CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: GENDER, CASTE, SOCIAL CHANGE AND LIFE COURSE

A set of concepts has been used to find out the notions of masculinity and femininity in three caste groups i.e. Brahmins, Rajputs and Banias. In fact, throughout the study, with the help of various conceptualisations and perceptions efforts have been made to find out the ideas related to men and women among these communities.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part discusses gender, and how masculinity and femininity are defined, while the second part briefly deals with the concepts used for studying caste and to see how they are relevant for the present study. The third part refers to how gender, caste and social change are related while the last part provides a general idea on the life course as a perspective and its applicability on the present study.

I. GENDER

Masculinity and femininity are often treated as dichotomous conceptions of the two sexes. That is, what one is, the other is not. Although every culture and group has its own ideas regarding what is masculine and what is feminine,
but usually masculinity is associated with 'manliness', 'dominance', 'bread-winning competence', 'independence', 'autonomy', 'success', 'courage', 'aggression' and 'violence', on the other hand femininity is associated with 'womanliness', 'domesticity', 'dependence', 'submissiveness', 'passion', 'intuition', etc.

'Gender' refers to the social construction of sex and to the categorisations and classifications into femininity and masculinity, while the word 'sex' refers to the biological division of people into female and male. 'Gender role' denotes to a set of expectations and obligations associated with a particular person by being a male or female within a group or social situation. Gender roles are learnt, acquired or internalized. 'Gender identity' refers to how people look up at themselves as masculine and feminine.

Now, the question is: How do sex-roles become gender-lined? It has been suggested that asymmetries between sexes lie in their cultural evaluation as female/male; domestic orientation/public orientation; ascribed status/achieved

3. Chodorow 1974; Rosaldo 1974
status; nature/culture⁴; affective expressive/intellectual instrumental⁵ and passive/active⁶, etc. The universal inequality of sex roles could be result of various factors that are deeply rooted in human societies. Often, women are identified or symbolically associated with 'nature': their status is connected with their stage in the biological life-cycle. A biological basis may be one of several bases, but more significant is its evaluation and interpretation by society and association with a particular type of action. In other words, stigmatization or valuation of behaviour is made in terms of a person of being male or female.

A contrast between the 'domestic' orientation of women and the 'extra-domestic' or public ties available to men, which is neither necessary nor desirable, provides framework for an examination of male and female roles in any society. Women become absorbed primarily in domestic activities because of their role as mothers.⁷ Their economic and political activities are constrained by the responsibilities of childrearing and the focus of their emotions and attention is particularistic and directed toward children and

5. Parsons & Bales 1955.
7. Ibid.
Socialization theory has widely been used for understanding the nature of masculinity/femininity. Margaret Mead in her study - Sex and Temperament In Three Primitive Societies concluded that "masculine" and "feminine" are cultural constructs and vary from culture to culture and within a culture between different individuals as they are exposed to "differences in conditioning especially during early childhood, and the form of this conditioning is culturally determined". Socialization theory is considered important for understanding how one becomes masculine or feminine. But it has, recently, been criticized for not being able to explain the construction of these notions or "where the content of these notions comes from". Even Mead was aware of this shortcoming as she said "...cultural creations to which each generation, male and female, is trained to conform. There remains, however, the problem of

the origin of these socially standardized differences". 13

Object relation is another perspective commonly used in gender studies. It is supposed to be an improvement on Freudian psychoanalysis and it attempts to identify the psychological links between genderization and the earliest experiences of girls and boys. Object-relation theory distinguishes the physical birth of an infant from the psychological birth. 14 The basic argument is that primary parenting by women and discontinuity in the little boy's primary identification with his mother, in contrast to the continuity of the girl's, is central to the emotional dynamics of masculinity and femininity.

A woman's role comes to her "naturally"; her growing up has a continuity. By staying in proximity with mother she learns that by being 'nurturant', 'responsive' and 'kind' she will be appreciated and this process involves the turning inward of the little girl's aggressive feelings. By suppressing her feelings women develop comparatively "weak ego boundaries" which allow them to empathize too readily with the needs of others. And result is a diffused "femi-

A man's experience lacks this continuity. They are forced into an early psychic separation and independence from mother-world. This is because of exclusive mothering by women and comparative absence of emotional and physical intimacy of the father. The boy's sense of self thus becomes bound up with his sexual identity and masculinity is constructed against femininity in a separation generated and sexualized by the mother. In this way the masculine identity formation begins with separation and individuation from mother. That is, discarding everything that associate with femininity and establishing one's self as an individual.

