II

On Methodology
This chapter endeavors to explain the concerns on methodology that the study follows. This is principally with an apprehension that this kind of an interdisciplinary conceptual research attempt would not be able to limit the methodology in a single framework. The various methods and the ‘ways of doing’ are conceived and revised in this section. Those reviews are about discourse, deconstruction, reflexive methodology and methodology of gender. The metaphysical issues and ontological views would turn different from that of other kinds of studies for a gender based analysis which holds feminist epistemological positions. The chapter gives an account on this difference and tries to understand how concept, theory, model and method are working out in this study.

Methodological Consternation

According to Max Weber, there is no absolutely ‘objective’ scientific analysis of ‘social phenomena’ independent of special and one-sided viewpoints with which they are selected, analyzed and organized for expository purposes. He finds the reason for this in the character of the cognitive goal of all research in social science, which seeks to transcend the purely formal treatment of the legal or conventional norms regulating social life. He elucidates in an incredible way that the ideal which all the empirical sciences, who were interested in concrete ‘reality’, serve or should strive to serve, is a system of proposition from which reality can be ‘deduced’. He writes:

Our aim is the understanding of the characteristic uniqueness of the reality in which we move. We wish to understand on the one hand the relationships and the cultural significance of individual events in their contemporary manifestations and on the other the causes of their being historically ‘so’ and not ‘otherwise’. Now, as soon as we attempt to reflect about the way in which life confronts us in immediate concrete situations, it presents an infinite multiplicity of successively and coexistently emerging and disappearing events, both ‘within’ and ‘outside’ ourselves. The absolute infinitude of this multiplicity is seen to remain undiminished even when our attention is focused on a single ‘object’. (Weber, 1949, p.85)

The intricate nature of objects or phenomena and the possibilities of being analyzed, gives rise to this sort of a curb. For example understanding the phenomenon ‘family’ would invariably invite aspects of caste, class and gender that would influence in an overlapping way. Then a researcher would have to take a decision which aspect should be scrutinized in the study. Then the question arises how it could be selected something as more important to be analyzed. Weber continues;

All the analysis of infinite reality which the finite human mind can conduct rests on the tacit assumption that only a finite portion of this reality constitutes the object of scientific investigation and that only it is “important” in the sense of being “worthy of being known”. But what are the criteria by which this segment is selected. It has often been thought that the decisive criterion in the cultural sciences, too, was in the last analysis, the “regular” recurrence of certain causal relationship. The “laws” which we are able to perceive in the
infinitely manifold stream of events must according to this conception contain the scientifically essential aspect of reality. As soon as we have shown some causal relationship to be a “law”, i.e., if we have shown it to be universally valid by means of comprehensive historical induction or have made it immediately and tangibly plausible according to our subjective experience, a great number of similar cases order themselves under the formula thus attained. (1949:p.85, 86)

He concludes this passage with a notion that the empirical studies also at one level are doing mainly the job of conceptual analysis. Because the structure of ‘laws’ that are found governing the selection of events or objects having causal relations, are also being analyzed as part of understanding the particular event or object. For example, the attempt to understand the woman and the man working in causal relations would necessarily analyze the rules overriding in the institutional structures, such as that of family, in which they are related.

Any interdisciplinary study can only presume a methodology, which might be seen only as a ‘methodological convenience’, to use Weber’s terms, that he used being a critic of the ‘rational types’ of methodologies.19 According to Weber, methodology could be relativistic and irrationalistic. ‘Rational action types’ have their own significance, but one cannot interpret other types of methodologies just as deviations

from the rational types. Any study having gender as a main concept, would have to conceive irrationalistic methodology at one level, especially because feminist standpoint methodology itself is a critique of the authority of reason based knowledge production.\footnote{Pendlebury, Shirly. “Feminism, Epistemology and Education” in David Carr (ed.) 
*Education, Knowledge and Truth*, Routledge, London, 1998} At one other level such a feminist study could be a discourse analysis in nature, and could be skeptical about the possibility of the choice of a particular method of research to interpret a text. But no doubt it would follow phenomenology and hermeneutics as philosophy and method so as to understand the meaning of the text. Despite some fundamental objections, Paul Ricoeur maintains his thesis that phenomenology remains the indispensable presupposition of hermeneutic theory.\footnote{Bleicher, Josef. *Contemporary Hermeneutics as method, philosophy and Critique*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Great Britain, 1980, p.221} But for Ricoeur, hermeneutic philosophy has its say against the methodical approach to the text, and Edmund Husserl’s reference of intuition at the level of epistemology.\footnote{Ibid., p.220}

Hermeneutic philosophy, by contrast, has pointed out the universality of understanding in the figure of hermeneutic circle. The object of interpretation, the text, further more takes on an autonomous character once produced, so that it is no longer adequate to merely refer to its original meaning. Instead of containing a fixed meaning, a text invites plural reading and interpretation.\footnote{Husserlian phenomenological way of knowing through the description of phenomena has to be referred here. According to this we make sense of objects or events by the description of our experience of them as appeared to us. For details see, Hammond Michael A., Howarth Jane M., Keat Russel N. *Understanding Phenomenology*, Basil and Blackwell Ltd., U.K. 1991}

\footnote{Ibid.}
On this ground the interpretation of a text is an open and boundless process. Hermeneutics developed as a result of the move for the formulation of rules for the interpretation of profane texts in the period of Renaissance tag on the analysis of *Manu-Smrti* in this study. *Manu-Smrti* being a book of rules for life, its analysis invariably includes hermeneutics. The canon of interpretation developed by Emilio Betti is worth remembering here that introduces the social interest and public good into the juridical process. The canon of actuality of understanding asserts the need for the interpreter to reconstruct the genesis of a thought, law etc. and to adapt its formulation to changed circumstances.\(^\text{24}\)

**Concepts and Methods**

Usually the title of the research problem, the objectives of the study, the investigative questions and the hypothesis consists of concepts.\(^\text{25}\) For example, the present study has family and gender as the key concepts and the study itself is an analysis of these concepts at one level. So the concepts involved are analyzed as part of the study instead of defining them precisely beforehand. Concept being an abstract symbol representing an object, a property of an object or a certain phenomena gives rise to the study of the process and causes of abstraction from sense impression or percepts. This is significant in this study as it enables us to transfer information in the form of images about experiences in the empirical world. For example the concept ‘family’

\(^{24}\) Ibid. p.13
represents many different experiences in the day today life. And the linking of two or more concepts leads to the generation of assumptions and the combination of assumption into a system leads to the construction of formal theories.\(^{26}\) The concepts ‘family’ and ‘gender’ in this study are the abstract concepts and some concepts like ‘woman’, ‘man’ etc. are problematic in the concrete/abstract dichotomy. They are concrete in the sense they are material bodies, but abstract in the sense they designate the qualities and duties ascribed to them. A gender based study may take up the names or words ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ to show the abstract side of the concepts woman and man at some instances. This leads to the study of operationalisation of concepts with which we try to understand concepts by understanding how they are used operationally.

Concepts are in one way operational in religion, making many conceptions according to the metaphysical understanding by different people in different times. Conceptions growing from religion and metaphysics are having causal connection with the social systems. Metaphysics involves the conceptions of the reality. Any conceptual study would be embryonic from some kind of metaphysical conceptions. For example, this particular study, having the task of analyzing some concepts in the text *Manu-Smṛti*, underlies religious conceptions as well, as the text is considered to be of Hindu religion. Both the religious and metaphysical conceptions may hold confusions with the concepts under analysis. Conceptions “belong to” a particular

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 110
person and it will differ, in general from time to time.\textsuperscript{27} We may regard a concept as impersonal and independent of time, in contrast to its conceptions. Since Kant, we have come to recognize every concept as a rule of judging or acting, a prescription for organizing the materials of experiences so as to be able to go on about our business.\textsuperscript{28}

The use of concepts in studies may show an instrumentalist nature. In the study of family and gender concepts and conceptions, followed by the analysis of the text \textit{Manu-Smrti}, instrumentalism plays some remarkable role. Instrumentalism identifies the procedures of analyzing concepts by an attempt to get at the use that is made of them. With an instrumentalist view, one can look at the problems the context is used to deal with, and at the ways in which it contributes to the solution.\textsuperscript{29} Within the context there are also many possibilities that the concepts would function for relating them directly to the perceptual cues that call from certain responses. Concepts may also serve to select which among several subordinate rules of action is to be brought to bear.

