Introduction:

Social theories are theoretical frameworks which are used to study and interpret social phenomenon within a particular school of thought. An essential tool used by social scientists, theories relate to historical debates over the most valid and reliable methodologies (e.g. positivism and anti-positivism), as well as the dominance of either structure or agency. Certain social theories attempt to remain strictly scientific, descriptive and objective. On the contrary, conflict theories, present superficially normative positions, and often critique the ideological aspects inherent in unadventurous, long-established thought.

It is difficult to trace the origin of social theory, but frequent debates return to Ancient Greek (Berberoglu, 2005, P. xi). These foundations gave rise to or aroused “Enlightenment social contract theory, sociological positivism, and modern social science”. Social science today is used as an “umbrella” term to refer, not just to sociology but also to economics, political science and other disciples. Accordingly, social theory is interdisciplinary, drawing ideas from the fields as diverse as anthropology and mass media. A social theory of authoritative nature is kept out of the academic social and political science, where in, it can be referred to as “social criticism” instead of social theory. The etymology of social theory has been discussed by Harrington. According to him, term ‘social theory’ did not exist in any language before 20th century. The origin of the term is ancient and has been derived from two words, i.e. ‘social’ from the Latin word ‘socius’ and ‘theory’ from the Greek word ‘theoria’ (Harrington, 2005). Social theorizing aided the Greeks in making sense of their lives, and in questioning the value and meanings of things around them. Social theory appeared as a distinct authority in twentieth century. It was largely associated with rationality and objectivity.
As compared to other disciplines such as physics or chemistry – use of scientific methods by social theorists is very less and they interpret their conclusions and data subjectively rather than that of scientists, who analyze it objectively. The concept under which social theory may supercede natural sciences is called “social construction of reality”. According to social theory, natural phenomena are understood based on the predictions by understanding the social phenomena. Social theory does not exist in mutual exclusion to the natural sciences; one is often contemporary to the other.

The earliest social scientific observations were found in the beginning manuscript of Western philosophy, (Plato, Polybius and so on), as well as in the non-European thought of figures such as Confucius. Saint Augustine (354-430) and Saint Thomas Aquinas’s (circa 1225-1274) concerned themselves with the idea of “Just society”. The analytical social theory of today which resembled with classical theories was developed with the birth of science of sociology. The ground work was laid by Auguste Comte (1798-1857), who is known as “Father of sociology”, for positivism as well as structural functionalism and social evolutionism. Three great classical theories of social and historical change emerged in the nineteenth century i.e. “Social evolutionism theory” (of which Social Darwinism forms a part), “The Social cycle of theory”, and “The Marxist historical materialism”. The term “Survival of the fittest”, was coined by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), who is also one among the early modern theorist. There is much post – modern social theorists who draw heavily upon Spencer’s work and argue that his observations are timeless (just as relevant in 2008 as 1898). It has been argued by ‘Vilfredo Pareto’ (1848 – 1923) and ‘Pitrin Sorokin’ that “history goes in cycles”, and they presented the “Social cycle theory” to illustrate their point. Many of the social thinker’s of the 19th century never held university posts namely Saint Simone, Comte, Marx, John Stuart mill etc and hence they were regarded as philosopher’s. Emile Durkheim, in 1896, established a journal named L’Annee
Durkheim monograph “Suicide” (1897), was a case study of catholic and protestant suicide rates, which distinguished sociological analysis from Psychology or philosophy.

FEMINISM

Feminism is not a unitary concept rather it is a diverse and multifaceted grouping of ideas and action. To define feminism we may start with the assertion that it is basically concerned with the inferior position of women in society and discrimination faced by them on the basis of their sex i.e. sexual discrimination or gender based discrimination. Besides all these common generalizations, it is difficult to come up with a ‘common ground’ between the different strands of feminism. The term feminism is a relatively modern one. There are debates over the origin of the term ‘feminist’. It was used first time by in a French medical test to describe a cessation in the development of the sexual organs and characteristics in male patients, who were thought to be suffering from feminization of their bodies (Fraisse, 1995). Alexander Dumas Fils, a French writer, republic and antifeminist, took the term from the French medical test and used it in a pamphlet published in the 1872 entitled *I’homme femme* on the subject of adultery, to describe women behaving in a supposedly masculine way. Hence, as pointed out by Fraisse (1995:316), although in medical terminology feminism was used for signifying men’s feminization, in political terms it was first used to describe virilization of women. Even after the word feminism was coined, it was not adopted as a term of identification by many of those who campaigned for women’s rights. Feminism is thus a term which emerged after a long time i.e. women started thinking, questioning about their inferior status and demanded recognition in their social position. There is a query over whether different types of political organizations which do not have a specific goal or aim, should be called feminist. On the other hand, there are those persons who argue for a much tighter definition of feminism, and as Dolmar points out:
“There are those who claim that feminism does have a complex of ideas about women, specific to or emanating from feminists. This means that it should be possible to separate out feminism and feminists from the multiplicity of those concerned with women’s issues. It is by no means absurd to suggest that you don’t have to be feminist to support women’s right to equal treatment, and that not all those supportive of women’s demands are feminists. In this light feminism can claim its own history, its own practices, its own ideas, but feminists can make no claim to an exclusive interest in problems affecting women. Feminism can thus be established as a field (and this even if skepticism is still needed in the face of claims or demands for a unified feminism), but cannot claim women as its domain.”

The problem regarding the classification of the feminism comes from the some studies of feminism and feminist theories. A basic classification would divide feminisms and feminists into three loose groups i.e. Liberal feminism, Marxist or socialist feminism, and Radical feminism. A brief summary of these can be stated as follows:

**LIBERAL FEMINISM:**

Equality of men and women through political and legal form is asserted through liberal feminism. Liberal feminism takes into account the personal interaction of both men and women as a basic ground to transform society into a more gender equitable place. This type of feminism has a tendency to have an impartial hallucination towards gender, the requirement of this type of feminism is that it requires females to shape themselves to get into the criterion to fit themselves into pre perceived figure for the welfare of the male citizens. According to liberal feminists, every female is competent enough to
accomplish equality; therefore a change can take place without changing the structure of the society. Basically liberal feminists work for the obliteration of institutional partiality and the execution of healthier laws. Feminist writers associated with the tradition are amongst Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill.

RADICAL FEMINISM:

Radical feminism is a stream within feminism that focuses on the theory of patriarchy as a “system of power” that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on an assumption of male supremacy used to oppress women. Radical feminism aims to object and put an end to patriarchy by challenging traditional gender roles and the male subjugation of women and calls for fundamental (radical) reordering of society.

The term radical has been derived from Latin word “radix” “raadic” meaning root, is used as an adjective. According to radical feminists root cause of woman’s oppression lies in the patriarchal gender relations, as opposed to legal systems (liberal feminism) or class conflict (socialist and Marxist feminism).

RADICAL FEMINIST THEORY AND IDEOLOGY:

In Western society, Radical feminism emphasized on the fact that primary reason of oppression of women in their society is patriarchy. Radical feminists are looking forward to put an end to the practice of patriarchy. Radical feminists have put forward a theory that because of patriarchy, women have been out looked as “other” to the male norm and due to this they have been methodically oppressed and marginalized. They believe that the only way to deal with the issues of patriarchy and oppression is to analyze the fundamental cause of these problems through revolutions. There are various forms and
categories of oppression based on gender identity, race, social class, perceived attractiveness, sexual orientation and ability. But whatever is the oppressed class, most oppressed will be female.

Radical feminists believe that men use social systems and other methods of control to keep non-dominant men and women suppressed. Radical feminists believe in eliminating patriarchy. Restocking co-founder Ellen Willis wrote in 1984 that radical feminism “got sexual politics recognized as a public issue”, “created the vocabulary….. With which the second wave of feminism entered popular culture”, “sparked the drive to legalize abortion”, “were the first to demand total equality in the so called private sphere (house work and child care … emotional and sexual needs)”, and “created the atmosphere of urgency” that almost led to the passage of Equal Rights Amendment.

**RADICAL FEMINISM AND MARXISM:**

Radical feminism has been compared to Marxism, these both have explained about “the great struggle of history”, between two opposed forces. Like there was struggle between classes (i.e. the proletariat and bourgeoisie) in Marxist theory, similarly radical feminism describes the historical struggle between “men” and “women”. Radical feminism has a close relationship with Marxism since its origin. Total change in social relations has been looked forward by both radical feminists and Marxists.