The object relation theory places excessive emphasis on the role of family, primary socialization and mothering in the formation of masculine and feminine identity. In this reference the theory is of limited use for the present study. Somehow the idea of caste does not fit into one scheme of theory. In other words, the theory does not take into consideration - what norms or values a family upholds and why.

15. Chodorow 1978:108-
One cannot say exactly that because of separation and individuation a boy develops a violent or aggressive attitude in general and particularly against women. Also important is what society expects from them by being a male and the 'type' of masculinity or manliness is recognized in a particular group, culture and society.

Pleck\textsuperscript{17} suggests that masculinity should not be taken as something permanently fixed by childhood experiences, but as a role that changes over the life span of the individual and as a role that is itself not stable, but undergoes significant cultural changes. Masculinity is fundamentally the social pressure that internalizes and prevents personal growth.

For studying masculinity and femininity various schemes/dictums/scales have been proposed by the psychologists e.g. Constantinopole\textsuperscript{18}, Gough\textsuperscript{19}, Bem\textsuperscript{20}, Scanzoni\textsuperscript{21},

\begin{enumerate}
\item Pleck 1976.
\item Constantinopole 1973:389-407.
\item Gough 1952.
\item Scanzoni 1975.
\end{enumerate}
Burke\textsuperscript{22}, Helmreich et. al.\textsuperscript{23}. These M/F test constructions are extensively used in psychological studies. Many of these scales make the concept of M/F bipolar, that is, what one is, other is not. However, Bem's paradigm known as 'Bem's sex role inventory' consists of a list of sixty adjectives: twenty masculine, twenty feminine and twenty neutral. Respondents are to rate themselves on each adjective using a seven-point rating scale ranging from 1 ("never or almost never true") to 7 ("always or almost always true").

For the present study none of the scales will be used as these scales and their adjectives are constructed in reference to western societies and are not much useful in the Indian context. Moreover within the city of Jaipur people are not homogeneous, they are not only divided as men or women but are also divided on the lines of caste, occupation economic standing and education. In such a situation one set of objectives is not applicable for understanding the ideas related to masculinity and femininity.

However, the traditional western model of masculinity associates manliness with aggression, violence, physicality,

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impulsive behaviour, avoidance of tenderness, a purely functional relationship between the sexes, femininity is related to tenderness, vulnerability, immaturity etc.

In the Hindu system, it seems there are various models of masculinity, these models are quite different from the western traditional type. But to some extent the Rajput model does look similar to western type in its emphasis upon physical prowess. For a Brahmin man his manliness lies in self-restraint and non-violence. It is difficult to say that a Brahmin is feminine, womanly or unmanly rather their value system assigns them a different role-set as man. The same is the case with the Banias too.

One can say that notions of masculinity and femininity vary from culture to culture or rather from group to group. Every group has its own way of attributing what is masculine and what is feminine. And what a particular culture demands from a person by being a man or woman is the greatest significance in formation of a person's identity.

II. CASTE

Some major theoretical frameworks used for studying caste in India especially suggested by Dumont and Srinivas need some attention in view of the present study. Du-
mont's interpretation of caste is based on the idea of 'purity and impurity'. According to Dumont the 'pure' must be kept uncontaminated by the 'less pure' in every aspect of life - marriage, family, food and occupation. Further, he had distinguished caste on the basis of status and power that status is not only superior to power but also surrounds power.

Since the study is not an attempt to find or discuss the "higher" or "lower" status of Brahmins, Rajputs and Banias, the concept of "purity" and "impurity" as proposed by Dumont is of little use. This concept would have been more useful if had it been a comparative study of the "upper" and the "lower" social status communities.

The process of socio-cultural change and mobility in the traditional caste system has been studied within the conceptual framework of 'Sanskritization'. It was M.N. Srinivas who first put forward the concept and defined it as "the process by which a 'low' caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a 'twice born'

caste. The sanskritization of a group has usually the effect of improving its position in the local caste hierarchy. It normally presupposes either an improvement in the economic or political position of the group concerned or a higher group self-consciousness resulting from its contact with a source of the 'great tradition' of Hinduism such as pilgrim centre or a monastery or proselytizing sect".26.

The concept is useful to some extent for the study in the sense that Brahmins, Rajputs and Banias from the 'elite' group in the city. So they do provide a model for imitation to those groups whose economic, political and ritual positions were relatively weak and are now trying to remove these disabilities. Moreover, such social changes also bring changes in the world of men and women.

