projects, it may be ensured that these projects lead to the development of new knowledge, or demonstrate a new area of service, a new strategy or methodology of work. As academic institutions, the focus of WSCs is not service but developing new knowledge by undertaking such projects.

A critical aspect of Women’s Studies is the new information and analysis, which generate new theories. Reports of conferences, seminars, meetings, issue-based affirmative action and so forth, generate knowledge, which must be documented as an important resource for designing policy and programmes for women’s empowerment.
There is still a great paucity of good books, readers and texts for teaching Women's Studies in India. In the absence of learning-teaching material, both in English and Indian languages, the academic component of Women's Studies has been diluted. The following are suggested by UGC (2012) for promoting sharing of teaching and research materials:

i) Preparation of text books, Readers/Reference Lists especially annotated ones, which would be useful in teaching and research,

ii) Thematic compilation of published/completed research for wider circulation,

iii) Compilation of regional data bank of research on Women's Studies in each region.

iv) High quality teaching/learning materials and dictionary/glossary of terms in English and Indian regional languages.

v) State-wise directory of women in prominent positions.

Women's Studies Centres are also to undertake

a. Documentation of oral narratives,

b. Translation of women's writings,

c. Documentation of campaigns of women's and other democratic movements,

d. Develop and provide database to strengthen struggles for gender equality.
It is suggested that special budgetary provisions be made for the library and documentation units of the Women's Studies programmes with attention to building up their requirement for capital equipment in the field of information technology.

The contributions, achievements with any breakthrough, areas of thrust, research publications, collaborations, infrastructure and facilities, resources generated, if any, by the centre should be reflected in the form of a manual. Though most of the Women's Studies Centres don't publish manuals, but majority of them published newsletters regularly reflecting the activities, programmes and future course of action of the centres. This kind of publication would be an important resource for those engaged in designing policies and programs for women's empowerment.

The network can promote among different centers to bring out materials on specific themes through seminars, researches, case studies. Various activities, actions and programs which are related to the above activities may be outlined as follows:

i. Creation of new information based on facts and analysis to generate new ideas, knowledge, theory and concept etc.

ii. Resource generation through seminars, workshops, conferences, surveys, and issue based action taken report, case studies so as to identify strength and weaknesses, future models.

iii. Create and use of Resource Centres for dissemination and transmission of knowledge.
iv. The UGC schemes of Book writing and Higher Education Journal, as and when revived, may also be capitalized for the purpose

v. Educational exhibition/ fare annual gatherings/ functions

vi. Awareness and environmental building/ Health Education program

vii. Human resources development and management program

viii. Publication / material development/ displays

ix. Staff achievements

tax. Donations and Sponsorship

xi. Infrastructure and facilities

xii. Documentation

xiii. Advocacy and publicity

Documentation refers to a service which is related with the research environment in the fields of the Natural and Physical sciences, the Humanities and Social Sciences. The success of Documentation activity is determined by the degree of intensity of the industrial and social environment. To increase the speed of industrial and social growth, documentation and information activities do need constant observation and planning.

3.34 Women’s Studies Documentation

After World War I, industries have come to depend more and more on research. A new class of industrial specialists have emerged. The subject coverage of
periodicals have been extended rapidly to outside the conventional subjects. Services of the micro thoughts expressed in the articles of periodicals have needed a special technique. A few of the specialists in their respective subjects walked out from the laboratories into the library and attempted to serve other specialists with nascent micro thoughts. They were called Information Officers.

The planned research under social pressure has enormously increased the quantity of research output. This downpour of new micro-thoughts and micro documents creates by itself problems in storage, retrieval and service.

Modern age starts with research. It is called the age of inquiry, discovery and invention. Diligent and systematic investigation of available data on any subject for discovery of theories and application has become the order of the day. The scope for research has become very wide and the speed of enquiry has become very rapid. Research has two aspects, viz extensive and intensive studies. In the course of extensive study, research worker has to go through all available materials on the topic chosen for research and has to collect the necessary data. After gathering the data, the researcher does the intensive study. Here the researcher analyses the collected material for the discovery of new theories, revises facts, draws conclusions and invents new application.