**RADICAL FEMINIST IDEOLOGY:**

By the beginning of the radical period, “heterosexuality was unchallenged assumption”. This assumption of heterosexuality was later on challenged by the rise of ‘political lesbianism’, which is closely associated with Atkinson and the feminists. There were two institutions i.e. Red stockings and the feminists,
which belonged to radical feminist organizations but both of them had distinctive views. Most members of Red stockings held a ‘materialist’ and ‘anti-psycho logistic’ view. According to them one should not only look at the oppressive nature of males as the only reason for oppression of females rather females submissiveness should also be taken into consideration as it leads to their own oppression.

Whereas Feminists hold a more naïve, psycho logistic, and utopian philosophy, by laying more emphasis on “sex roles”, seeing “sexism” as rooted in “contemporary patterns of males and females behaviour”. According to them institutions of marriage, family, prostitution and heterosexuality lay stress and are responsible for “the sex role system”. And they suggested that all these institutions should be smashed. But there were disagreements within the group, such as Koedts views the institution of “normal” sexual intercourse based only on males erotic pleasure whereas Atkinson viewed it mainly in terms of reproduction. Radical feminism cannot e only viewed as a movement of ideology and theory but Radical feminists also take direct actions.

SOCIALIST AND MARXIST FEMINISM:

Marxist feminism:

This is subtype of feminism theory which focuses on taking apart of capitalism as a way to liberate women. Marx’s feminists see existing gender inequality as ascertained ultimately by the capitalist mode of production. Gender oppression is class oppression and women’s subordination is seen as a form of class oppression which is maintained because it serves the interest of capital and ruling class.
Marxism and Feminism:

Marxism believes that it is the class division which is the root cause of women’s oppression and not the gender. Because a great deal of time and effort is needed to reproduce workforce which comes from the private family, this according to Marx is the key to women’s oppression because despite of education and healthcare in capitalist countries, the system largely depends on the unpaid labour of women for the creation of a healthy workforce. This is generally the basic cause of women’s low economic and social status. Friedrich Engels in “The origin of the family, private property and the state” (1845) argues that the bourgeois family rests on a material foundation of inequality between husband and wife, where wife is an unpaid prostitute, producing heirs for the transmission of property. For Marx, feminism is a bourgeois theory because of which a particular section of women get advantage where as a greater section of women get exploited, for example, Naomi Wolf’s call for the women to enter the work force as bosses and as workers in Fire with fire (1993).

Theory of Marxist feminism:

As Marxist feminism follows the work of Karl Marx’s hierarchical class relations (built on unequally distributed or owned sources of wealth, including monetary and other resources) are seen as the source of coercive power and oppression. Sexual dimension is seen as a dimension of class power. The Marxist school adopts a historical perspective of any social situation. According to this view, production and capital accumulation are the two fundamentals for understanding women’s position. There are two different views, according to one view, by expressing the relation between man, labour
and capital and their association with the market is the basic to understand women’s status. This system refers to certain methods such as creating blocks between the genders to break labour consistency, exclusion of women from market production, are some of the methods adopted by the capitalists in emphasizing on capital accumulation (Himmidmeit and Mohum, 1977). Since labour is viewed as fundamental to all economic activity, (historically specific) analysis of the organization of labour is crucial to Marxist feminist approaches. Hence Marxist feminists, in common with other Marxists, generally accept the version of what is called as the base superstructure model of society, that is, social relation’s including those related to the sexual inequality are conceived as crucially shaped by the economic base of the society, rather than by ideas and attitudes. According to Marxists, the main enemy in this form of analysis is the class system (capitalism, in modern societies) which creates division between men and women. According to an assumption in Marxist feminism, there is an underlying uniqueness between the two, while women are seen to be oppressed by men around them, men are oppressed by capitalism and ultimately both men and women are oppressed by capitalism and hence the interests of men and women are not crucially different (Beasley 59-61).

The second view of Marxist stream is known as Marxist feminist school. Here history is viewed as a system of relations between men (who dominate) and women (who are being dominated). Along with the fundamental contradictions between capital and labour, the Marxist feminists add another dimension to the system of contradictions and a struggle has been suggested against caste and gender exploitation (Hartman, 1979).

**Socialist Feminism:**

Socialist feminism focuses upon both the public and private spheres of a women’s life and argues that liberation can only be achieved by working to end both the economic and cultural sources of women’s oppression. Socialist
feminism is a dualist theory that broadens the Marxist feminist’s argument for the role of capitalism in the oppression of women and radical feminisms theory of the role of gender and the patriarchy (Beasley 58). In 1960s and 1970s debates that occurred between radical feminists and Marxist feminists concerned the fundamental cause of social inequality and were important in the formation of new groupings of socialist feminism. Some elements of Marxism have been maintained by social feminists regarding the significance of class distinctions. There are several versions of socialist feminism which involve different combinations of radical and Marxist feminism. In brief, there are three major socialist feminist traditions which may be derived from debates between radical and Marxist feminists. The first aspect involves a concern with the social construction of sex (gender) which was largely seen in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis. This approach perceives the concept of oppression of women as an effect of psychological function and not through the Marxists len’s.

The second major aspect of socialist feminism endeavors to draw the work of radical and Marxist feminists into one theory of power and describes a unified system sometimes referred to as capital patriarchy. Examples of this approach include work by Alison Jaggar and Iris Young. These theorists opposed dual systems by making an attempt to analyze patriarchy and capitalism together, for example, Jaggar in “Feminist Politics and Human Nature”, (1983) argues that the concept of alienation is a category broad enough to cover both phenomena.

On the contrary, third aspect describes a dual system of social organization. Patriarchy and capitalism are regarded as different entities by dual systems theorists, each having its own schedule and sphere of social relations. This description of socialist feminism has been identified by their views of relationships between class and sex (sometimes referred to as the category, gender) - that is, the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy.
GENDER:

Gender studies and study of gender have become taken for granted parts of the literature throughout the social sciences. The specific study of women or men and their difference of gender were not entirely absent from the studies but it was very limited. Most of the time, a generalized assumption was made about the study of gender as social oppression and the exploitation of women. The concept of gender came into existence during the early 1970’s. Before 1970’s, the word patriarchy existed but it (patriarchy) was given its particular meaning by academic feminism which meant power of all men over women. The word gender was used as an investigative category to draw the line of differentiation between biological sex differences. The aim of assigning a sex/gender distinction was to open a discussion about the actual physical or mental affects of both genders, which in turn is to create awareness among females about their better suiting nature to domestic roles. The word ‘patriarchy’ was used by feminists in the beginning for the study of women and the level of their social subordination. There was a disagreement about the use of the term ‘patriarchy’ because it led to a consensus proving females less socially privileged than men.

Throughout 1970’s and 1980’s, the word ‘gender’ belonged to feminism. For various intellectual and political reasons, term ‘gender studies’ replaced the term women studies in 1990’s, which indicated the impossibility of women’s study without the study of men. There is a counter balancing and non-governmental element in the term ‘gender studies’ as opposed to that of “women’s studies”. The impact of the social world on construction of masculinity and feminity was shown by the use of the term gender rather than women. Irrespective of the experiences of one or the other half of the population, theories and accounts of social world are being focused. It has been made clear that a social theory can never be complete without some discussion of the materialization and influence of academic feminism. Even though gender has always been a part of all societies and there realities but recently
only it has emerged as a concept and discursive tool. In today’s scenario, to analyze gender as a keyword involves knowledge of vocabularies, of the culture and society that surrounds us. Gender has often been assumed as patently obvious kind and it has also been it has also been assumed that its Domain of suggestion is crystal clear and straight forward.

In the past 30 years, social theory and sociological theory have been made part of this global culture by feminists, by their debates and concerns. Sociology as a subject has been accused of being blind to the concerns, ideas, and situation of women. It is important to have knowledge of history of sociology, relation of sociology with modernity, the conservatory and social praxis. The objective of this concise revisit to the fundamentals is to raise the question of relationship of theory to practice. We should always argue in sociology with the concept why we want to know along with what we want to know. There is no social process or action that takes place in a vacuum. Women and men both are social actors and social beings and to gather knowledge about one particular (gender) social being we have to study both.