Differences in various contexts are by no means always marked by differences in the words used for the corresponding concepts. For example, the term ‘woman’ may differ in its concept in different contexts. A term is a verbal expression of a


\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p.46

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p.46
concept. It can be a set of utterances grouped together. The ‘utterance’ is any act of speech or writing performed by a particular person at a particular time. Therefore a textual analysis as well as conceptual analysis is of course, the analysis of the utterances of a particular person or group of persons at a particular time. Nevertheless this fact itself questions the validity of a text and a concept. Having the same as research problems, a study could continue to the way of understanding the text for the purpose of analyzing the functions of concepts involved in it.

Explanations and Interpretations:-

The functional ambiguity of the usages, woman/femininity and family/household, repeating in this study, confronts the overlapping as descriptive and explanatory concepts. The terms that corresponds the concepts could be confusing as they function as descriptive or explanatory at different parts of a study. And such a study would entail a phenomenological description out of consciousness as Husserl’s an approach at one stage. Explanation is often contrasted with description as explanation involves telling us not merely what happens, but why. To explain a fact or a law is to give a reason for it. Explanation which is a concatenated description tells us something else than the mere description and especially something appropriate to the context in which the explanation is to function. Scientific explanation is contextual, but it does not depend on the readers as in the case of semantic explanation. For example, the same concept family could be semantically

31 ibid, p.48
explained both in physical and psychological terms. It could be of a physical space where some people live together and it could be of a mental space with which some people are related in life.

Certain explanations which include both semantic and scientific explanations are called interpretations.\textsuperscript{32} The analysis of a text that has got social significance may seek both semantic and scientific explanations. Semantic explanation is to make clear the meanings of the terms and scientific explanation seeks if the propositions are true. Propositions are the verbal expressions of the judgments.\textsuperscript{33} The concepts and judgments emulated from a text could be analyzed from the terms and propositions used in the text. At some point the truth of any stated proposition may not depend on the speaker or the listener or anyone else.\textsuperscript{34} So, an analysis of any text involves interpretation and there are possibilities of reading and interpreting the meaning given by the author and taken by the readers, standing outside such meanings. Various hermeneutical approaches in method may underlie such an attempt.

Terms and Meanings:-

For the formulation of possible ‘other’ meanings of terms in use in a study as they are used in the society, the clarification of the existing meanings of the terms is a

\textsuperscript{32} Kaplan, 1964, p.328
\textsuperscript{33} Wolf, A. \textit{Text Book of Logic}, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 1976, p. 41-45
\textsuperscript{34} Kaplan, 1964, p.328
requisite. For that purpose, the researcher should be committed to be aware of the modes of verification of the terms involved and the operations by which they are applied and defined. The theoretical terms of any science differ markedly from one another in the way in which they share to the experiences that they conceptualize. Terms like gender, family, household, woman, man, masculinity, femininity etc. possibly will show various meanings during the process of conceptualization and application. The differences may be expressed in any of the three semantic empiricist idioms as positivist, operationist or pragmatist. While logical positivism and operationism are concerned with the meaningfulness of the terms and what the meanings are, pragmatism is concerned with what difference it could make if a statement is meaningful. These forms of semantic empiricism play important roles in the present research in the venture of understanding different concepts.

The methodological import of semantic empiricism provides the possibilities of textual analysis as well as conceptual analysis. It prescribes the analysis of meanings must focus on the particular contexts on which an action is performed and the purposes which the action as whole meant to achieve. This action is to be understood as the responsibility of language which is supposed to be performed by it, provided by the instrumentalist view of language.

Meanings might be derived from either direct or indirect observations. Present study involves terms of both direct and indirect observations. For example, ‘woman’ is a

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35 Kaplan, 1964,p.54
term of direct observation,\(^{36}\) but ‘family’ is a term of indirect observation. There are possibilities that the meaning is not fully understood by observing something and believing the verification. The term ‘family’ may be understood by the inferences and the meaning could be understood indirectly. It could also be conceived as a hypothetical construct. What we do is the act of deducing the existence of the hypothetical construct.\(^{37}\) ‘Gender’ is another construct which is used in this study that would face such an issue seriously. As constructs are terms which, though not observational either directly or indirectly, may be applied or even defined on the basis of the manifest they are definable at least in principle by observables. But in practice we may give them only partial and perhaps shifting anchorage in concreta.

Rudolf Carnap has elaborated the way in which the devices by which theoretical terms are brought into relation with observations providing partial interpretations of theoretical terms. This leads to the idea of ‘openness of meaning’ that expresses the view that the specification of the meaning would make the usage of the term uncertain. This study would overcome the semantic myths by following the various meaning postulates.

Theories and Models:-

Cognitive states including thoughts and beliefs must be conceived as involving some sort of quasi-linguistic mode of representation. These states have conceptual content

\(^{36}\) But it cannot be denied that terms such as ‘woman’, ‘man’ are also sometimes seem to be giving only obscure meanings by direct observation.

\(^{37}\) Kaplan, 1964, p.55
and they have conceptual structure. The analysis of concepts, involved in the analysis of cognitive states that we get from the linguistic mode represented in a text are very important as we use theories in the process. For instance some existing theories might be used to explain some social facts of family and its institutional nature of role making of man and woman. And if the study revolves around the analysis of a text and the way it might have influenced the making of the social facts, it also counts the use of theories. Theories are advanced to explain and predict phenomena or facts. While a fact is an ‘empirically verifiable observation’, a theory specifies the relationships between facts or orders them in a meaningful way. And it is a “set of systematically interrelated concepts, definitions and propositions that are advanced to explain and predict phenomena (facts)”.

Theory provides a conceptual framework for a study (Krishnaswami, 1993:17). According to R.B. Braithwaite, a theory is a coherent set of hypotheses which form a deductive system. Arnold Rose’s view is also similar to this, which defines theory as an integrated body of definitions, assumptions and general propositions covering a given subject matter from which a comprehensive and consistent set of specific and testable principles can be deduced logically. This research study refocuses on some existing theories on family and gender and uses some linguistic theories for the

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39 See, Theories of perception and The adverbial theory and disjunctive theory of sense-data or ‘sensa’.
analysis. Abraham Kaplan says, a theory is a way of making sense of a disturbing situation so as to allow us most effectively to bring to bear our repertoire of habits and even more important to modify habits and discard them altogether, replacing them by new ones as the situation demands. According to him theory will appear as the device for interpreting, criticizing and unifying established laws, modifying them to fit unanticipated data in their formulation and guiding the discovery of more powerful generalizations.\textsuperscript{41} Theories start with ideas or conceptions and they function throughout the process of research. The conceptions about ‘family’, ‘woman’ and ‘femininity’ have made different generalizations putting up them as theories governing the social life. Any research based on these concepts involving the analysis of the same could proceed with these functions of theories on the same.

For any particular study to determine the consequence of the problem is assisted by the construction of the conceptual model. Conceptual or theoretical model is a simplified systematic conceptual structure of interrelated elements in some schematic form,\textsuperscript{42} such as narrative statement. The conceptual model in this study is derived from the statements made in the text \textit{Manusmrti}, about the ‘family’. In other words, the phenomenon called ‘family’ which could be read from the text, irrespective of time and space is represented by the model in this particular study. For example, the conceptual model ‘family’ may play the roles of real, abstract as well as causal models at different occasions as an analysis goes on. Anyway the model describes

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{41} Kaplan,1964
\textsuperscript{42} Krishnaswmi,1993.
\end{flushright}
the relationship between and among concepts and variables and they are not divorced from application to real problems even though a level of abstraction is in the cards for making a simplified conceptual framework.  

‘A model is said to be the embodiment of a structural analogy in a set of symbols. So the conceptual structure in which they specify is a significant factor and the models could be seen as conceptual isomorphs. If we think about models in any particular system, the isomorphism that may exist shows that the models in a system resemble to that in another system, only in their structural properties, and the resemblances are illusionary as the contents might differ. The term ‘model’ is often used in any scientific theory in the symbolic, postulational and formal styles of cognition. The model is conceived as a structure of symbols interpreted in certain ways, and what it is a model of is the subject- matter specified by the interpretation.’