The knowledge base of the women’s movement was also greatly enriched by the many publications—books, reports and the grey literature (newsletters, pamphlets and so on)—that were produced by the Women’s Studies centres. These were also vastly different from traditional academic books, not only in content, but also in
form, style and in the way they were collected and organised to spawn institutions, such as documentation centres, reading rooms and open libraries (Jain & Rajput, 2003, p. 32).

**Document and Documentation**

A document is considered as a fundamental unit or building block of a library and information is the fundamental unit of a document. Document is a frame that holds up information. The document may exist in a number of physical forms or in electronic form.

The delegated task of creating access for scholars to the topical contents of documents, especially of parts within printed documents and without limitation to particular collections, was redefined as documentation (Dutta & Das, 2005).

"Suzanne Briet pointed out that "a document is evidence in support of a fact". She elaborated a document as "any physical or symbolic sign, preserved or recorded, intended to represent, to reconstruct, or to demonstrate a physical or conceptual phenomenon" (Dutta & Das, 2005).

To understand the concept of document, Briet enumerates six objects and asks if each is a document—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Star in sky</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo of star</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone in river</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone in museum</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal in wild</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal in zoo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This definition implies the permanent nature of information in the form of documents. To be a document a piece of information must be organised and stored for future reference.

Documentation is that portion of the bibliographic organisation that is involved with the indirect communication of primary materials within a many group of specialists, to the end that they will receive in a manner as efficient as possible, the data which they require for the effective execution of their work (Shera, 1966, p 2).

The word "documentation" encompasses both records and documents. Records are recorded information, regardless of the medium or characteristics, made or received by an organization that is useful in the operation of the organization. A document, on the other hand, is a term that denotes an organization's written or graphical procedures, policies or instructions.

The objective of documentation is to bring into use the nascent micro subjects by the specialist readers pin-pointedly, exhaustively and expeditiously.

The meaning of documentation has been undergoing certain variations of evolutionary nature, which is inherent in any new discipline. It involves all the library practices involved from the stage when the new knowledge is created and published, to the ultimate stage of dissemination of that new knowledge; and enjoins specifically the locating of each document, of abstracting, classifying and indexing it and retrieving it on demand. If the nascent thought is to be used effectively, some ways must be found to retrieve individual items of information and of servicing the
same in original form or by any reproduction of it, and occasionally, if necessary, in the language understood by the user. If it relates to the problem of bibliographic organisation, it does not merely mean the building of bibliography of micro-thoughts. It surpasses the traditional techniques of subject bibliography in that, it means analysis of each document in depth and in finer details. It is pre-conditioned by the actual possession of documents and their accessibility under its new bibliographic organisation and is a continuous process in anticipation of demand, rather than an activity relating to the preparation of ad hoc lists of accessible and inaccessible items, initiated after a request is received.

Dr. Ranganathan’s (1963) definition of documentation implies control over the total production of micro-documents. In order to disseminate the information about, and contained in micro-documents expeditiously to the specialists, some auxiliary activities are included by him in documentation, intended for saving the time of the specialists. These are –

a) Documentation Work
b) Documentation Service
c) Abstracting Work
d) Document Reproduction Service
e) Translation Service

Documentation Work

It is the work of preparing a documentation list. It is concerned with the technique of collecting, cataloguing, classifying and abstracting both published and unpublished literature.
Documentation work consists of the following processes –

I. Locating the documents from various published and unpublished sources by conducting through literature search

II. Abstracting the documents, specially the current scientific literature.

III. Classifying the documents and the abstracts in a convenient way.

(A faceted scheme of classification is suitable for classifying micro-documents. After classifying, a serial number is generally given with the document or abstract.)

IV. Indexing of documents is very important. Subject index cards should be prepared bearing the classification number of the abstract or document in citations of author, title, name of journal with volume number and relevant page numbers of the journal.