However, the title of the chapter is not “women and sociological theory” but it is ‘Social theory and gender”. Therefore, we want to emphasize that the concerns discussed here are not just those of women but of women and men. “Plath” and “Larkin” are two authors, both well known and widely read throughout; these both have also suggested a common social arrangement i.e. of heterosexual marriage and domestic life. Both these writers have suggested the domestic division of labour and internal order of household. Another famous sociologist ‘Ann Oakley’ along with other sociologists has also written about family (and the gender relations within) is inspired by a wish to challenge and question conventional assumptions. At the beginning of the 21st century there was correspondingly a passionate concern to be found among those with the concern for the environment. Sociology however is currently
inspired by little vital political concern. Any term that comes to the world of sociology gets acceptance after critical evaluation and the case was same for the term “gender” as it has also passed through the critical evaluations before being accepted. Our everyday experience tells us that we have different expectations about the behavior of women and men and these expectations are visible in any family, school or workplace. We have to confront the issue of social change and social theory: as sociology can describe present but it becomes more interesting when it attempts to predict the future as it was done by “Weber”. Thinking of gender offers two possibilities to sociological and social theory. According to the first possibility, we have to think about an area of our lives which we can best describe as the ‘personal’ or ‘emotional’. There is a famous phrase coined by Simon de’ Beavuoir that is “One is not born to be women but becomes one”. This statement underscores the basic distinction between sex and gender. It has both psychological and physiological aspects. In most societies, biological differences are translated into socially institutionalized roles and position. “Gender” refers to socio-cultural definitions of man and woman, the way societies distinguish between them and assign different roles to them.

According to Ann Oakley,” gender is a matter of culture”. She asserts that gender distinction constructed by society, based on sex differences, which are biological in nature (Oakley1985:16). She says, “Not only is the division of labor by sex universal, but there is no reason why it should be there. They owe their creation to human inventiveness rather than invincible biological forces”. Society takes up the task of converting a biological male into man and a biological female into a woman by prescribing masculine and feminine qualities to them respectively. Now, since we know that masculinity and feminity are not natural but acquired, so the human subject of sociology has to be approached with care. We are no longer docile creatures with those clear labels of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ but human beings whose sexuality and sexual identity we know to be unstable and complex. Furthermore, we are invited
most clearly by “Judith Butler” to consider the idea that not only gender is natural but it is the social foundation of a deeply divided and unequal social world.

Butler writes:

‘The economic (economy), tried to the reproductive is necessarily linked to the reproduction of heterosexuality. It is not that non-heterosexual form of sexuality are simply left out, but that their suppression is essential to the operation of that prior normatively. This is not simply a question of certain people suffering a lack of cultural recognition by others but, rather, a specific mode of sexual production and exchange that works to maintain the stability of gender, the heterosexuality of desire, and the naturalization of the family”.

**GENDER, CULTURE AND HISTORY**

Human cultures are diverse and endlessly variable. Human behavior is largely determined by culture. An eminent British Anthropologist has defined culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, And any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. Culture is learned way off behavior, which is transmitted from one generation to another generation. Moreover, it is shared by a group. Infact in Ralph Linton’s terminology it is a “social heritage” which an individual receives from his/her group. Therefore it is said to have a historical growth, which has links with the past and has certain insights for the future. According to the historical materialism, human being is not only an animal species but a historical reality. Engels traces the history of women according to materialist perspective (Engels). He explains in the Stone Age, when the land was common to everyone in the clan, the elementary character of spade and hoe
limited the possibilities of agriculture, so that women’s strength was adequate for gardening. During this primitive division of labor, two classes were constituted by the two sexes and equality was found between them. Thus, role played by was larger in economic life.

The culture of a society can be tangible and intangible at the same time. The tangible aspects pertain to the objects, symbols and technology of a particular society while the intangible aspects refer to the beliefs, ideas, values and expectation in any society. Since, culture pertains to the learned aspects of society rather than the inherited ones, the way in which children and other new members of the society learn the ways of life in that society is called socialization. Ideas on one’s gender identity are also learned as a way of behavior. With the change in the value of work of man and woman, the maternal authority was taken over by the paternal authority. The property which used to be inherited from woman to her clan was also now inherited from father to son and from here began the suppression of woman. She was considered as mother or goddess but not as fellow creature. According to de Beavuoir, “society has always been male; political power has always been in the hands of men; public or simply social authority always belongs to men” (de beavoir, 1952:79). Men’s biological advantage from the beginning of humanity has enabled them to confirm their status as the only supreme ruler of the objects. They acknowledged their power always. Frazer puts more precisely: “men make gods; women worship them. Women’s place in the society is always which men assign to her; at no time has she ever imposed her own law” (ibid: 87). Along with the ownership of land man claimed the ownership of women. Even today women’s position is lower than man in all spheres of her social, political and economic life. Working class has been defined as working men by many of the historian’s. Socially constituted gender roles form stereotypes. A stereotype, according to the Webster’s New Word dictionary, 1998, is defined as an “unvarying pattern, specifically of people and for no individuality or critical judgment”. However, social psychologists define
a stereotype as being a cognitive structure containing the perceiver’s knowledge, belief and expectancies about some human social group. The stereotypification of gender, with the help of socialization process, has a sort of biological determinism, which starts with the reproductive ability of women. Sigmund Freud said, for women” anatomy is destiny” (Freud cited in Bhasin 2000:10). They stand inferior to men biologically, even physically they are weaker; this sort of biological determinism has been used till date, to justify the submissive position of women (Bhasin2000:10). According to Freud the learning of gender differences in infants and the young children is centered on the presence and absence of penis, “I have penis” is equivalent to ‘I am a boy’, while, ‘I am girl’ is equivalent “I lack penis”(Giddens 2000:110). But Nancy Chodrow has something else to say. She reverses Freud’s statement of saying that masculinity rather than feminity is defined by a loss, the forfeiting of close attachment to mother. She emphasizes more on the role of mother in the child’s identity rather than the role of father as Freud did (cited in Giddens 2002:111).

Most often the image of the family that has been conceived by the world is that father is the bread winner of the family and mother remains at home attending to housework and child care. In every respect women’s participation in history has been marginalized (Alexander: 1976). It was for the feminist theory that freed women from their murkiness as wives, mother’s and daughter’s of working men. Once Lenin described women’s domestic work as monotonous and lack of job satisfaction, this stands so apparently in the present period. Housework is most unproductive and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of women (Lenin 1983 quoted in Alexander). Rice emphasized the enormous burden placed on women by their” housewife role ………..’ in the majority of homes. The woman is the slave without whose labor whole structure of the family tends to collapse (Rice, 1934:14). Family is the basic unit of production where household work is essential to sustain our social and economic structure. But at the same time it is
isolated, tiring requiring hours and hours of hard work and unproductive. Despite of such a hard work in domestic sphere still it is considered that “women do not work”.

In the pre-industrial period, head of household was engaged in land or urban craft, which determined the family’s source of income, which was considered to be father. Most of the women worked as weavers, spinners, gardeners and agricultural farmers during pre-industrial period. The colonial era was both a boon and a bane to the Indian society. It took up many civilizing missions and “sati”, the tradition of immolation, was one of it. Women who burn herself along with the corpse of her husband are supposed to bring good luck to her family. A widow was disinherited from her husband’s property. We have till date heard about Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s debate during that period to abolish the sati system, but there was no voice of women. They were denied even at the point when it was a matter of their life and death. The missing voice of women on sati from the pages of history is simply ridiculous. Moreover, we saw absence of women in the pages of history. History indeed talks of the interaction between gender and culture. And our culture is such that only men and their activities have been highlighted. One would find women outside the feminist context, i.e. they have been in focus as somebody’s daughter, mother or sister. History was the story of great heroic deeds of great kings and individuals. Female was considered a slave to men. Usually servants do not find a place in family photographs. And here women’s status was similar to that for which she did not find a place in history. She is no more a man’s property. She is an individual with a past, which could be as glorious as the great king’s. Our culture has given enough space for ignoring women as secondary.
SOCIOBIOLOGY

Partially as a backlash to feminists demands and successes, there is currently a growing interest in and revival of the old “biology is destiny” theories of gender roles. Number of fields contributes to these positions but the general debate has been subsumed under the label “sociobiology of gender roles”. There are number of attempts that have been made to find out the scientific validation for the western sexual stratification system. Sociologists Stephen Goldberg, and Pierre Van den Berghe, anthropologist Lionel Tiger, biologist Edward Wilson, ethnologist Konrad Lorenz and popular writers such as Midge Decter, George Gilder and Robert Andrey have all attempted to develop theories of the biological necessity of male dominance and female subordination. Such theorists tend to draw heavily upon animal research and often use inappropriate or at least highly questionable analogies between animal behavior and human behavior. For example, a great deal of attention is given to the gender role related behaviors of the Hamandryas baboon. In this species males are highly aggressive and exhibit the extreme of male dominance. Naomi Weisstein points out that on the basis of the logic that human gender roles have the same natural limits as primate gender roles. The effort to locate innate biological mechanisms which trigger our gender role related behavior patterns has been similarly based. Goldberg, for example, puts forth a hormonal determinism theory of male dominance and patriarchy. According to him, it is the male hormone “testosterone” that gives antagonistic nature to males, which in turn helps males in defeating females in competition for any high status non maternal position in society. This sociobiological debate has raised a different context than the “biology is destiny” theories of the past. Today, although the women are under represented in the fields of science and higher education, there are still significant numbers of male and female feminists in the scientific world who are willing and able to challenge
the scientific basis of such theorizing. Even feminists have been influenced by sociobiology.

CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER ON THE BASIS OF RELIGION

Religion is concerned with matters that are thought to be sacred and supernatural. Religion forms a greater aspect of one’s culture. Religion distinguish between the Everyday things of the world around us, what Durkheim called “the sacred” and “the Profane”, that is certain “holy” events and entities, things that are out of ordinary. Religion involves a certain set of beliefs (a creed). Karl Marx argued forcefully for the Concept of religion as a tool of social dominance. According to him, religious beliefs and practices are simply the means by which the lower classes are kept in their plate. Religion even carries its gender related bias in its texts for instance, Hindu religion is an Embodiment of patriarchal domination. In fact, most of the Hindu mythology focuses on the sacrificing nature of the female; for instance, the uncomplaining image of Sita, who worshipped her husband and tolerated all the atrocities of the society and her husband. She jumped into fire and even went on an exile to forest all alone to prove her purity. Draupadi, as another example, as she got married with five brother’s (pandava’s) and was Disrobed by her husband’s cousin’s as her husband had lost her to their cousin’s in the game of dice. Despite of this entire dishonor, disgrace, she left with her husband’s leaving behind all the comforts. This proves that Indian society has nothing except expectations from women. An ideal image of women in Indian society is just to sacrifice. It’s been concluded from ‘Mahabharata’ and ‘Ramayana’ that war waged between men because of women, but nobody looked into the faults of men. In Ramayana, the war took place because Lax man (the younger brother of Lord Ram) humiliated Ravana’s sister, so Ravan took revenge by abducting Sita. Likewise, in Mahabharata, the game of dice was played by five brothers. They gambled away their property including their wife, who for them was a part of their property. She was no where he causes of the fight of Mahabharata
but still she was shown as a cruel person, women because of whom cousin’s fought among themselves. The interesting part was women were either criticized or eulogized and both led to her repression. Women always strive hard to meet the expectations of everyone and if she fails to do so, she feels guilty and blames herself and also gets blamed by the society.

Even Gender stereotypes are perpetuated in Christian mythology, which portrayed women as inferior. It is believed that Adam was created by god first and Eve was created to fulfill needs of Adam. Thus, it has been proved that women are inessential and she has been created to keep men at ease. According to Christianity, God is the father, a male. Jesus was a man. In the biblical contexts also Christianity has always prime importance to men. Elizabeth Stanton, in 1985, in her work “The Women’s Bible”, has claimed that bible does not reflect the views of god; rather it has been manipulated by men who wrote it. In 1870, also Stanton has pointed out that, that the Church of England was when revising its biblical text not a single woman was there in the committee. There are hardly any women seen in the post of priest. The job of priesthood has been controlled by men as they think that women are not fit for these types of jobs. So, women take the jobs of nun’s, which involved nursing and teaching that were controlled by religious institutions. In Islam, with its cultural practices like polygamy and purdah system, in an epitome of objectification. There are a number of verses in Quran that lay down its essential teaching on gender and genderization. A few of these lay down the equality of male and female sexes and/or genders, but the more decisive verses lay down hierarchy of the sexes/ or genders. Whether the Quran is contradictory or, at least, inconsistent will depend upon how one reads the verses in question, but it seems safe to maintain, that while, on one hand, the Quran appears to put both male and female muslims on a plane of spiritual equality, it, on the other hand, certainly seems to put them on a footing of social, economic, psychological, and cultural inequality. In these respects, it favors what can only be described as patriarchy and sexual hierarchy, with
superiority of the male over female. We shall look at both sets of a few selected verses of each kind in the Quran, namely, those that favor inequality of man and woman. Before moving to the verses let us see what “Abdul Wahab Buohdiba” writes in his “Sexuality in Islam”. He writes:

“The bipolarity of the world rests on the strict separation of the two ‘orders’, the feminine and masculine. The unity of the world can be achieved only in harmony of the sexes realized with full knowledge. The best way of realizing the harmony intended by god is for man to assume masculinity and for a woman to assume her femininity. The Islamic view of the world removes any guilt from the sexes, but it does so in order to make them available to one another and to realize a ‘dialogue of the sexes’ in a context of mutual respect and joie de vivre’.

Now, we should move towards. Among the verses that favor male-female equality may be included. The decisive verse, which favors the equality of men and women, is 33:35. In English translation Yusuf Ali has rendered it as follows: (All quotations below are from the holy Quran texts, translation and commentary, with Arabic text and English translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, reissued with roman transliteration of the Arabic text by Nusrat Ali Nasri).

For muslims men and women .for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, foe men and women who give in chastity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves) Page 20

For men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in god’s praise,--for them god has prepared forgiveness and great reward. Quran 33:35

In the above verses of Quran, certainly the intent of, at least, limited forms of equality of men and women are quite clear. Islam also makes the seeking, pursuit, and acquisition of education, learning and knowledge an equal obligation of both men and women.
There are many verses of the Quran, that constitute some of the mukhamat or commands, that clearly and straightforwardly state doctrines which provides a doctrinal basis for the psychologically, socially, culturally and civilization ally constructed inequality of male and female in Muslim life and living. Indeed, nothing is more evident in all of Islamic history than such inequality of men and women. The sexual and gender inequality, with the inferior statuses, rights and role of Muslim women in contemporary Muslim societies and cultures, derive directly from the doctrines of inequality of man and woman in the Quran, Sunnah, and Islamic tradition and history. Among the inequality verses of the Quran, the most decisive verse that supports male-female inequality is the following:

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because god has given the one more strength than the other, and because they support them for their means. Therefore the righteous women and devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband’s) absence what (chastity) god would have them guard. As to those women, on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them(first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) to beat them; but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means of annoyance.” Quran, 4:34

The above verse is addressed to men. They are told certain things about their own status and status of women and the relation in which men stand to women. First, men are told that they are in control of women, i.e., their wives, but also responsible for their maintenance. Second, they are, then told that, because they are the stronger sex physically and take care of, provide for, support maintain, and protect women from sexually predatory men, they are entitled to the unquestioned obedience of their wives to them, and finally, they are told, in the event of disobedience by a wife, how the husband has to proceed in order to discipline her. (Referred from Islam Rethought by Ausaf Ali)
MASCULINITY AND FEMINITY: SEX AND GENDER

Margaret Mead, an American anthropologist, was one of the first to empirically ground the distinction between the biological and social characteristics of men and women. Mead’s study, though contestable on sexual grounds, contributed significantly to the shaping of the concept of gender in the latter half of 20th century. The functionalist notion of ‘sex role’ was also a crude precursor of the concept of gender. Men and women are socialized into sex specific roles, namely, ‘instrumental’ and ‘expressive’. Scholars have suggested that gender is something more than roles performed by the individuals (Lorber 1984). Critics have also pointed out that socialization is always precarious achievement and that agency, interpretation and negotiation are a part and parcel how gender identities are actually constructed. The difference between sex and gender, which came to dominate the theory in 1970’s in sociology of gender, is based upon the idea of universality of ‘sex’ and ‘variability of gender’. A very popular distinction of sex-gender in sociology has been made by Ann Oakley in her book, “sex, gender and society” in 1972. For Oakley, sex is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genital, the relative difference in procreative function. “Gender” is a matter of culture; it refers to the social classification into “masculine” and “feminine”. Robert Stoler, an American psychiatrist, used the terms (sex and gender) to deal with cases of individuals whose biological ‘sex’ did not match their gender.

The process of socialization of gender in men and women is so strong that one can notice a deep rift between them in terms of their perspectives, priorities of life, their dreams, their aspirations, life styles and their ways of looking at things. According to Ned Nodding human beings are isolated atomistic individuals; we live and blossom in communities in relational units. According to her, life is not about just rules and principles but also about individuals and responsibilities related to them. And it is this point where
difference between males and females lies. The feminine character which is coupled with women is distinguished as submissive. Kindheartedness and physical weakness are identical to the womanish (feminine) genus. Where as masculinity is defined as dominant, courageous or encouraging male. Men are supposed to be high on bodily vigor. According to beliefs of both Nodding and Carol Gilligan, men and women have different principled directions, where men speak the language of rights and women speak the language of responsibility. According to men morality is considered as a rule of the game where as it (morality) is looked in terms of relationship in case of females. It will be very interesting to note that language of justice and rights is taught to females by the educators as according to them it will be helpful for females in order to function in the world where as this will not be taught to males by the educators as it might threaten the success of boys in the market.