Srinivas's concept of Sanskritization describes how lower ranking groups claim higher status, but it has limited scope while comparing the three 'high' castes. If we take each community individually the concept can be applied in analyzing changes - particularly among Rajputs. The post-Independence era gave a sudden rise to the 'Rajputization' of many groups in Jaipur region.

The warrior-ruler model of the Rajputs includes power, authority, dominance, social prestige and status without much stress on learning, ascetic piety and wealth. Since the Rajput model imposes fewer restrictions it provides an effective model for imitation. Rajputization has also been observed in the other parts of India, especially by Majumdar²⁷, M.N. Srinivas²⁸, Pocock²⁹, Cohn³⁰, Shah & Shroff³¹, Mayer (1960), Surjit Sinha³², S.K. Srivastava³³, Rowe³⁴, Minturn & Hitchcock³⁵, G. Shah³⁶. Accordingly, the process of Rajputization involves re-arrangement of lineage and lineage segments in hierarchical order, which provided a basis for hypergamy. For this genealogists and mythographers are patronized who help in creating a myth about their origin and prepare a genealogy. Association with some famous warrior clan generally validates claim to Rajput

²⁷. Majumdar 1926.
²⁹. Pocock 1955.
status and the claims are established through hypergamous marriages. Rajputization not only involves change in occupation, securing the services of priests, but also emulation of what is deemed to be the appropriate role behaviour for a Rajput.

However, in the Jaipur city Rajputization is more or less related to the stratification of Rajput community itself. The people who were working for the ruling families and the Jagirdars for generations and many of them were 'half Rajputs' after Independence they got landed property and de-employed from the traditional occupations. Since they were born and brought up in the Rajput culture, they also started calling themselves Rajputs and adopted Rajput names, customs which they were already following. However, at the same time challenging the "established Rajputs" made them more sensitive to their Rajputhood.

Such processes are not visible (probably I did not come across during my field work) where a person is not a Bania or a Brahmin but claiming to be so. In fact, in Rajasthan most of the Bania sub-castes trace their origin from Rajput rulers e.g. Agrawals, Maheshwaris, Oswals etc.
generally change their occupation while women are secluded from outside world to domestic work.

There is a view\textsuperscript{37} that with sanskritization subjugation of women increases because greater constraints are placed on women. Women are even used as means for achieving higher social status.

Although it is true that a rise in social standing increases constraints on women but one cannot say positively that the subjugation of women lies in the caste hierarchy. From an outsider's point of view it could be the case, for an insider the situation can be different. Women might not actually feel subjugated. Women too desire for an improvement in social status. When restrictions like purdah are placed, they certainly do not feel that they are being used or suppressed. Rather they feel proud and honored that their family is now in better position so that they need not work outside the home. This is a thing of social status.

Since social prestige is attached to seclusion of women when a poor family becomes affluent enough to adopt purdah, its women are generally eager to do so because now it is

"family izzat", an index of superior status. The seclusion of women results in the increased dependence of women on men. It involves the emulation of the high caste ideal of 'pativrata', i.e. treatment of the husband as deity, or that all religious rituals are directed towards the well-being and long life of the husband, because of widowhood due to taboos related to a widow and social restrictions on widow remarriage.

Moreover, the idea that at marriage a woman is given as kanyadan with dowry to another family makes the situation difficult for a woman, especially for a widow. Once married return to her parental home becomes a formal occasion and permanent return becomes out of the question because it is seen as dishonorable for both families, her natal and conjugal.

Another effect of seclusion is that a girl becomes a burden for her parents and preference goes for a son. Preference for son has been enforced and reinforced by religious sanctions and related rituals which only a son can perform, so that women become important only in their reproductive role especially as mothers of sons.

Seclusion of women emphasizes that now their sexuality is controlled, that daughters are virgin, chaste and pure and wives faithful. Once women are secluded the seclusion of women is associated with social status, a preference certainly goes for a virgin bride with a good 'reputation'.

It has been suggested that pure/impure is Indian version of culture/nature dichotomy. Impurity is associated with low castes and among high castes with women. But impurity of caste is supposed to be permanent and for women it is rather temporary related to her life-cycle, when she is menstruating, during child birth and death in family. She is treated like an 'untouchable', impure because of her close involvement with 'life process'.

A man is considered relatively pure. Purity of man can be associated with their extradomestic orientation. In their position as bread-winner they cannot afford staying at home but they can afford their women staying at home and adhere to purity/impurity notions as they differentiate

40. For example, even among the 'untouchable' Chuhras prepuberlat girls are treated as pure as a goddess while are treated as pure as goddess while in menstruation and child birth she is impure. As a suhagin she is auspicious, especially if she is also a mother of sons but as widow she is inauspicious. See Kolenda 1984:289-354.
lower born higher castes.