**Methodological Frameworks**

Although deconstruction and discourse are not typical techniques or methods, they could be seen as the ways of doing at different stages of analysis in this study. And reflexive methodology is unavoidable in a study done by a woman researcher on the conceptualizations on ‘woman’. A ‘methodology of gender’ that diverges from the mainstream methodology and that underlies feminist perspective, is the major pattern, being the fusion of method, epistemology and ontology of this study.

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43 Krishnaswmi, 1993. p.20
44 See Kaplan, 1964
Discourse:-

The approach of discourse analysis might be an obligatory strategy for a conceptual research. A discourse is a set of sanctioned statements which have some institutionalized force, which means that they have a profound influence on the way that individuals act and think. Statement as a primary building block of discourse it is defined by Dreyfus and Rainbow, ‘as neither an utterance nor a proposition, neither a psychological nor a logical entity, neither an event nor an ideal form.’(Dreyfus and Rainbow, 1982: 45). Sara Mills describes that a statement is not an utterance because one sentence might be able to function as many different statements, depending upon in which discursive context it is used. Foucault says, “the constancy of the statement, the preservation of its identity through the unique events of the enunciations, its duplication through the identity of the forms is constituted by the functioning of the filed of use in which it is placed.” (Foucault, 1972:104).46

45 Mills, Sara. Discourse, Routledge, London, 1997, p.62. She gives the example, how the discourse of middle-class femininity in the nineteenth century with heterogeneous statements (utterances, texts, gestures, behaviour which were accepted as describing the essence of Victorian womanhood: humility, sympathy, selflessness) and which in fact constituted the parameters within which middle-class women could work out their own sense of identity.

Although she recognizes Foucault as the authority of the concept discourse, Diane MacDonnell claims the importance of discourse theories by many others and finds all speech and writing in social under discourse.\textsuperscript{47} She expounds it is the institutional nature of discourse and its situatedness in the social which is central to all the different perspectives on it. Dialogue is preliminary condition for discourse and discourse is not a disembodied collection of statements, but groupings of utterances or sentences, statements which are enacted by the social contexts. So, the institutions and social practices are important for discourses. She puts a discourse as a particular area of language use, may be identified by the institutions to which it relates and by the positions from which it marks out for the speaker. And this position does not exist by itself. It has to be seen as a standpoint taken by the discourse through its relation to another, eventually becoming an opposing discourse.

Discourse theory asserts that the very possibility of perception thought and action depends on the structuration of a certain meaningful field which pre-exists any factual immediacy.\textsuperscript{48} This means, our cognitions of speech acts would become meaningful only in a pre-established discourse. The concept of discourse was developed from the field of linguistics along with its transformations. Even though the linguistics was concerned with ‘diachronic’ analysis of the historical evolution of language in the beginning, it enlarged the scope through the linguistics of Saussure (1981 (1959):81) which is based on synchronic analysis. Torfing describes the growth of the discourse with Saussurean theories based on semiology and at the

\textsuperscript{47} Mac Donnell, Diane., Theories of Discourse, Blackwell, Oxford,1986, p.1,3

\textsuperscript{48} Torfing, Jacob., New Theories of Discourse, Blackwell Publishers Ltd.,Oxford,1999 p.84
same time, he tries to divulge a distant root of discourse in the Kantian
transcendental turn of the Western philosophy, by quoting Laclau (1993).\textsuperscript{49}

Foucault’s discourse theories have contributed in great abundance to gender studies.
His conceptualization of power is compelling us to reassess the role of
language/discourse/texts in the process of the constitution of subjects within the
hierarchy of relations. Sara Mills differentiates the debate over political
correctness/sexism that may revolve around works based around theoretical notions
of ideology and on discourse theories.\textsuperscript{50} As far as she is concerned, both groups of
theorists, sexism consists of those statements and underlying beliefs which make
unnecessary and discriminatory distinctions between people on the grounds of
gender. Both ideological critics and discourse theorists would have the same opinion
on, which statements could be reckoned as sexist. She writes:

However within an ideological view, would be seen as a form of false
consciousness, a way that subjects were, in Althusserian terms, interpellated,
that is, called upon to recognize themselves as certain types of gendered
subjects (Spender, 1980; Althusser, 1984). By accepting sexism within
language, subjects are called upon to recognize themselves as taking up a
position within a hierarchised system of gendered differentiation; thus sexism

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, p.86,87
Laclau, E. \textit{Discourse}. In Gooding and Pettit (eds), The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary

\textsuperscript{50} Mills, 1997, p.42, 43. She says for example, “While Marxist theories worked upon ideology and
viewed language as simply a vehicle to for forcing people to believe ideas that are not true or of
interest, discourse theories hold language as a site where those struggles are acted out.”
forces subjects into an acceptance of the ‘status quo’ and of prevalent views of 
women as inferior and sexually available to men , with men as superior, in 
control, and so on. 51

But a discourse theory perspective facilitates a study to interrogate into the way in 
which sexism was taken ever simply as a matter of the imposition of a set of beliefs 
on a group of subjects. It problematizes the use of terms, statements, sentences, the 
use of language and even the right to use the language.

Discourse analysis is a reaction to the formal and structural linguistics, and is 
concerned with translating the notion of structure from the level of the sentence, i.e., 
grammatical relations such as subject-object-verb, to the level of longer text. 52 The 
larger levels of structures are difficult to understand because of its unanalyzed, 
taken-for-granted nature. She claims the discourse analysis have fabricated out of the 
aspiration to analyze the larger units and structures which are implicitly identified at 
the level of discourse rather than at the level of sentence. Discourse analysis of a 
written text aims to make explicit, those implicit norms and rules of production of 
language, and is particularly interested in the way that discourse consists of sets of 
hierarchical units which make up discursive structures. 53

The relation between ‘the discursive’ and ‘the discourse’ is significant. The 
discursive is a ‘theoretical horizon for the constitution of the being of every object’,

51 Torfing,1999, p.91,92
52 Mills,1997, p.135,136
53 Ibid, p.140
while the discourse is a relational ensemble of signifying sequences in which meaning is constantly renegotiated. Torfing writes in detail:

If this relational and differential logic prevailed without any limitation or rupture, there would be no room for politics. All identities would be fixed as necessary moments of one and the same discourse, and conflict would only be played out between different intra-discursive variations. However, in the absence of a fixed centre, complete totalization and thus closure, becomes impossible. Hence there will always be something that escapes the seemingly infinite processes of signification within discourse. The multiplicity of mutually substituting centres only brings about a precarious order and only manages to produce a partial fixation of meaning. The ‘partial fixation’ of meaning produces an irreducible ‘surplus of meaning’ which escapes the differential logic of discourse. The field of irreducible surplus is termed the discursive or the field of discursivity in order to indicate that what is not fixed as a differential identity within a concrete discourse is not extra- or non-discursive, but is discursively constructed within a terrain of unfixity.

(Torfing, 1999)

So, the discursive, gives the way for the subversion of the partially fixed normative meanings produced out of the major discourses. And it shows the possibility and impossibility of fixing meaning partially giving the structures of identities made by them. According to Torfing, we can arrive at the concept of discourse either through the deconstruction of the notion of totalizing structures or through the deconstruction of the notion of atomized social elements.
Any interdisciplinary interpretation of a text could pretty well fit into the mode of discourse analysis. But, “it is difficult to give a single definition of Critical or Discourse Analysis as a research method. Indeed, rather than providing a particular method, Discourse Analysis can be characterized as a way of approaching and thinking about a problem. In this sense, Discourse Analysis is neither a qualitative nor a quantitative research method, but a manner of questioning the basic assumptions of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Discourse Analysis does not provide a tangible answer to problems based on scientific research, but it enables access to the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind a project, a statement, a method of research, or a system of classification. In other words, Discourse Analysis will enable to reveal the hidden motivations behind a text or behind the choice of a particular method of research to interpret that text.”

Foucault's Genealogy and social criticism and analysis of the uses of discourse to exercise of power, might be worth following for a discourse analysis involving abstract phenomena ‘family’ and ‘gender’ as main concepts, and for an interpretation of social institutions such as religion, culture, law and language as well. His analysis of how knowledge is created in our societies and with what purpose or effect would give an epistemological background (i.e. backgroundlessness) for such a study. Deconstruction by Jacques Derrida and feminist interpretations of current social practices by Julia Kristeva and Helene

http://www.gslis.utexas.edu/~palmquis/courses/discourse.htm
Cixous are some other types or theories of discourse analysis that are significant. Especially in the case of studying a text, taking theoretical constructs such as ‘gender’ as a category of analysis, discourse is a mandatory mode of interest.