Well the society does not follow one single model of masculinity and feminity, however, it may boast machismo in men and there is a general notion that it is the most ideal way for men to behave, and women also find it desirable. According to R.W.Connell, there are many different expressions of masculinity and feminity. Connell has used an ‘ideal types’ of masculinity and feminity in his hierarchy. At the top stands the category of supremacy of manliness, which is dominant over all other masculinities and feminity in the society. According to Connell feminity can be of various forms. The most prevalent one which has been accepted as a general norm has been named as “Emphasized feminity”. Then we have the subsidiary feminity, which includes feminists, lesbians, spinsters, midwives, witches, prostitutes and manual workers. This together can be categorized as the resistant feminity. But despite all these types “hegemonic masculinity” and “emphasized feminity” top the scale in terms of popularity.
The particular manner in which gender is socially constructed in a society is closely related to kinship organization of the society. The kinship organization of the society plays a significant role in shaping gender relations in most societies. The kinship organization of the society plays an important role in shaping gender relations in most societies. The system of descent followed in a social group has direct consequences for the construction of gender relations in the group. It has been shown by the anthropologists, that, whether the descent system of a society is primarily Patrilineal, matrilineal, or bilateral but it has major connotation for the construction of gender identities and relations of a society. This is because the system is very often the basis of group membership. Patrilineal societies are very widespread; such societies will be amongst most unfavorable to women as they try to differentiate between the sexes. In a Patrilineal system, descent is considered in male line, and usually women move to her husband’s home after marriage, a practice referred to as “patrivirilocality” in anthropological manner of speaking. In such a system, there will be a high value given to male progeny and men largely takeover the property. Women are treated as interim members of their biological (natal) household and amalgamation into their husband’s household is always weighed down with uncertainties. In an insightful essay on socialization of girls in Hindu India, Leela Dube has shown how the temporariness of a woman’s relationship with her (natal) biological relation’s is a persistent theme in folk songs and forms the underlying motif of many religious celebrations which enact the brief return of a daughter to her father’s house.

While discussing how kinship constitutes gender, we should consider the case of matrilineal societies, even though their actual prevalence has always been marginal. In these societies, the position of women is not equivalent to that of male in case of patrilineal society. In such system the descendents are known or are traced through women such as Nayar’s of Kerala
and the Khasi of North-East India, but men continue to hold an important position in their mother’s/ sister’s household. Infact, in a matrilineal society, brother-sister unit is as important as husband-wife unit in case of patrilineal societies. Absence of common marital residence is quite a known and common in matrilineal societies. To sustain the marital relationship men may visit periodically to their wives house. Matrilineal societies are not resistant to share their property with men but not willing to share the same property with men’s children who belong to their patrilineal group. Where as Patrilineal societies show resistance in sharing the property with daughters. Chastity and virginity of a woman is not valued in matrilineal societies as compared to patrilineal societies. This certainly gives some kind of sexual freedom to females which cannot be heard even in case of patrilineal societies. The practice of matrilineal societies allows a women for example in case of Nayar women, to enjoy relationships with all the visiting husbands , which is considered as highly absurd and would be treated as analogous to prostitution in case of Patrilineal societies.

**GENDER AND GLOBALIZATION**

Globalization has impacted upon gender relations in complex and contradictory ways. The centralization of the power within the sovereign state that has been disjointed by globalization was not predicated upon, nor necessary supportive of, equality between men and women. The power structures of the nation with the state have been organized around patriarchal assumptions that have accorded to men monopoly over power, authority and wealth. A number of structures have been erected to achieve this imbalance that have disguised its inequity by making it appear as natural and universe, for example, constructions of citizenship that concentrated upon civic duty( payment of taxes, military service, public office) from which women were excluded.
through public/private dichotomy and subordination of women within the family. Emphasis upon the normative impact of the public/private gas been legitimately criticized for universalizing a western model of social ordering. While recognizing the fluidity of any demarcation between public and private spheres, the undervaluing of women within the family impeded their advancement across many societies. The opening up of new spaces by apparent weakening of the nation state holds open the possibility of depressing the traditional gender hierarchies and devising new bases for relations. However, the reality appeared that the state no longer remained the sole institution that can define identity and belonging and it has denied women the space to assert their own claims to gendered self determination. Another aspect is the dispersal of power through what has been termed as the non – democratic forces of the “globalization from above” – corporate enterprises, markets, and movements of capital. These have weakened the effective decision and policy making power of the nation state, notably in economic and labor policies. Women are seen and hence favored, as a passive, compliant workforce that will accept low wages without demanding labor and human rights. The traditional sexual division of labor (the location of women in employments to which they are regarded as inherently suited, for example, textile industries and the caring professions) has been furthered through the addition of new locations and forms of work (service industry, tourism, and work in free trade and export process zones). What remains constant is the low economic value accorded to work performed primarily by women in conditions of exploitation, no job security and violations of human rights. In other situations, the consequences have led to powerless sexual exploitation; for example, reports of the special Rapporteur on violence against women have highlighted the linkages between countries in economic transition and the increase in trafficking and forced prostitution of women.

However, the global social movement of human rights has acquired the irresistible force, bringing the language and beliefs of human
rights to all parts of the globe into all aspects of social, political and economic life. In one manifestation of “globalization from below”, groups working for the recognition of women’s right have furthered their skills and strengths in campaigning and communicating globally. Another area where revolutionary technologies have had particular consequences for gender relations is that of reproductive technology. Again the picture is mixed. On one hand, this has allowed women, especially economically affluent, greater freedom and choice with respect to reproduction. On the other hand, it had created innumerable health problems for those who are not given adequate attention by the State agencies. Women’s health conditions, especially gynecological problem’s that could be relieved with little expenditure are frequently overlooked or remain untreated through cultural taboos. Other problems arise when technologies are used alongside state policies with respect to women’s fertility, for example, reproductive technology that allows pre-determination and selection of the sex of a child alongside a national “one child” policy. “Modem technology has been the means of liberation and choice for many women but for other’s it has resulted in death and exploited” says the preliminary report by the special Rapporteur. Gender relations are fluid and subject to constant negotiation within the family, the workforce and community. Transitions to democracy and market economies resulted in public office participation for women and loss of a range of economic rights. More generally, economic downturn within a state has a particularly harsh impact upon women through high unemployment. Continued stereotypes of men as the primary bread winner’s with family responsibilities lessen women’s employment security, even in the face of statistical evidence for women- headed households. Reconstruction after conflict often focuses on the need to find employment for men rather than on the continuation of female employment. What has become apparent is that forms of inequality exist regardless of the states prevailing political ideology. Their manifestations may differ, but the reality of women’s subordination remains constant. Advancement in women’s interest susceptible to being lost
through political, economic, and societal changes, both those that is deemed generally progressive and those that are destructive.

WOMEN AND ECONOMY IN INDIA

India’s economy has undergone a substantial transformation since the country’s independence in 1947. Agriculture now accounts for only one-third of the gross domestic product (GDP), down from 59 percent in 1950 and a wide range of modern industries and support services now exist. Furthermore, despite advances in the economy, large segments of the population are destitute. Some estimate that over one-third of the population is living below poverty line. Though specific customs vary from region to region within the country, there are different standards of behavior for men and women that carry over into work environment. Women are expected to be chaste and especially modest in all the actions (Dube and Pariwala, 1990), which may constrain their ability to perform in the workplace on an equal basis with men. Another related aspect of life in India is Purdah-literally, the veiling and seclusion of women. Fewer women, especially younger women, observe purdah today, but those who still do face constraints beyond those already placed on them by other hierarchical practices (Heitzman and Worden, 1996). This cultural rule place some Indian women, particularly those of lower caste, in a paradoxical situation: when a family suffer’s economically, people often think that a women should go out and work, yet at the same time the women’s participation in employment outside the home is viewed as “slightly inappropriate, a subtly wrong, and definitely dangerous to their chastity and womanly virtue” (Dube and Pariwala, 1990, P: 131). When a family recovers from an economic crisis, women may be kept at home as a demonstration of the family’s morality and as a symbol of its financial security. As working women of all segments of Indian society face various forms of discrimination including sexual harassment. Even professional women find discrimination to be prevalent: 2/3rd of the women in one study felt that they had to work harder
to receive the same benefits as comparably employed men (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). One of the basic reason for the income gap that is increasing over time and again in men and woman is that when men enter labor force they enter for good, where as women occasionally take time for child bearing, and parental leave. This has vast effect on women’s wages and it is fuelling the increasing gap between the life span. Sexual harassment is one of the main reasons that men resist gender equality in work place.