V. Finally, recording is done. The result of documentation work should be brought out in a documentation list in dictionary or classified form with alphabetical indexes.

Documentation Service

It is the process of reproducing any available material and making it available to others. It consist of the following processes –

I. Consulting the indexes for the entries of the document in order to bring to the knowledge of the reader the available information.

II. Supplying him with the documents available in the library.

III. Procuring the document from other libraries by inter-library loan for the use of readers.
IV. Reproducing the documents, if necessary, in the form of micro-films, micro-cards, micro-fiche, micro-opaque, Photostats etc. and providing the copies to the specialist readers on demand.

V. Providing technical translation service in the language understood by the reader from any other foreign languages.

Abstracting Work

An abstract is a brief statement of the essential content of the original or indication of the characteristics of the original. Its purpose is to draw attention to the information contained in the original and provide a sufficient basis for the reader to judge whether or not he wants to consult the original.

Document Reproduction Service (Reprography)

Reprography signifies all the various activities and techniques associated with the facsimile reproduction of documents. Micro-film, micro-print, Photostat, reflex copy, xerography, thermo fax, diazo, offset and all other varieties of processes used for making copies of documents constitute reprography.

Translation Service

Translation service is one of the facets of documentation, which plays a very important role in dissemination and application of information and knowledge.

Today, literature is publishing in various forms, various subjects and various languages. Due to language barrier, communication between scientists and technologists is very difficult, and thus full utilisation of the recorded knowledge in various documents is quite impossible. The knowledge barrier can only be overcome
by making expeditious translation of scientific and technical papers, from its language of exposition to any other desired language.

Since 1945, an altogether different factor has been accelerating interest in documentation. That is population pressure and nature and rate of production of printed documents for use. All this lead to:

i. Intensification of Research, and Conservation of Research potential of the humanity as a whole without its dissipation by unwanted repetition in research, has been demanding intensification of documentation.

ii. Change of Concept in management.

The effective use of human, material, machine and financial resources becomes the guiding principle of management. It is implied that for the purpose of decision making, possession of all relevant data—the thought, resources on all aspects of the problem on hands is of vital importance. In order to arm the management with the right information at the right time so that they may properly plan, coordinate, control and motivate to produce the goods and services, documentation becomes an essential factor in scientific management.

Different types of documentation services may be required to meet the different demands of specialist/readers. It may include:

a. Serving with frequently published advanced documentation lists for current awareness,

b. Preparing abstracts on demand or in anticipation,
c. Preparing trend reports or ‘state of the art report’ in a subject,

d. Preparing digests,

e. Preparing news digest/news briefings,

f. Adhoc collection of documents/bibliographical services, and

g. Pre-publication information.

**Documentation on Women’s Studies: Indian Scenario**

There are a good number of Women’s organizations working in nongovernmental sector, which are very well engaged in documenting the activities and the experiences in the field of activities of the respective organization. Some of such centres from India are discussed in the chapter-4. As an effort towards documenting the activities of the centres almost all the Women’s Studies centres publish newsletters periodically. Books pamphlets and special papers are published on the basis of studies done by these organisations on different aspects of women’s life. Some publishing houses like Kali for Women, STREE and Women’s Unlimited are totally devoted towards women publications. All these organizations efforts result in the development of documentation of Women’s Studies literature in India. Activities of some such organizations are discussed below:

*Aalochana* <www.aalochana.net> is a Pune-based documentation and research centre for women. The aim of the centre is to systematically contribute to the process of documentation, research, and dissemination with special emphasis on Maharashtra. Hence the name Aalochana, means critical review in Marathi. Over the years, Aalochana has become one of the significant resource and training centres, with a lot of outreach programs in the western region of India.
Aalochana's bilingual resource centre makes available a variety of local, national, and international resources on women. Samvadini is Aalochana's mobile resource centre that works with NGOs and CBOs in Pune district to create awareness about women's rights. Muskaan, an Aalochana initiative against child sexual abuse, has been working since 2000 to create awareness, and provide counseling and support to children and their families.