Deconstruction:

Jacques Derrida has resisted any attempt to reduce deconstruction to a concept definable in terms of method or technique, by his disciples. It is not even a species of critique according to him. What the deconstructive moves consist in is the dismantling of conceptual oppositions, the taking part of hierarchical systems of thought which can then be reinscribed within a different order of textual signification. Or deconstruction is vigilant seeking-out of those ‘aporias’, blind spots or moments of self-contradiction where a text involuntarily betrays the tension between rhetoric and logic between what it manifestly means to say and what it is nonetheless constrained to mean.

Deconstruction is of precisely the delimiting of ontology and a good deal of unpacking which is an inevitable way of textual analysis. Context and historicity are among the most repeatedly emphasized and carefully scrutinized topics in Derrida’s “writing”. And at the same time, the ethical and the political are not avoided by deconstruction, but are implicated at every step.


56 Ibid., p.18,19
Any analysis of a text of historical significance follows deconstruction. Deconstruction differs from other ways of addressing questions about a work. Rather than comparing the work to an external standard of fixed moral standards, scientific standards, or political ideology, for telling what should be done, it looks for ways in which the book itself shows what it has overlooked. Deconstruction is a form of what is often called as an imminent critique. Deconstructive criticism is not intended to suggest a way to make the book finally complete, but to show its necessary incompleteness. Deconstruction is adopted to illustrate that a work does not sufficiently address something, not that it should have. A study interested in a text and its relation with what it tries to explain would have claims of deconstructive approach.

A deconstructive work focuses on language. Deconstruction demonstrates the multiple layers of meaning at work in language. We can see that language is constantly shifting. A traditional reader thinks that language is capable to articulate ideas without changing them. In the hierarchy of language, writing is secondary to speech, and the author of a text is the source of its meaning. The traditional or metaphysical way of reading makes a number of false assumptions about the nature of texts. Derrida's deconstructive style of reading subverts these assumptions and challenges the idea that a text has an unchanging, unified meaning. And this results in the proliferation of the number of legitimate interpretations of a text. According to John Lye (1996) deconstruction can be a way of thought for the analysis or
interpretation, for any researcher who works with a Text. Deconstruction is a strategy of analysis. And for Derrida, all texts whether written in the narrow sense or not, are rehearsing their grammatological structure, self-deconstructing as they constitute themselves.\textsuperscript{57}

Many literary and philosophical researches have followed Derrida`s deconstruction as a way of doing. For example, deconstruction has been applied powerfully even in the criticism of poetics by the people like Paul de Man.\textsuperscript{58} In his essays he talks about the formalist notion of the poem as `verbal icon` -i.e. a timeless , self possessed structure of meaning – is shown to deconstruct its own claim through unrecognized twists of implication. The obsession with ‘organic’ form gets undermined by those very ‘ambiguities’ and ‘tensions’ which they sought out in order to praise and so contain them. Deconstruction draws no line between the kind of close reading appropriate to a literary text and the strategies required to draw out the subtler implications of critical language.\textsuperscript{59}

A text like \textit{Manu-Smrti} being written in the form of poetic puts forward the possibility of getting various interpretations by the commentators, translators and readers. According to a traditional reader who deems in the hierarchy of language, the author of a text is the source of its meaning, and the interpretations once done would be the finally reliable meanings. This is the point on which a research study


\textsuperscript{58} see Blindness and Insight ,1971

\textsuperscript{59} Norris, Christopher ., \textit{Deconstruction : Theory and Practice}, Methuen & Co. Ltd.,NewYork, 1982
may flourish into the interpretations of a text like *Manu-Smrti* and the analysis of some particular concepts propagated by it. Some texts, particularly religious ones, generally being considered as an authority of value orientedness of the individuals and dominating mores in the society, the authority of the meaning of the text and the possibilities of theorizations are prone to analysis. Critical theorists and feminist theorists elucidate the means by which value assumptions direct the framing of the theory and facts.  

Reflexive Methodology:-

Reflexive methodology would turn to be essential for a woman researcher while studying the conceptualizations on woman. The study of gendered family and the aspects that affect the lives of women would entail the reflexivity of the woman researcher. Reflexivity is an act of self-reference where examination or action affects and refers to the entity instigating the action or examination. Conceptions of reflexivity range from self-reference to self-awareness to the constitutive of accounts or texts.  

A reflexive methodology is actually a radical sociology because it would discover that knowledge of the world cannot be advanced apart from the researcher’s knowledge of herself/himself and her/his position in the social world or apart from her/his efforts to change these. And also this methodology seeks to transform as well as to know the alien world inside her/ him.

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60 See, M. Gergen, 1988; Habermas, 1971; Harding and Hintikka, 1983; Martin, 1987; Reinharz, 1985  
Pierre Bourdieu`s aims at increasing the scope and solidity of social scientific knowledge, a goal which puts it at loggerheads with phenomenological, textual, and other postmodern forms of reflexivity. Bourdieu stands against all forms of methodological monism that purport the ontological priority of dualistic alternatives such as structure and agent, system or actor, the collective or the individual, and he affirms the primacy of relations. Norbert Elias (1978a:113), another resolute advocate of the relational conception of the social, insists that ordinary language leads us to `draw involuntary conceptual distinctions between the actor and the activity, between structures and processes, or between objects and relations`, that in effect prevent us from grasping the logic of social interweaving. Keeping his obsession with epistemic reflexivity and methodological relationism Bourdieu dismisses methodological individualism and holism, and denies the transcendence even in methodological situationalism. Reflexive methodology is a methodology of methodology in the sense that, using this approach, social researchers can keep reassessing the epistemological status of their methods, assumptions and hermeneutics. Pierre Bourdieu points out the need to disclose the most deeply plunged structures of the diverse social institutions and the devices that produce and transform them. An analysis on the structure and function of the family would

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62 Ibid., p.37
63 Ibid., p.15
66 See Ibid. Also see, Bourdieu, Pierre and Loic Wacquant., *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, University of Chikago Press, Chicago, 1992
necessarily adopt reflexive methodology so as to take up the social and personal challenge of transforming it as well.

The methodology of reflexivity oriented social constructionism may seem to be significant for textual as well as conceptual analyses, while the subject-object dichotomy of typically termed constructivism has been a problematic among social scientists. The self-reflexive way of approaching problems might be a better methodological concern for any research no matter it is empirical or theoretical. Both constructivist and constructionist approaches would appear to be unavoidable basic perspectives for any research study which is non-empirical in nature. But social constructionism proves to be more crucial in a textual analysis as it centers on the performative function of language and holds that knowledge is represented in language.

From the social constructionist viewpoint it is not the cognitive processing of single observer that absorbs the object into itself but it is language that does so. So the constructionist position holds that the concepts prevailing in the society are constructed and propagated by the language in use and the texts existing. According to Gergen and Gergen, accounts of the world take place within shared systems of intelligibility, and it is usually a spoken or written language. These accounts may not

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67 Even natural scientists like Heisenberg have raised the issue of observer-dependence of the objects which are concrete. So the ‘observer created error’ (as Heisenberg said) on the abstract objects of study for the social scientists is a challenge in research process.


Gergen gives an account of differentiating the constructivist and constructionist approaches.
be the expression of the speaker’s internal processes such as cognition or intention. It can be viewed as an expression of the relationship among persons.\textsuperscript{69} Any text that is a form of written language gives this issue behind, to think about if it was the writer’s intention or cognition or outcome of her/his interpersonal relations. At the same time the analysis draws attention to the manner in which conventions of language and other social processes such as negotiation, persuasion, power etc. influence the accounts rendered of the ‘objective’ world.