Since 1970s, studies of friendship have taken a different turn, divided in two different events. One hand, feminism began to celebrate women’s experience as a source of solidarity among women. Most women believe that women’s friendship are decidedly better than men’s because they involve personal care, concern, intimate sharing, and more emotional exchange, while men’s friendship were seen as more likely to involve work sports and business. Sociologists Lynne Davidson and Lucille Duberman, report little investment in the personal and relational levels of friendship”. According to the findings both men and women disclose personal information but it has been found that women actually disclose more to their friends. Pitcher (1999) draws together a range of British research evidence that shows the gendered character of education and training, paid work, household work and caring, love and sexuality, body related technologies, popular media culture, crime and criminal justice, and politics. Adkins describes her research as concerned with the ‘gendering’ of the contemporary labor market. It focuses on the processes through which power relations between men and women in employment are constituted and how “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female”, (Acker 1990:146; Adkins 1995:1) Adkins calls ‘sex workers’, working for both the public and for their male colleagues and bosses. To be workers, women have to be “attractive” workers and carry out forms of sexualized work, whereas men did not have to do this
Adkin argues that the labor market is gendered prior to job differentiation.

Even if a woman is employed, she may not have the control over the money she earns, though this money often plays a very important role in the maintenance of the household. In Indian culture, as in many other countries, women are expected to devote virtually all of their time, energy and earnings to their family. Men are expected to spend time and at least some of their earnings on activities outside the household. Research has shown that women contribute a higher share of their earnings to the family and less likely to spend it on themselves (Dwyer and Bruce, 1988). Research has suggested that as the share of the family income contributed by woman increases, so the likelihood that she will manage this income (The world bank, 1991). However, the extent to which women retain control over their own income varies from household to household and region to region. One study found that fewer than half of the women gave their earnings to their husbands (Dwyer and Bruce, 1988). The study, also showed, however, that many women still sought their husband’s permission when they wanted to purchase something for themselves. In Northern India, where more stringent cultural restrictions are placed, it is likely that few women control family finances. More importantly, however, the cultural practices vary from region to region; it is a broad generalization that north India tends to be more patriarchal and feudal than southern India. Women in northern India have more restrictions based on their behavior, thereby restricting their access to work. Southern India tends to be more egalitarian, women have relatively more freedom and women have a more prominent presence in society. Women also face wage discrimination. Throughout the economy, women tend to hold lower level positions than men even when they have sufficient skills to perform higher level jobs. Researcher’s have estimated that female agricultural laborer’s were usually paid forty to sixty percentage of the male wage (Kishwar and Vanita, 1985). Even when women occupy the same position and have similar educational levels, they earn just eighty percent of what men do. The public
sector hires a greater share of women that the private sector, but wages in the public sector are less egalitarian despite law’s requiring equal pay for equal work (Madeswaran and Lakshmanasamy, 1996).

Relationship between women’s education and work is not straightforward. The level of education is low in India, in 1991, only thirty nine percent of women and sixty four percent of men were literate. Meaning of literacy as per Indian terms is, “person is considered literate if he/she knows to write their names.” The majority of those who were literate have only primary education or less (RGCC, 1993). The effect of education on the employment status of women is not straightforward. Higher levels of education for women do not translate directly into higher proportions of the main worker’s. For example; eighteen percent of illiterate women are employed as main workers, while just eleven percent of those with high school education are employed as main workers. Not until a woman achieves a post high school level of education are the dramatic improvements in their employment status—about half of all women who receive a post secondary, non college diploma are employed as main workers. Surprisingly, women with university degrees do not have relatively high employment rates, only twenty eight percent of these women are employed as main workers. The confounding of the usual relationship between education and employment may be related to the likelihood that poorer and lower educated families require member’s to work. Often, girls and young women work instead of receiving education. Well-off and better educated families may send their daughter’s to school, but are able to afford to follow the cultural practice of keeping women at home after schooling is complete. Not until women receive specialized post secondary education do they see significant improvements in their employment rates. Women have distinct work experiences in different areas of the country. Employment rates for women vary substantially across India’s diverse states and territories. States with proportionately larger rural populations typically have higher employment rates because most people throughout India are
engaged in agriculture. For instance; the territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, a small area in western India, had the highest female employment rate (forty nine percent) in the country according to 1991 census. Delhi on the other hand, with an urban population of nearly ninety percent, had a female employment rate of just seven point four percent. Regions in northern India have lower employment rates than southern regions. Though the share of population involved in agriculture in these states was near the national average, the female employment rate is very low i.e. 10.8% in Haryana and just 4.4% in Punjab. According to the survey conducted by NSSO and according to their data collected in 1994, in rural areas, rural female unemployment is very low in Punjab it is 1.4% and it is almost nil in case of Haryana. Around half of all the rural women in these areas are engaged in domestic duties compared to the national average of 37.8 %( NSSO, 1994).

There are evidences which suggest that technological progress sometimes has a negative impact on women’s employment opportunities. When a new technology is introduced to automate specific manual labor, women may lose their jobs because they are often responsible for the manual duties. For instance; one village irrigates its fields through a bucket system in which women were very active. When the village replaced the manual irrigation system with a tube well irrigation system, women lost their jobs (Kishwar and Vanita, 1985). Many other examples exist where manual tasks such as wheat grinding and weeding are replaced by wheat grinding machine, herbicides and other modern technologies. These examples are not meant to suggest that women would be better off with the menial jobs; rather, they illustrate how women have been pushed out of traditional occupations. Women may not benefit from jobs created by the introduction of new technologies. New jobs (e.g. wheat grinding machine operator) usually go to men, and it is ever rarer for women to be employed in the factories producing such equipments. Recent National Sample survey data exemplify this trend. Since the 1970’s, total female self employment and regular employment have been
decreasing as a proportion of total employment in rural areas, while casual labor has been increasing (NSSO, 1994). Other data reinforce the conclusion that employment options for female agricultural workers have declined, and that many women seek casual work in other sector’s characterized by low wages and low productivity (National Commission for Women in India, 1993)

GENDER SEGREGATION

Gender segregation is also one of the most current issues faced in our society, it occurs when men and women are placed or located separately from one another. For example, in many countries, there is provision for boys and girls being educated separately rather than studying together in the same school and they are divided on the basis of gender. In India, these types of institutions are prevalent in every state but most commonly in northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, where combined education will be provided up to tenth standard and after that parents of the state opt for separate higher secondary schools and colleges for their daughters and sons. Gender segregation in education can also be said to occur that boys and girls study different subjects. Many researchers have focused on gender division in case of paid work to analyze power inequalities between women and men. In Hartman’s (1982) account, there is a common lodging between patriarchy and capitalism, which results in a ferocious circle of hindrance for women. Job isolation means that it is men who hold the job with greater material rewards, not relatively high wages compared to women. The lower income earned by women in their jobs keep them dependant on men as they encourage them to get married. It is world known fact that if a girl gets married she has to perform domestic chores for her husband and due to this she starts getting lacked in her professional front. Due to this domestic division of labor, women’s position in labor market gets weakened. Thus, the hierarchical domestic divisions of labor are perpetuated by the labor market and vice versa (448).
Isolation is at the most extreme level of jobs. Since occupations are clusters or comprehensive of jobs, this grouping together of jobs may obscure the full extent of isolation. For example, we find in teaching profession that women occupy primary school teachers job where as men occupy secondary school teachers job. Similarly, one more example is there i.e. of ‘Cleaner’ in which men predominates as ‘street cleaners’ where as women as ‘office cleaners’ (Mace men 1994:5). Human being is not born with the perceptions of gender differences, rather these emerge during the process of socio-economic change. The conflicts concerning are gender identity interaction particular ways that boys experience the processes of differentiation of the formation of sex. Both boys and girls set up separateness in relation to their mother, but because the mother is a woman, these experiences differ by gender. Though children of both the sexes have originated from her but a mother intentionally or unintentionally her son as far more as compared to her daughter. Equally, a son’s gender identity develops far from her mother due to his male core. Generally, women and girls never define themselves as ‘not men’ but as female. However, they might have problems with their sense of continuity and similarity.