In reference to caste and gender the most talked about topic is control of female sexuality and caste purity. Nur Yalman writes: "There is specific important relationship between female purity and the purity of castes.... It is through women and not men that the 'purity' of the caste-community is ensured and preserved...."\(^1\) But in reference to Rajputs or Rajputization\(^2\) the notion of 'purity' rather becomes point of honor that their women should not work outside the home and in regard to marriage Rajputizing groups usually opt for hypergamous marriage for their daughters. Marriage relations are the easiest way to make permanent connections with high ranking group. For example, Patidars and Kolis of Gujarat\(^3\) adopted hypergamy while claiming Rajput status.

But when such groups find it difficult to marry their daughters in high status groups and are not accepted by their reference groups and they find it degrading to marry

\(^1\) Yalman 1963:41-44.

\(^2\) As is common in the city of Jaipur among the groups like Charans and Darogas who were associated with the royal Rajput families.

off their daughters in their own castes with whom they are trying to dissociate, in such situation many have introduced huge dowry and sometimes started practicing female infanticide. For instance, Lewa Kankis of Gujarat, Lewa Patidars, Jhareja Rajputs of Kathiawar; tribes of Meenas\textsuperscript{44} and Mahir of Ajmer and Udaipur adopted such a practice and they were equally proud of their lineage considering Rajputs themselves. The Jats of Bharatpur practised it, as they took it as disgraceful to give their daughters in marriage to anyone.\textsuperscript{45}

At the "lower levels of caste, marriages by exchange, widow remarriages and bride-price in place of dowry are more prevalent. As these groups move upward they discard these practices and introduce others like hypergamy, dowry etc.\textsuperscript{46} Since more prestige and high caste status is associated with such marriages due to economic affluence or seclusion of women leading to their devaluation as earning member of the society, these not only have suppressive effects on women but also put pressure on men. Now men have to arrange substantial dowry for their daughters and look for a bride-

\textsuperscript{44} Saxena 1975:10-12.


\textsuperscript{46} See Kolenda 1984:108. "Woman as tribute, woman as flower: images of "woman" in weddings in north and south India".
groom in a higher ranking group etc.

Dowry is an integral part of high caste marriages. Upward moving groups generally pay huge sums (dowry) to have a desirable groom from higher strata. For example, the rich, landowning patidars of central Gujarat paid dowry while poor patidars paid bride-price. Again the rich landowning Desais (upper layer of Anavil Brahmins) paid dowry, while the Bhatela, the poorer division of the Anavil practised marriage by exchange, both direct and indirect.47

Introduction of dowry makes a girl's birth burdensome for her family. As it becomes a matter of honor and family prestige to give their daughter with sufficient dowry, probably giving of a large dowry helped in negation of the lower status of the bride and the stigma of an association with a lower status group. It also gives the bride moral support in the sense that in spite of being from a lower status she has brought dowry (only if it is substantial). Particularly among the aristocratic families where polygyny was common, dowry used to help a bride for her maintenance and her status within zenanas. Many of their marriages were contracted in order to gain an enormous sum as dowry, while

for the family it used to help them in improving their social ranking through marriage alliance which was also often a political alliance.

Rajputizing and Sanskritizing groups also use 'sati' and glorifies 'sati' as a means for claiming higher social status. Occurrences of sati in other parts of India have been associated with drastic socio-political and economic changes. Sati was common among the Rajputs during medieval period and was associated with heroism and family honor. But in Bengal it was prevalent among Kulin Brahmins and related to Dayabhaga system, the inheritance rights to a widow, and nouveaux riche, Sanskritizing groups during colonial time. Among the Marwari Banias Sati became popular in the post-Independence period. Since sati was associated with aristocracy and high rank in earlier times groups who later on became dominant in certain areas opted for the custom/rite/practice and gave different set of values suited to their group, caste and occupation, although the incidences were never very high in number.

Sati was an expression of association with high rank. For high ranking groups marriage was the only approved

status for women, and remarriage was out of question. Attempts to upgrade caste ranking were usually accompanied by the imposition of restrictions on widow remarriage. Once married with dowry, a woman is considered as a member of another family so that in case she is widowed at an early age remarriage is not possible. On the one hand widow remarriage is seen as against the prestige of her in-laws' family. But, more importantly, who is going to marry her? Since men of high castes used to have a wide choice of brides, why should they take a widow as a bride?