As constructivist would look inward, and for her/him there is no way out from the subjectivity and so she/he must be in an infinite regress of cognitive dispositions. But a social constructionist view invites the investigator outward – into the fuller realm of shared languages. The reflexive attempt is thus relational, emphasizing the expansion of the languages of understanding. The reflexivity on own subjectivity would also activate the latent language potentials in a researcher’s linguistic community of understanding. Social constructionist standpoint would emphasize the functional bases of language within ongoing relationships.\textsuperscript{70}

Traditional practitioners of the rigors of scientific method will more or less guarantee an objective account of the world independent of themselves as observers.\textsuperscript{71} But the

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, p.78. From this view point, it is within social interaction that language is generated, sustained and abandoned. It is this view that also unifies multidisciplinary critique.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, p.86. The writers note that, a compromise between both a subjective level of cognition and a public level of discourse is not only to recapitulate the traditional dualism of Western culture, but to lose the advantage of the epistemological critique of empiricism (itself based on a dualistic foundation). see p.94

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p.76
reflexive methodologies ensure a different way of looking at the world and phenomena. By this outlook, subject-object problem is taken into consideration in indifferent ways to see the observer bias. As the constructivists hold that this bias is because of the researcher’s cognitive process, it entails that the object could not ever be seen separated from the subject. Because the ‘observation’ must necessarily be a product of some observational process within persons. For the social constructionists it is not the ‘state of mind’ but it is the linguistic capacities that produce observation. But both agree with the point that ‘observation’ does not produce our categories of ‘understanding’.

According to social constructionist framework, to generate understanding is to apply the existing language to the problem at hand. We have to abandon the problem of the origin of ideas, and shift concern to the emergence of language within communities. The linguistic capacities emerge primarily as we acquire the language of the culture. So the researchers approach their problems with a range of linguistic predispositions already at hand. For example if we want to ‘understand’ family,)

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72 See Ibid. See also Kuhn, 1970. This view is clear from the works of Thomas Kuhn on analysis of paradigm shifts in science. Changes in the nature of what we take to be knowledge are akin to ‘Gestalt shifts’ in perception. One simply comes to see the same phenomenon in different ways.
73 Ibid
74 See Ibid. If we hold the position that ‘theory preceded observation’ the problem of the origins of a priori categories. See also, Hanson, Norwood R., Patterns of Discovery, Cambridge University Press, London, 1958
75 Ibid
76 See Ibid. The authors give an example of the theorist who wishes to understand the nature of jealousy. For the constructionist, jealousy is not a feature of the world independent of a language system. Instead jealousy is a linguistic integer enmeshed in cultural codes of communicating and acting. Whether or not one uses the term ‘jealousy’ does not depend on what ‘actually the case’, but on local conventions of naming or indexing patterns of events. The ‘determinants’ or ‘antecedents’ of jealousy are not read from the nature, nor derived logically from observation. They are constituents of an elaborate code of intelligibility. Thus an important step in a reflexively oriented inquiry into
femininity, woman, man etc., as per constructionist point of view we would see them dependent of a language system within the cultural or social codes of communication. As part of the theoretical understanding a production of series of propositions ‘if…..then’ might transpire. From the rudimentary definition that produced by the combination of local expressions, one may derive many other propositions through definitional unpacking rather than empirically.\textsuperscript{77}

The traditional empiricists may find it as problematique, but the emergence of theoretical ideas and new perspectives of addressing topics would encourage new vistas of conceptual studies.\textsuperscript{78} In this method, the entire formulation is based on an elaboration of definitions already embedded within the cultural code. The confirmations or disconfirmations of hypotheses through research findings are achieved through social consensus, not through observation of the ‘facts’. The ‘empirical test’ is possible because the conventions of linguistic indexing are so fully shared that they appear to ‘reflect’ reality.\textsuperscript{79}

As Feyerabend held, the reflexive concern of various forms of discourse should be a continuous undertaking in which all sub-cultural enclaves should be invested.\textsuperscript{80} And this may open a space for research endeavors which are specifically cognizant of the researcher’s enmeshment within a culture of multiple languages. A textual jealousy would be to formalize the understandings already contained in the common conventions for talking about jealousy. (See also Smedslund,1988 )

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid. The last among the many propositions enables the investigator to move from simple level definition to something on the order of a ‘theoretical insight’ with important practical implications. Such propositions stand intelligible without a single observation of persons in action.

\textsuperscript{78} See Ibid. see also, Popper, Karl R. \textit{The Logic of Scientific Discovery}, Harper Row, New York,1968

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.

study around the aspects of conceptualizations of an institution such as family would follow all such methodological phases through out the research process.

Methodologies of Gender:-

The debate on the gendered politicization of the research methods is mandatory in the social science research experiences. There is a tension between a desire to give women a ‘voice’ within the making of knowledge –‘grasping the experiences, understandings and lives of women themselves as seen from their own perspective’.\(^{81}\) This makes a feminist methodology by the gendered politicization an unavoidable strategy, even though it cannot be a static concept, on which there is consensus amongst feminists.

The argument that there is a specifically feminist methodology implies not just that feminists select research topics on a different basis to non-feminists ,but that when a feminist investigates a particular topic , the whole process of research will reflect her commitment to feminism ( Hammersley, 1992:p.191). Feminist inquiry and criticism has challenged the dichotomization of the private and public in social research and revealed the need for research to be done on ‘women’ and women’s lives,\(^{82}\) and has resulted in the incorporation of a sensitivity to gender ,as well as to womanhood within the theoretical frameworks of the disciplines.\(^{83}\)

\(^{81}\) See, Henwood and Pidgeon, 1955: p.16
\(^{82}\) Epstein,1981
\(^{83}\) Langland and Gove, 1981.
The power in the research process and the power in the research relationships had been main debates of feminist methodological approach.\textsuperscript{84} Even though the power relations between the researcher and researched and the empowerment involved in the research process are visible only in empirical studies, the empowerment by the results of research is significant in the conceptual studies as well. These difficult issues are extended beyond the data gathering phase to the analysis of the information.\textsuperscript{85} The concepts under analysis, whose construction entails some experience, are problematic while analyzing the construction and cognition phases of their meanings. The argument against the construction of the dichotomy of qualitative and quantitative research by Henwood and Pidgeon (1995) could be kept in mind to enter in to the argument that a multiplicity of methods is the most favorable method in feminist research.

Sandra Harding (1987) advocates the alternative positions of methodology to be based on detailed feminist critiques of epistemology as feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernism. Feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernism are central in this particular study as it is conceptual in nature. Even if feminist standpoint methodology is a crucial move in feminist theory, it leaves many contradictory tensions for people who are engaged in feminist activist research. The unitary category of ‘the woman’ which the standpoint theory holds strongly is problematised by the feminist postmodernism. Highlighting the works of Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson (1990) and Judith Butler (1992), Nancy Naples

\textsuperscript{84}Subhadra Channa, ed. \textit{Encyclopedia of Feminist Theory}. Cosmo Books, New Delhi, 2004
\textsuperscript{85}ibid, p.238
argues that postmodern critiques of standpoint methodologies also raise important questions regarding the possibilities of developing knowledge for an emancipatory politics for women.

The process of developing an emancipatory politics might be achieved by the action research, even though the emancipation or empowerment concept itself is a problematic. Action research could be broadly conceived as specifically geared to changing matters or social situations, instead empowering a group or community. The thinking here is that research should not only be used to gain a better understanding of the problems which arise in everyday practice, but actually set out to alter things (Descombe, 1998). Any study with direct observation as a method and reports or records as source of reference may perhaps also be called action research, and it may be worked out as a critical analysis with an activist disposition. Nancy Naples talks about the ‘activist scholars’ who are committed to research on behalf of progressive social change. According to her, in order to understand how women of different race and class develop oppositional consciousness or an awareness of the dynamic relations of ruling that shape their lives in different contexts, we must learn how women construct and experience community- that is the localized context in

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86 Feminist researchers have argued that their research work must empower the researched. ‘White sociology’ has been sharply criticized about the stereotyping of the black. The same sort of a criticism prevails, but some feminists think it is not necessary to problematize the empowerment, in anti-racist sociology, feminist sociology and action research. See, Subhadora Channa, 2004, p.131
88 Ibid, See also, Susman and Evered 1978:589
which politicization and political action takes place.\textsuperscript{90} The personal and political dilemmas involved in writing as activist researchers and the extensive series of negotiations and rewrites, \textsuperscript{91} are components of the methodology of gender.

Viewing intersections of gender, class, race and ethnicity shifting and fleeting moments of sociality shakes up any belief in the permanence of knowledge generated from one social location.\textsuperscript{92} Thus the socio-cultural and geographical states of affairs in which a text was evolved, would not restrict the analysis of the concept and organization encompassing the woman`s life in her world (the one and only one world–family, figured in the text \textit{ManuSmrti} in this study). Dorothy Smith`s `everyday world` approach to stand point analysis offers a methodological strategy for understanding ` the social relations and organizations pervading her (woman`s) world but invisible in it` (Smith,1992:91).This approach views standpoint as a site of inquiry rather than property of individual “knowers”.