We all are aware of the fact that girls and boys are related to their mother as primary care taker, love object and object of identification in a sexual and gender organized world. These developments create a gender difference which is central for males and not for females. Due to this a psychological investment in difference is created which women do not have. According to Freud, it is very clear that males are “not females” in earliest development. But because of cultural domination that men have in our society, a noticeable thing happens. Men use this domination to appropriate and transform these experiences. Both in everyday life and hypothetically, men have come forward to define masculinity which is basically human and to define women as not men.
Women are always seen as a part of male. She does not have her own recognition. Even it is believed that Eve was created out of a ‘supernumery bone’ of Adam. Michelet defines woman as the relative being. According to Benda”……. Man can think of himself without women. But she cannot think of herself without man. And she is simply to fulfill the desires of male i.e. whatever he demands, thus she is called “the sex”, which means she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For man, woman is considered as sex-utter sex, nothing more and nothing less than that. He is the focus, he is the supreme – she is the other (de Beavuoir, 1952- XiX). “The domestic labor that feels her lot because they were reconcilable with the cares of maternity imprisoned her in repetition and immanence; they were repeated from day to day in an identical form, which was perpetuated almost without change from century to century; they produce nothing new” ( de Beavuoir, 1952: 71). But men’s position was totally opposite to that of women. To begin with, man has been the inventor through numerous inventions. His success has always been celebrated with festivals and accomplishment. “For it is not giving life but rising in life that man is raised above the animal; that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings but to that which kills” ( de Beavuoir, 1952:72). Thus, women’s subordination began with the development of the society. Men’s activities were always treasured while women are destabilized.

GENDER AND HEALTH ISSUES IN INDIA

United Nations fund for population Activities (UNFPA) began a journey in 2001 with the release of the census of 2001. They began their journey to deal with the growing sex- ratio imbalance. Calculated on the basis of the number of girls per 1000 of boys in the 0-6 year age group, the child sex ratio showed a sharp decline from 976 girls per 1000 boys in 1961 to 927 girls per 1000 boys as per 2001census. It becomes important to study how far urban, educated middle class has gone ahead to ensure birth of son’s and not daughter’s. And
by studying them it became clear that the problem is not with food that is malnutrition or poverty but it is a new expression of choice by urban families. Rapid decline to child sex-ratio is largely contributed by ultrasound technique, which is used to determine the sex of the foetus. Adversely, a great fall or decline has been seen in the ratio of urban cities and districts, educated and those access to resources and technology. Now- a – days, a new trend is catching up attention in India i.e. the concept of small families and couple’s are achieving this by selecting son’s birth and aborting female foetus. Couples now – a – days want a small family but not without son(s). This scenario has to be changed in order to maintain an equilibrium in the male female sex ratio and this possibly can be achieved by the employment of women outside the home which will help to recognize the value of girls within the culture which in turn will contribute to the survival of daughter’s.

There are host of indicator’s available on women’s health in India showing their poor health status as compared to men. A more careful analysis reveals considerable variations in the sex ratio according to the state, caste, age, communal group and expenditure class. Kerala is the only state with a positive sex ratio at 1036, compared to the states like Haryana (865), and Punjab (882) with highly unfavorable sex ratios. Excess female mortality is concentrated among women and girls, death rates among both boys and girls in the 0-4 age group are at the highest but are higher among girls in spite of boys biological disadvantage at infancy; maternal deaths also count for 13 percent of female deaths before the age of 24. Scheduled tribes were found to have higher sex ratios than average population, possibly indicating the relatively better position of tribal women within their own communities. The comparatively low sex-ratio among “Dalits” is harder to explain and varies considerably by state, being lower than average in some relatively prosperous states and higher than average in less well-off states. There is also some evidence, that the sex-ratio is less unequal among the poorest classes. There is a steady decrease in the adult sex-ratio with the rise in per capita monthly expenditure which holds
for both rural and urban areas. Women stand a better chance of survival in poorer households where they are economically most active and therefore most needed. Hard and fast conclusions are difficult to arrive but it is clear that, among better off sections of the populations, gender discrimination within the household does not disappear rather it may even intensify.

Sociologists and demographer’s conclude that sex selection will take place when ever there is rapid fertility decline, with the continued son preference, and access to technology and illegal services. A distinct feature of sex ratio imbalance is that it is conditional in nature. It has been proved in many data’s that oftenly those families indulge in sex selection which do not have son’s. Even in India, the census offices “Special Fertility and Mortality Survey” (1998) shows that sex ratio at birth is adverse for girls. If a culture offer’s boys then technology is ready to catch up to meet a concealed need. Because of this practice, sex selection becomes wide spread.

There are three main issues in the social construction of gender relations i.e. identity, institution and interaction with regard to gender difference and inequality. Gender is more of a product of our interactions with other’s than a property of the individual. According to West and Zimmerman gender is a “managed property” which is manufactured with respect to the fact that particular ways, women and men are distinctively of social groups, constituted in concrete, historically changing and generally unequal social relationships”. (“Doing Gender” 1987)

Women share many of the diseases to which men are prone and are also especially or uniquely affected by others such as anemia, gynecological infections, back pain and depression. Studies of gender and health issues proliferate with the evidence of the disadvantaged status of women related to men. India is one of the few countries where women and men have nearly the same life expectancy at birth; despite the natural female advantage in this
regard (Chatterjee 1990; Desai 1994; World bank 1996). However, it has also been pointed out that the focus of health research must move beyond the reproduction of data that repeatedly proves this disadvantaged status, to actually examining the reasons for India’s falling sex ratio’s, gender differentiated mortality rates, and socio-cultural belief’s governing health (John 1995). Several health concerns’ are specific to, or have a serious impact on women in India. These include: (a) Maternal mortality, (b) Lack of prenatal care (c) Occupational hazards.

(a) Maternal mortality: is estimated at 437 deaths per 100 births, most maternal deaths are caused by infection, hemorrhage, eclampsia, obstructed labor, abortion and anemia. Lack of spacing between children- 37% of births occur within 2 years of the latest birth- also intensify mortality rates.

(b) Lack of prenatal care: approximately 37% of pregnant women in India receive no prenatal care during their pregnancies (IIPS 1995). The proportion varied directly with education levels and place of residence. Importantly, mother’s cited lack of nearby adequate health care facilities as one of the main reasons that they did not seek/ receive care (Bhalla 1995).

(c) Occupational hazards: women are, especially in agricultural areas, expected to perform hard physical labor, both within the household and outside. Such labor has serious effects on adolescent girls with under developed bone structures and high rates of respiratory diseases (World Bank 1996).

There is a wide range of health institutions in India, including government services, private institutions and NGOs. A considerable bias exists towards urban areas in terms of availability of health care facilities- in 1986, only 21% of all hospitals were in rural areas. Government health care systems are based on the establishment of Primary Health Care Centers, PHCs cover over 40,000 people each on average and that 16% of the population in rural areas lives 10 kms away from the nearest health care centre (Bhalla 1995). Recent data suggests that over 84% of health expenditure is now private.
Haddad and Smith (1997) found that increase in the level of nutrition of infants can be attached directly to improvements in women’s education and their status relative to men. They found that for the developing countries as a whole, these factors were directly responsible for over 50% of the total reduction in the rates of malnutrition amongst children from 1970 to 1995. Thus, there seems to be a direct relation between the reduction of severe malnutrition and rising educational levels. Studies constantly show that nutritional allocations (within and outside household) are biased against female children. The reasons for such biases are various and hard to determine. Sen (1985) based a study in villages of Bengal and concluded that differential mortality rates are caused by neglect of the female child. Pal (1998) conducted a large scale study that had several important findings. He found strong correlations between the birth order of a child and its level of nutrition. Later born female children were found to be the most discriminated against within the household, though a similar bias was not found for later born male children. Pal also found that increasing levels of literacy did not automatically assuage the bias against female children. Das Gupta (1987) and Vlassof (1990) also found bias against later born female children, evidenced by higher rates of mortality for this group. Bhandari presents an analysis for her experience in trying to introduce better feeding and nutritional practices to reduce infant mortality and malnutrition. She found that educating low income mothers was only minimally effective due to the strong influence of traditional gender biases in feeding practices. John (1995) uses National Survey data (1990) to show that strong gender biases exists in access to health care. Female children were found to be the most disadvantaged- a trend that is most prevalent in the states of Orissa, Haryana and Punjab. Girls are less likely to be brought to hospitals than boys, and are almost always brought in at a later stage in the illness (Bhalla 1995; Jejeebhoy and Rao 1995).
POSITION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

When we talk of status, we understand that it implies the social and legal position of an individual or, an individual standing in front of others. In a country like India, our constitution guarantees and grants equality to women in all spheres, as it has provided to all its citizens. Besides all this our constitution has also made special provisions for them. It is a matter of great fact that in a country like India, where constitution grants all powers of equality to women and also where once women were worshipped as incarnations of goddesses, still woman is facing problems related to her status. However, this is irony of the fate of Indian women that their status which should have been identity to reckon with, has become a topic of debate. Traditional structures have failed to make room for females as equal partners in the decision making process. There is no reflection of the interests of women in developmental plans and local programmes. Women are ignorant, unaware and ill informed about how they can live better lives with less hard work, morbidity, and fear of violence. Even though female has been provided with better biological potency by nature, the environment suffocates their development. This system is so deteriorated, as time passed the status of women became an issue to be discussed over various platforms. Last few decades have seen a mushroom growth of organizations struggling to get for women their dues, but how far this helped in the improvement of the status of women is still a debatable issue.