Aalochana has publications in the form of books, newsletters, training manuals, posters, booklets and also a good number of documentary films are made by Aalochana reflecting status of women in panchayats, participation of women in politics, story of women leaders etc.

Vimochana, meaning liberation, was initiated in 1979 by women and men from within the Centre for Informal Development Studies (CIEDS) collective that had come together in 1975 to seek a just, humane and creative society rooted in transformative politics. Vimochana grew out of the need for a public forum that would stand for organised resistance to the increasing violence on women and would be assertive in challenging the pervading apathy to the problems of women in the context of larger structures of violence and power.

Vimochana's areas of activities cover-

- Reaching out to women in distress through offering emotional and legal support, direct intervention, facilitating negotiated settlements and providing shelter.
• Focused public campaigns on specific issues like dowry harassment and
deaths, sex selective abortions, violence against women in prostitution, sexual
harassment at work place etc.

• Providing resource and conducting gender training programmes for various
educational and research institutions, police and other government
functionaries as also other activists groups, apart from facilitating processes
of reflections and critical thinking for volunteers and internees from different
parts of the state, country and world.

Documenting evidences and all relevant information available through
personal investigations and interviews with the victims, of any kind of violence
against women or their family members; and documentation based on the collection
of data, analysis of the underlying trends and patterns of violence in the present
context, etc are some of the activities of Vimochana. These documentations are then
used towards making documentary films and bringing out publications.

feminist bookstore based in Bangalore, South India. It is a sister concern of
Vimochana, an activist organisation based in the same city. The women at
Vimochana and Streelekha have been working in and around Karnataka for the last
17 years, mostly to protest and defend the rights of women wherever and whenever
they have been violated. They have reached out to women who are victimised for
dowry and either killed, driven to suicide or are forced to leave violent home
situations, women who are victims of rape, sexual harassment, wife beating, of bigamous husbands or desertion etc.

Their website (www.vimochana.in) offers a varied collection of inspiring material that can be downloaded or optionally ordered online by sending an email. The Collections include print publications from Streelekha, and various women’s rights related high resolutions print posters and also relevant DVD material.

*CHETNA*<chetaomaindia.org/> meaning “awareness” in several Indian languages and an acronym for Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness, is a non-government support organisation based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Established in 1980, CHETNA addresses issues of women’s health and development in different stages of their lives from a “Rights” perspective. CHETNA is an activity of the Nehru Foundation for Development, which is a public charitable trust, registered under the Bombay Public Trust Act 1950.

CHETNA supports Government and Non-Government organizations (GO and NGO) through building the management capacities of educationists/health practitioners/supervisors/managers enabling them to implement their programmes related to children, young people and women from a holistic and gender perspective and advocate for people centred policies.

Identified as a Regional Resource Centre (RRC) for Gujarat state and the union territories of Daman, Diu and Dadra Nagar Haveli to provide technical assistance to NGOs to improve Reproductive and Child Health (RCH), facilitate
GO-NGO partnership, document and disseminate successful approaches and provide inputs to government of India to ensure effective implementation of policies.

CHETNA's Information and Documentation Centre was established in the year 1993 to address the information needs of individuals, government organizations, Non-government organizations, academicians and students working on health and development concerns of women, young people and children. Today CHETNA's main efforts are aimed at documenting the lives of women and children in India and health issues. The collection contains a special section of training manuals, information kits and modules. In English, Hindi, Gujarati Languages.

NIPCCD (National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development) <http://nipccd.nic.in/resources_frame.htm> has a Documentation Centre for Women and Children (DCWC), which was set up in 1989. DCWC is a specialised information centre on children, women and other vulnerable groups. The information in DCWC is collected and disseminated both at national and international levels.

DCWC has a collection of over 24,000 books in English and Hindi, and 22,000 unpublished documents. It subscribes to 26 newspapers, 73 journals and 44 magazines. Of the 73 journals, 13 are international and 60 are national. It also receives around 100 newsletters every year.