Post-modernist conceptions of plurality prove to be worth applying in the methodology of gender, to change the andocentric view of normative male research and interloper female research. Breaking down the polarization between male and female, rather than rebalancing it –as standpoint theory attempts to do- and acknowledging the diversity of psychological and intellectual gender, is the

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid, P.335. She insists, she did not mean the term localized context, only in geographical sense. This shows, even though she is talking about research activism in terms of community activism it might be applicable to any form of research process of political engagement.

\textsuperscript{91} See Naples with Clark, 1996

\textsuperscript{92} See Spivak 1987, Haraway 1988, Mohanty 1991
postmodernist way of doing. By doing so, it may be possible to advance the strong political agenda for women in scientific research, by avoiding the alienation of them who resist an account of their way of knowing as holistic, connected or indeed anything but the commonly agreed, logical-positivistic scientific paradigm.

Epistemological Concerns

Questions such as, what is knowledge and what is the process of knowing, have ever been the central concern at the starting points of any philosophical inquiry. Theoretical studies based on concepts and conceptions may seem to be alarming to the empiricist tradition. Karl Popper denies authoritative status either to any particular means of attaining knowledge such as sensory experience or to any particular social theorists such as Plato or Marx. In his view our approach should be scientific in order to understand particularly the growth of knowledge.

Karl Popper holds that knowledge never starts from firm foundations, but exists only in so far as one progress from necessarily uncertain starting points. According to him ‘the main problem of philosophy is the critical analysis of the appeal to the

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93 See Subhadra Channa, ed. 2004, p.252
94 Ibid. Whilst it is clear that actual scientific research does not necessarily always proceed in the idealistic ways posited by scientific philosophers (see Latour,1987) the idea of ‘the scientific method’ is a powerful internal construction used by scientists in explaining their ideas to each other and to non-scientists. See also Longino and Hammonds, 1990
96 This is the critical analysis of the appeal to experience. See, O’Hear, 1980, p.2
authority of experience. Popper writes the main task of theory of knowledge is to understand it as continuous with animal knowledge and to understand its discontinuity. Popper becomes decisive in the epistemological tradition critiquing the validity of empirical knowledge. His strong opinion is that human knowledge and animal knowledge share some properties when it is out of giving primacy of theories or expectations over observations. Human knowledge transcends animal knowledge in the ability to formulate theories in language and to criticize them.

Popper uses the analogy of evolution to understand knowledge. As in evolution, progress is achieved by weeding out the weakest elements (species or theories) through pressure from the environment. In one way he maintains human knowledge itself is a part of the overall process of evolution. Seeing the knowledge in an evolutionary context, the question of philosophy of science would have to be raised about the demarcation of scientific study from others. How do we test the experiences and how knowledge which claims to be scientifically valid could be tested are some issues to be posed. The answer from Popper’s side would lead us to a general characterization of rationality. For him ‘there is nothing more “rational” that the method of critical discussion, which is the method of science’.

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98 Ibid, See also, Popper, Karl R., ’Replies to my Critics’, In P. Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, 2 Vols, Open Court, La Salle, Illinois, 1974, pp. 959-1197

99 Ibid

understanding the critical method and examining the growth of knowledge we could apply what we have understood to moral and social problems. The epistemological concern we obtain from Popper`s view facilitates the freedom from dogmatism and eventually leads us to a more humane attitude to life and society. This at least gives a way to make the point of gender sensitivity enter into the sight, even though Popper or people influenced by the likes of Popper, never could imagine to mention about the issues around subjectivity and rationality.

Rationality being considered as a masculine quality would necessarily raise the question of knowledge of women as mitigated. From the well known Western dualistic metaphysics, the dichotomy between reason and emotion as assigned to man and woman respectively, is ever clear. The first term being elevated over the second in the dualities mind/body, subject/object, male/female, shows the authority of pure, good and authentic male knowledge. Feminist philosophers starting from Simone de Beauvoir of the modernist era, have opposed the use of such dualities to answer the metaphysical and epistemological questions, speaking about ‘the other’.

Feminist critiques debated about what valid knowledge could be and built up alternative positions of epistemology. The epistemological underpinnings of the political emphasis on the inclusion of woman’s experiences lead to the feminist conception of knowledge which is ‘intuitive, emotional, engaging and caring.’ Some commentators have gone so far as to propose a ‘successor science’ to the existing

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101 Ibid, p.2
social science paradigms, which privileges so called feminine qualities – a holistic, integrated, connected knowledge-as opposed to the analytically –oriented masculine form of knowledge which currently hold sway\textsuperscript{103}. Thus the epistemological concern becomes the obliteration of the common notion that concepts of feminist interests are not vital to be analyzed to produce any kind of knowledge.

Feminist theorists interested in exploring the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class and other social structural aspects of social life have generated a diverse set of theories categorized under the rubric of ‘feminist standpoint epistemology’\textsuperscript{104}. Standpoint epistemology represents a crucial theoretical move in feminist theory, one that brings the modernist project of feminism up against the postmodern subjectivity and identity politics.\textsuperscript{105} Both address the issue of subjectivity in the process of knowing, but postmodernists bring out the instability of the subjectivity as well.

Standpoint theory holds that knowledge without taking the standpoint of the knower is impossible. It is criticized being essentialistic about the subjectivity of woman knower. Nevertheless this theory is vital in the sense it questions the ‘othering’ of woman and the making of man as the ‘norm’.\textsuperscript{106} Thus feminine understandings of knowledge are also positioned as ‘other’ and less valid formulations. In any event, criticizing feminist standpoint theories as essentialists amounts to a failure to understand that they are discussing the incorporation of the feminine rather than of

\textsuperscript{103} Subhadra Channa, ed. 2004, p.247
\textsuperscript{104} Naples, 1998, p.339
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid. See also Fraser and Nicholson, 1990; Hennessy, 1993
\textsuperscript{106} Subhadra Channa, ed. 2004, p.248
womanhood. Whilst some women are feminine, others are masculine: the argument is whether those persons, male and female who utilizes these feminine conceptions of knowledge should be classed as knowers, when at present only masculine ideas of knowledge qualify.\textsuperscript{107}

Feminist postmodernist epistemology discards the notion of a unitary category of woman. Instead of privileging female or feminine standpoint feminist, postmodernism suggests that there is a variety of contradictory and conflicting standpoints of social discourses, none of which should be privileged. And there is no point in trying to make a fuller or more power-neutral knowledge because such knowledge does not exist.\textsuperscript{108} According to postmodern feminists, rather than seeking out a unifying epistemology, albeit one which incorporates gender, we should be constructing multiple discourses.\textsuperscript{109} They hold the search for a unitary notion of knowledge is impossible and knowledge is ‘partial, profane and fragmented’\textsuperscript{110}.

Even though they differ in positions both standpoint and postmodern epistemologies prove vital in the heart of gender and epistemology. Women’s ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986) are linked with their social identities by the standpoint theorists, but the postmodernist feminists remind them of the instability of the identities. Some feminists like Dorothy Smith hold standpoint theory could be seen as a site of inquiry rather than something embodied in social identity or community.

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\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, See also Hekman, 1990 : Nicholson, 1990
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, See also Mc Lennan, 1995
\end{flushright}
Thus the multidimensional approach to standpoint epistemology with analyses of postmodern feminists draws upon the concept of ‘positionality’, which describes, “the subject as nonessentialized and emergent from a historical experience….to say at one and the same time that gender is not natural, biological, universal, ahistorical, or essential and yet still claim that gender is relevant because we are taking gender as a position from which to act politically.” (Alcoff, 1988, 433)

In the case of having social science research to make knowledge about women’s experiences and lives, the postmodernism has some significance, although not as an underlying epistemology. This is clear from the quote by Maynard (1994: 22):

…..The kind of research currently identified with the social sciences ( be it surveys, interviews etc.) is associated with precisely the modernist Enlightenment tradition which postmodernism is trying to transcend. While analyses of discourse and text are possible from within a postmodern perspective, anything which focuses on the materiality of human existence is virtually impossible, unless analyzed in terms of discourse and text. This does not mean, of course that a postmodern approach has nothing to offer feminists, What it does mean is that because it contains radically different assumptions from those of other epistemological positions it has, potentially different things to do.”