But for a widower, things are/were different. Remarriage was not a problem, it was rather given religious justification. Firstly, being a patriarchal society, it attached significance to the birth of a male heir; secondly, easy accessibility of brides made the remarriage of a widower easier. One argument is that in the Hindu view women are endowed with 'wild energy'/innate energy, ('shakti'). That is why they need to be 'controlled' and directed in wifely roles. Since they are the source of 'shakti' for their husbands, when the wife is dead a man should "replace the missing source of energy and vitality by marrying again".  

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The unmarriageability of the widow among high social status groups and her association with 'inauspiciousness' and 'danger' helped in the advocacy of sati. Aspiring groups for higher status emulated this as verification of their higher ranking. Probably fear of widowhood was so strong that all rituals and rites for women were/are directed towards the wellbeing and long life of husbands. Ceremonial or actual death were the alternatives left for a widow.

IV. LIFE COURSE

'Life course' as a sociological perspective deals with lives and society and their interrelationship. Lives means human lives and one can take any aspect of human life and can study it in relation to society. And society is seen in reference to past, present or future. In this way, life course provides a broad framework for studying society because it focuses on individual in relation to society and individual and society in reference to dynamics - historical or existential or both. In other words, it gives a total worldview.

In conceptualizing life course as a research perspective E.H. Elders' work is quite important (1994, 1987, 1992). He stresses on the social forces like "time", "human agency" and "change" as they shape the life course and its
development. Elder views life-course "as a multilevel phenomenon, ranging from structured pathways through social institutions and organizations to the social trajectories of individual and their developmental pathways". 51

He emphasizes on connection between individual and historical time. He further explains: "In concept, the life course generally refers to the interweave of age-graded trajectories, such as work careers and family pathways, that are subject to changing conditions and future options, and to short-term transitions ranging from leaving school to retirement.... In terms of theory, the life course has defined a common field of inquiry by providing a framework that guides research on matter of problem identification and conceptual development". 52

Tamara K. Hareven gives a historical perspective and life course perspective to aging, generational relations and family transitions in her various articles. 53 She gives importance to "synchronization of timing" - "historical time", "family time" and "individual time". 54 She writes,

52. ibid.
"the life course approach provides a way of examining individual as well as collective development under changing historical conditions.... Rather than focusing on stages of the life cycle, a life course approach is concerned with how individuals and families made their transitions into those different stages. Rather than viewing any one stage of life such as childhood, youth and old age, or any age group in isolation, it is concerned with an understanding of the place of that stage in an entire life continuum".55

Alice S. Rossi adopts the life course perspective in her various studies in relation to age, sex and gender (1986); women's lives with historical and biological interests (1980); gender differences in parenting (1984); gender and biological aging process (1985) and her own growing up and her career in sociology.56 In her bio-social studies her aim is to "measure physical aging directly and relate it to personality, social role, time perspective, subjective age identification and so forth".57

The studies conducted taking life-course as a perspec-

tive have changed and moulded the definition of the life-
course accordingly.

Life course has widely been used in researches regard­
ing demography cohort and ageing.58 Now social scientists
are using it in the context of social dynamics and human
lives59; family development and change60; age stratifica­
tion, life-span, socialization and human development61; and
gender62.

However, still the concept of life-course has not been
used for studying caste and gender relationship in India.

Here I will be using the life course as a total world­
view, as a whole thinking pattern not as a life-world or
life process or life-span, not as inter-generational change,
not in reference to upward or downward mobility.

The focus of the present study is to find out the
notions of masculinity and femininity, not in general but in

58. E.g. Hogan 1981; Elder et. al. 1991; Cain 1964; Poner &
Kertzer 1978.


Featherman & Lerner 1985.

particular reference to three castes communities of a par-
ticular region. The efforts aim to understand the notions from all the sides and give a total worldview of the situa-
tion.

In this regard, for knowing the view of the notions, data have been collected by interviewing men and women of all the age groups - from 18 to 85 years old, comprising of Brahmans, Rajputs and Banias irrespective of their class/status. Even biographies and autobiographies of relevant persons have been looked through because they contain individual's history within the context of the larger history of one's own time.

For knowing the notions on the societal level an 'ideal type' has been constructed on the basis of what society expects, values and demands from a man and a woman of these three caste communities.

For understanding the notions in relation to society, culture and individual i.e. how and in what way the notions become apparent or noticeable in the existential condition - certain festivals, celebrated in the city of Jaipur, are analysed.

For finding out how the notions persist on the family
level and how they are reproduced - family system and family relationships are looked at.

To get a proper idea of life as existing in the city of Jaipur - photographs are clicked.