Its functions cover-

- Collection of research and evaluation studies on women and children
• Identification of information sources

• Collection, classification, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information

• Creation of a database of bibliographic references of documents

• Creation of a database of voluntary and other organisations

• Creation of a database of resource persons

• Creation of a database of statistics on women

• Networking with academic and professional institutions

• Creating awareness and publicity about information resources in DCWC

The areas on which information is collected are statistics, policy documents related to children, women, youth and social issues, health - reproductive and child health, nutrition, human development - psychosocial development, education - preschool education, recreation, social welfare, including welfare of children, women, youth and family, child abuse and neglect (deprived child, juveniles, child labour, children of prisoners, terrorist violence, victims of trafficking, children in difficult circumstances, street children, etc.), differently abled persons, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, and minorities, ICDS, rural development, social legislation, social security, funding for social programmes, communication, management and environment protection.

DCWC provides reference service, photocopying services, support services like supplying research reports and bibliographies, compilations of information,
Internet searches, inter library loan facility and networks with DELNET for information sharing.

DCWC regularly publishes - DCWC Newsclips (monthly), DCWC Research Bulletin (quarterly), DCWC New Additions (quarterly) and DCWC Contents Update (quarterly).

From a concern for dissemination of information and documentation of Women's Studies material, the RCWS, SNDT University at the very outset started an information cell. This was developed into a full-fledged library and documentation wing in 1982 with the idea of making available to scholars research reports, seminar and conference papers, newspaper clippings, and unpublished material not easily available elsewhere. Abstracts and reproduction of important historical documents have also been maintained.

The Document section is a valuable collection of:

- Policy papers of Indian Government, both national and state.
- U. N. and related agencies reports.
- International declarations.
- Programmes for women's development of several countries.
- Special reports of UNICEF, FAO, ILO, INSTRAW, APDC. ESCAP on women's organizations, women and development issues.
- Texts of all Acts passed in India with respect to women since independence.
• Texts of laws applicable to women such as various labour laws since 1920.

Besides these, there are bound copies of more than 2000 papers presented at national and international seminars and conferences.

The most frequented resource is the news clippings on a wide range of issues pertaining to women collected from periodicals and major newspapers in India.

The Documentation Centre offers a treasure house of information on the genesis of the women’s movement. It has regular collection of newsletters, brochures on women’s organizations, reports of action research and annual reports, bibliography of articles on women from Marathi periodicals of the 19th and 20th centuries. Also offers bibliography assistance to scholars on request. The Centre has initiated the compilation of various internet resources of Women’s Studies from the web, on a wide range of topics, and with a special focus on women’s role in the economy and women's employment.

3.4 Women’s Studies: the present trend

The multiplication of women's organizations, the growing number of conferences, seminars, and workshops devoted to Women’s Studies, and the networks that have emerged over the last decade and a half displays dynamism and an activist orientation. Whether they can sustain the strength of the movement and deepen its sociopolitical impact will depend to a great extent on their capacity to draw strength and sustenance from an expanding base of women at the grass roots.
The pedagogic aspect of Women's Studies was totally absent in its initial phase of conceptualizing. After a number of seminars, workshops and discussions in the field, Women's Studies family has able to design a curricula to meet the needs of Women's Studies scholars and now a good number of universities are running different courses on Women's Studies at various levels starting from short term certificate courses, diploma courses leading to M-Phil and Ph.D. degrees.

Women's Studies Centres are under the pressure of functioning in a project mode and the human and physical resources available with the Women's Studies Centres are not able to successfully accomplish multiple responsibilities rests upon these Women's Studies Centres. Number of Women's Studies Centres, Networks and publications are significantly increasing in the last decade and still Women's Studies scholarship have to contribute a lot to the development and for the recognition of the discipline in the expanding society.

With the entrance of Women's Studies in the University system, the scholars have to face dual responsibilities, which is very critical to perform as they are expected to produce high quality research and at the same time they are expected to bring change in the society through various conscious raising activities and extension services. The task becomes more difficult with the scarcity or non-availability of funds that these centres have to face and also they have to fight against the conservative forces of the society.