Deconstruction as a main tenet of postmodernism develops an epistemology critical of the authoritarianism of culture and tradition which is crucial for a feminist
analytical study. Postmodernism has been against the assumption of ancient and modern times, that there is an absolute truth which could be applicable to everybody, everywhere, at all times. Postmodernists stand up against this foundationalism and condemn the idea that truth can be known by revelation, reason, intuition or experience. Thus they transcend the classical epistemological claims of both rationalism and empiricism. The postmodern argument that meaning and truth are social constructs is often based on a particular view of language called deconstruction.

Deconstructive ideas in the works of Jacques Derrida point out many issues around epistemology. He maintained that words are only signs that only arbitrarily represent ideas. That is to argue that signs get their meaning because we use them in various ways in a specific linguistic-cultural framework. Different cultures would use the same word to mean different things in different ways. In addition to this, deconstructionism calls attention to the fact that language itself is not stable. Language has an element of contradiction within it. A text derives meaning in opposition to and by excluding other texts. This means that every text is a political creation and the privileged texts (i.e. those that use certain words with certain meanings to the exclusion of other words and other meanings) are used to label or to justify sexism, racism, classism and the like and to deconstruct the meaning of a text is to uncover the true agenda underlying it.

111 Honer, Hunt, Okholm, 2002
112 Ibid, p.92
113 Ibid.
Metaphysics and Ontology

Metaphysics is central for any conceptual study since it is possible to consider metaphysical theories as metaphysical hypotheses and since these hypotheses cannot be tested empirically. Any philosophical inquiry that goes beyond the ‘essent’\textsuperscript{114} is metaphysical. Martin Heidegger who thought metaphysics has done its due course, upheld the problem ‘why there are essents rather than nothing’ as the fundamental question of metaphysics\textsuperscript{115}. Heidegger problematizes the whole notion of asking fundamental questions as part of the will to know instead of giving a direct answer for the question. For him, the whole history of human thought and existence has been dominated and characterized by our understanding of ‘being’\textsuperscript{116}. Metaphysics inquires into the being of the existent and the disorientation of modern thought and existence is to impute a forgetfulness of being to metaphysics, according to his opinion.

With the introduction of the term ontology during seventeenth century the way of addressing issues of reality changes into the issues of ‘being’ and Heidegger’s explorations into the meanings and usages of the terms within metaphysics could be seen as to the point. Can ‘being’ be considered only as a universal concept which

\textsuperscript{114}See, Heidegger, Martin. An Introduction to Metaphysics, Yale University Press Inc., USA, 1959, p.ix. ‘essents’=‘existents’. ‘things that are’. The translator of Heidegger, Ralph Manheim, takes the liberty to coin the word based on the fiction that ‘essens,’ ‘essentis’ is the present particle of ‘sum’.

\textsuperscript{115}Ibid. In Greek ‘beyond something’ is expressed by the word ‘meta’.

\textsuperscript{116}See, ibid. He uses the German words ‘Sein’ for being and ‘Dasein’ for existence, splitting it ‘Da-sein’ which means ‘being- there’.
inevitably occurs in all special concepts, or is ‘being’ of an entirely different essence, and hence anything but an object of ‘ontology’, is a question raised by Heidegger.\textsuperscript{117} For him it marks the development of the traditional doctrine of the ‘essent’ into a discipline of philosophy. Ontology signifies the endeavor to make ‘being’ manifested itself, by way of the questions, ‘how does it stand with being?’ and ‘what is the meaning of being?’

“Our asking of the fundamental question of metaphysics is historical because it opens up the process of human ‘being-there’ in its essential relations- i.e. its relation to the essent as such and as a whole- opens it up to unmasked possibilities, futures and at the same time binds it back to its past beginning, so sharpening it and giving it weight in its present. In this questioning our ‘being-there’ is summoned to its history in the full sense of the word, called to history and to a decision in history. And this is not after the fact, in the sense that we draw ethical, ideological lessons from it. “Not the basic attitude of questioning is in-itself historical, but it stands and maintains itself in happening, inquiring out of happening for the sake of happening”, says Heidegger. This shows our interrogation and exploration into the ‘existence’ and ‘possibilities of existence’ of any particular existent (object/event of our study), may be woman or man or the institution family in the society, and could be historical as well.

Different worldviews have been come up about the problem ,‘what the ultimate reality is’, from the period of pre-Socratic time in the history of Western

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. p.40,41
philosophy. In modern time’s naturalism, existentialism, materialism, idealism and dualism have been prominent in the inquest into the ultimate reality. The branch of philosophy called metaphysics was given much importance over time. But metaphysics has never been without detractors. Plato’s efforts have repeatedly been a target of attack. David Hume, ranted against the metaphysicians of his day. And one of the founding missions of logical positivism was to show that metaphysical claims are meaningless. But the stance of positivism and its successors’ was for a long time ambiguous. According to Habermas the unenlightened scientific motive of elevating empirical scientific thinking itself to the position of an absolute betrayed itself in this antimetaphysical furor. He thinks the efforts of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Adorno to speak against metaphysical way of thinking generated only a kind of negative metaphysics enclosing that which metaphysics wanted to do actually but failed to do.

Habermas uses the term metaphysical to designate the thinking of philosophical idealism that goes back to Plato and extends by way of Plotinus and Neo-Platonism, St.Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Cusanus and Pico de Mirandola, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz up to Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Ancient materialism and skepticism, late medieval nominalism, and modern empiricism are antimetaphysical counter movements. But Habermas maintains they just remain within the horizons of possible thoughts of metaphysics. . And as part of the recent postmodern discourses Habermas could be seen as critical about Western metaphysical tradition and its exaggerated conception of reason. He suggests the need to transform our

\[119\] See Ibid.
inherited conceptions of reason and the rational. Habermas develops a kind of intersubjectivistic approaches to meaning and validity and especially to subjectivity and individuality. Habermas’s own universal pragmatics has got its theory of three distinct validity claims. The three competing accounts of meaning are intentionalism, the use theory and truth-semantics. Habermas upholds that linguistic meaning is constituted communicatively. According to his opinion ‘interpretant relation’ cannot be understood independently of the conditions of intersubjective communication. With every utterance, which is the smallest unit of communication, the speaker makes a truth claim relating to the objective world of states of affairs, a rightness claim relating to the social world of normatively regulated interpersonal relations, and a truthfulness or sincerity claim relating to the subjective world of experience to which the speaker has privileged access. 120 Each of these validity claims is universal, that is, the validity that is claimed cannot be restricted to validity for the speaker or validity for the specific group. Then, with any utterance a speaker lays claim to three dimensions of validity that transcend the particular context or the linguistic community in which the utterance is made.

The paradigm shift from the philosophy of consciousness to the philosophy of language lined the means of post metaphysical thinking even though it didn’t

120 See ibid. p viii, ix. The smallest unit of communication is the utterance put forth by a speaker together with the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ position taken toward the utterance by a hearer. Every utterance contains a (stated or implied) propositional component p that predicates something of an object. However even in the case of assertion, the meaning of the utterance is not determined by p alone. The full meaning of an utterance depends equally upon how this propositional content is being put forth—whether it is being asserted, commanded, confessed, promised, etc. This force of the utterance is given by its illocutionary component which may be made explicit by a performative clause: “I assert.,” “I command.,” “I confess.” and so on. But every utterance in fact make three distinct validity claims, only one of which is thematized by the illocutionary component.
overcome the very metaphysical figures of thought. The assumption that metaphysical statements are meaningful was rejected by linguistic analysts who were skeptical about the whole metaphysical enterprise. According to A.J. Ayer, philosophy is wholly independent of metaphysics. His theory is concerned with understanding and clarifying language by eliminating metaphysics. Ayer recaps his position by saying, ‘metaphysical sentences are nonsensical as they purport to express a genuine proposition but in fact express neither a tautology nor an empirical hypothesis.’ Ayer thinks the whole issues of metaphysics including the dispute among realists and idealists could be solved when words are defined clearly.

The call against metaphysics has been thus strong in different period of time and more recently feminist theorists have also joined the chorus. ‘If we can live with our metaphysical position’—has been a crucial concern among feminists. Simone de Beauvoir brought up issues about the definitions of woman by function, i.e. as a womb, which derives from Platonic essence to nominalism. She has been a strong modernist critic of the traditional metaphysics which conceived women only in relation to men and thus subordinated her in all ways. Aristotle, the well-known student of Plato, considered ‘the female nature as afflicted with a natural

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121 One meaning stated in different terms.
For eg. If we take the metaphysical statement by a theist that ‘God exists” or by an atheist that “God does not exist” or by an agnostic that “God does or does not exist, but there is no way of knowing which way it is”, all three statements are totally nonsocial for Ayer. We cannot demonstrate God’s existence or nonexistence by deduction, since all deductive truth rests on premises that simply define how terms are being used. Statements about God’s existence cannot be proved empirically either, since we cannot say “if God exists X would be observed.” If we say certain regularity in nature provides evidence for God’s existence, then the statement “God exists” simply means “there is certain regularity in nature”.
123 Honer, Hunt, Okholm, 2002. p.113
defectiveness’. Fifteen hundred years later Thomas Aquinas regarded woman as ‘an imperfect man’ or an ‘incidental’ being.\textsuperscript{124} No doubt that these statements or definitions by prominent philosophers might have influenced the conceptualization of woman. This doesn’t limit with the geographical areas or particular time period, because the mainstream thought process all over the world, always seemed to be following the well-known thinkers. Derrida has mentioned about the totality of logos of the worldwide historico-philosophical situation being predetermined by the Greco-European traditional metaphysics, taking over all of humanity.\textsuperscript{125} With a common observation one can see the metaphysical conceptions of dominant thinkers have caused the subordination of women in the societies at all times. Beauvoir tries to take an existential posture leaving behind the concepts of superiority and inferiority, which has been created by the conceptualizations on women by the prominent philosophers beginning from Socrates who lived in Greece about five hundred years before Christ.

The woman never identified her subjectivity for long time because of her being as the ‘other’. According to Beauvoir, the women would achieve liberty through transcendence. She has thought a lot about how all the marginalized and oppressed communities should achieve the freedom to live authentically by transcendence. Two of her most famous claims appear to have profound metaphysical implications: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," (de Beauvoir 1989, 267) and "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute--she is the Other" (de Beauvoir 1989, xxviii). There is disagreement about how to interpret both claims, yet to many the former serves as

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{125} Derrida, Jacques. \textit{Writing and Difference}, Routledge & Kegan Paul ltd. Great Britain, 1978, p.82
the slogan for the view that gender is socially constructed, and the latter identifies the content of feminine construction as all that is opposed to the masculine, the masculine also being what counts as the subject or self. Three interconnected themes prominent in feminist metaphysics emerge here: the social construction of gender (and other categories), the relational nature of the self (and other categories), and the dangers of dualistic thinking.¹²⁶

The desire for making a community and asserting the subjectivity presumes the dichotomization of subject/object in one way. Descartes says this as *cogito me cogitare*: I think/experience ‘myself’ thinking/experiencing. This ‘myself’ is not a product of the experiences but is prior to them in an ontological casting of subjectivity. What is essential is not a constancy of experience or self-understanding through that experience, but the ‘mode of being’ underlying these experiences. The postmodern feminists noticed the fact that this goes with the dualistic Western philosophical background of mind/body problem. The unity of an identity is made problematic by the postmodernists. Iris Marion Young says, thinking in terms of the unity of subject and object, we are actually making a logic of hierarchical opposition.¹²⁷ About this issue, the solution may be drawn from Derrida which would help us to see this problem lifting up the category of ‘difference’¹²⁸ which is in contrast of the idealist metaphysics of presence. He thinks the metaphysics of

¹²⁶ http://www.mit.edu/~shaslang/papers/fmnewsUHO.html

¹²⁷ Honer, Hunt, Okholm, 2002, Also see Young, Iris Marion., “The ideal of community and the Politics of Difference” in Feminism/Postmodernism, Routledge, New York,1990

¹²⁸ Ibid., Derrida uses the term ‘differance’ in French. This word means both differing and deferring. that is, a sign (e.g. a word) signifies by its place in a chain of signs and holds in abeyance any completion of its meaning (because contexts may change).
presence is illusory. He put forward a totally different way of seeing things in terms of the mastery of concepts over language. Even in the beginnings of metaphysics, an intimate interrelation was thought between social being and language. For Aristotle, the human is the being that has the logos, i.e. who can speak, and is therefore sociated.

But a feminist research would identify that the human being with the logos, capable of speaking, remained only as a male human being for a long time. The ‘inherited unquestionable’ about the non-sociated female beings, started lingering in the history only recently. Irigaray’s theory of sexual difference suggests that women could never ‘be’ a ‘subject’ in the ontology of substances in the Western culture precisely because they are the relation of difference, the excluded. Women are also ‘difference’ that cannot be understood as the simple negation or ‘Other’ of the always-already-masculine subject. Thus they are neither subject nor its Other, but a difference from the economy of binary opposition, itself a ruse for a monologic elaboration of the masculine.129 Then, metaphysically, the appearance of sex within hegemonic language as a ‘substance’ is achieved through a performative twist of language and discourse that conceals the fact that ‘being’ a sex or gender is fundamentally impossible.

According to Judith Butler everything gender is ‘socially constructed’. Then the primary question in this stare is that concerning the being of social practices. It is simply repeated dogmatically and so the social (including cultural) practices must be

the starting point for any theory of gender. Then another fundamental question such as’ what is society’ comes up invariably, to fall back into the insidious clutches of an ahistorical, naturalizing metaphysics. Society is a mode of being in which human beings are sociated with each other. But ‘what is human being’, and ‘what is sociation’, and ‘how is it possible’ are other questions following. Such questions become crucial once it is realized that society, in these ostensibly progressive theories, is posited as the ultimate underlying substance.

Butler’s endeavor was to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble.\textsuperscript{130} With other thinkers who support her, she tried to put a critical distance between their own thinking and the traditional, purportedly phalloglogical, and therefore, oppressive discourse of metaphysics, which is accused of being "naturalizing" and "ahistorical" and, along with that, of erecting an "ontology of substances"\textsuperscript{131}. Substance is understood to be the temporal persistence of the conscious human subject who understands itself consistently and coherently over time, can speak and determine its own existence on the basis of its free will. Substance is humanized as the human subject of consciousness. About this conception Butler adds that the 'substantial person' is only the outcome of "socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility"\textsuperscript{132}, i.e. of "signifying practices" in the course of which human subjects come to understand who they are in the world, to assume an identity.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 44
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., p.25
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., p.23, p.25, p.184
Butler justifies her refusal to seriously pose questions regarding an “ontology of gender whereby the meaning of being a woman or a man [would be] elucidated” with the claim that to do so would be to treat gender as a natural category. For Butler, all ontology is "naturalized" (p.42) and therefore outside history. For her, any phenomenon that isn't social is necessarily natural. But the question of the being of gender is historical without being reducible to being merely an effect of social discursive practices (whose being is left unquestioned). The question of being is situated prior to the dichotomy society/nature or culture/nature (where prior here is not meant in a temporal sense, but rather in the order of enabling conditions of possibility). To pose the question concerning the being of gender involves examining the phenomena of historical, gendered being-in-the-world against the background of gendered being's embeddedness in an historical understanding of being as such that can be coaxed to come to light by examining the traditional texts of metaphysics, starting with Plato and Aristotle. Western thinking and Western being-in-the-world, at least, are to the present day silently shaped and determined by the discreet historical background workings of metaphysics.133

In the East as well, the way of thought and life have ever been regulated by the metaphysical foundation given by the Sacred Texts. The reflections of the textual ideas in the society could be observed through analyzing such process of metaphysical foundations. It is in this way the interpretation of the concepts of gendered/gendering family and woman are being done in this study with reference to the text *Manu-Smriti.*

133 http://www.webcom.com/artefact/mtphysfm.html
Summary

The concept of holding one particular methodology appears to be a problematic in an interdisciplinary social research. And especially in the case of a feminist research, a multiplicity of methods becomes mandatory. Raising this point, the above has been an attempt to review the possible methodological patterns that could be traced out in this conceptual study, such as discourse, deconstruction, and reflexive methodology. And the methodology of gender as differed from mainstream methodology is the totalizing framework for this feminist conceptual analysis. The terms and the meanings and explanations are important in an interpretative study as we hold here. Along with that the relation and role of concepts in theories and models are to be born in mind so as to understand how they take part in a research program. There is also an attempt in this section to identify the feminist epistemology and ontology that underlies the following analysis.