Women constitute 48 percent of the total population in India. They are treated as animals with lots of burden of responsibilities of attending all the domestic chores, bringing fuel, fodder and water and working from morning to evening in a clockwise menu without a minute to set back and all this also doesn’t bring her any sort of recognition in the system of National
Accounts. Even though 50 years have passed after independence but still women are living in world of negligence and exploitation. Given empowerment in terms of knowledge, information, the right environment and proper skills, women can lead the nation to greater heights socially, economically and culturally (Women and Education). Education is one of the most important aspects for the promotion of national economic development and for improvement in the status of women. If we consider empowerment of women through education, it will help a lot in improving their situation; it will also be of great help to the family, society and nation as a whole. There is old saying that, “If we educate a man (male) we educate an individual only, but, if we educate a woman, we are educating a whole family”. This is true in case of females as they educate not only their children but they also educate all those who depend on her, and thereby a whole nation gets educated. Gender inequality in education would lower the impact of male education on economic growth and raise the impact of female education (Doller and Gatti, 1999; Knowle, Lorqelly, and Owen).

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN PROCES OF EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

With regards to the status of women in the Indian society at large, no other literature has held their women in higher esteem than the Hindus. Perhaps, no other literature has presented a more admirable type of woman character than Sita, Maitriya, and Gargi. Hindu mythology witnesses that the status of Hindu women during the Vedic period was honorable and respectable. There are references, which indicate that, equal social status and religious status was allowed to boys and girls in Vedic society. The girls also spent early years of their life in brahmacharya ashram after observing Upanyana Sanskara fro study of Vedas. Attainment of women in intellectual field is to be inferred from the fact that some of the hymns are attributed to female rishis. They were on the
same footing as men. Marriage was an established institution in the Vedic age. It was regarded as a social and religious duty; it was not taken as contract. The husband wife stood on equal footing and prayed for long lasting love and friendship. The bride had the right of selecting her own consort. Widows were allowed to remarry if they desired so. The strong cultural background of India society and high status of women kept them healthy from all perspectives—social, physical and psychological. But everything changed after Post Vedic period. Women started losing their status in society, which she attained in the Vedic Age. Manu, the progenitor of Hindu race, stated that a woman should be kept day and night in subordination by males of the family. He did not treat women at par with men so far as rituals are concerned. According to him (Manu), man is responsible for hard work, earning the bread and women are for household duties. Manu says, “When creating them (women), god allotted to women a love of their bed, of their seat, and of ornaments, impure desires, wrath, and dishonesty, mature and bad conduct.”

During Mughal rule, the socio-economic status of Hindu women were very much lowered and had to depend on the Hindu male in every activity. The social evils like Purdah system came into force. Lack of education, early marriage, absence of absolute property rights were main causes of inequality of sex in the socio-economic field.

Britisher’s during their rule in India tried bringing significant modification in society’s structure. For status of women various reforms were initiated. Legal equality of men and women is something that free India has carried forward from the British India. However, there are various cultural orientations in Indian society which are shaped by the historical factors of development, regional and local traditions, classical texts and religious teachings. Because of ritual consideration’s material desirability for male child has increased over the birth of girl child or in other words preference of girl child. According to Hindu traditional scheme salvation acquires a highest place
and to achieve salvation it is necessary to complete all the life cycle as prescribed by dharma. According to Patrilineal Indian Hindu society, only a son can perform rites ensuring attainment of salvation. Parents believe that they can depend on their son’s for the support in old age. Sons are looked upon as potential builders of family’s prestige and prosperity. Where as, daughter’s are considered to be destined for others hence their upbringing is all worry and work for parents. Even today in a large number of households, the birth of a son is an occasion for rejoicing; the birth of a daughter is a cause for anxiety (Vashishta, 1976).

Girls in India, either inside or outside the educated elite classes, are considered to be a liability by their parents because of the tradition of giving dowry at the time of her marriage. As per Indian culture, daughters are offered to bridegroom by their parents under the practice of “Kanyadaan” and affectionate gifts are offered to bridegroom under the tradition of “Vara dakshina”, with the concept that the new couple will start their new life happily together. There is another perception of “Streedhan”, in which ornaments are given to the bride by her father or brother with a perception that these will help her in her tough times. The practice of dowry which was once started as token of love of a father towards his daughter, i.e. a small gift was given to the girl by her father as a symbol of love has now become compulsory and this practice has now been commercialized. This practice of dowry has become a serious social issue and has linked with many harmful practices against women and girls all over India, which includes burning of brides over dowry issues. Because of the social trend that has been set and a thinking that has overtaken everybody’s mind i.e. the girls are a drain on family’s resources, people are not interested in investing on daughters rather they feed their sons with better food, timely and costly healthcare as compared to female siblings. As per Indian culture, women derive their status primarily from their child bearing role and their value is analyzed by number of sons they have. There is cultural practice of female eating in the last which affects her health if she belongs to low
economic households. Females in Indian culture have little autonomy after her marriage regarding her own fertility as she is under the authority of her mother-in-law. Some among these females are told to remain in purdah in front of her father-in-law, elder brother of her husband etc. Their isolation and limited freedom of movement contribute to their dependence and restrict their access to family planning information and services (Conly and Camp, 1992).

Issue of providing equal status to women has been sharply focused in the development process right from the first five year plan. First four five year plans focused on organizing various welfare activities and giving priority to women’s education while a shift from welfare towards overall development of women in terms of health, education and employment of women has been noticed in fifth and sixth plans. Where as seventh plan laid a stress to identify and promote beneficiary programmes which extended benefits directly to women. And during eighth plan a significant shift from ‘development’ to ‘women’s empowerment’ has been made. Thirty percent reservation was recommended for women at all levels of government programmes under this plan. There was an increase in literacy rate from eight percent in 1947 to fifty four percent in 2001 as per census. There was a study conducted by humanistic study group, Birla Institute of technology and science(BITS), Pilani during Aug-Nov 2001, and the topic of study was “Rehabilitation and socio-economic conditions of special focus group”- War widows in the state of Rajasthan. Rajasthan state commission for women, Jaipur, sponsored the study. This study stated that social and economic status of war widows is far better than general widows because of various supportive objects and rehabilitation programmes sponsored by state and federal government (Prakash, N et al, 2001). Another study was conducted by students registered in contemporary India courses, BITS, Pilani on the topic, “Working women: Issues and challenges”, which was a case study of Pilani. Analysis of this study revealed that most of the respondents felt they are economically more independent, they did not faced any gender discrimination at their work, they have a prime role to play in the
decision masking processes at their home, and perceived a positive change in the perception of society towards women. Though these respondents revealed that they faced opposition of their family members with respect to taking of a job (Prakash, N and CDP C 332, 2003, the number of female candidates being admitted in BITS has been steadily increasing from past few years. In the year 2000, 168 female candidates were given admission in Bits and this number increased to 296 in 2001 and it further increased to 306 in the following year. The increasing number of females being admitted in BITS reveals the growing interest of females in the field of science and technology.

As per 1991 census, among 324 million illiterate, 197 million i.e. 61% are girls and women. According to an estimate for 1995-96, only 42.5% of girls attended primary schools, the number reduce to 39% at meddle level which further reduces to 35% at the secondary stage indicating considerable number of group drop outs. 94% of the work force in unorganized sector (working in the fields, construction and other such sector) comprises of women. Their share in paid employment industry and services stand at 15%. In decision making capacities (IAS, IPS, IFS), the number of women still needs to be improved. It has been found that in civil services, females mainly opt for diplomatic services or district administration where as only 3% of women join police services. Even though a significant boost in their (women) struggle for equal rights has been provided by legislative, reformative, educational, health and employment strategies but still there is a lot to be done in terms of giving enough confidence to carry this struggle further. The society has to change mindset. While legislative and other measures are sparking off the process, a swaying approach through mass communication techniques with the involvement of social and family groups will have to be worked out through collective efforts of all concerned. It will be done by escalating the ongoing process of social climate through awareness and due motivation (Kumar, 2002).
GENDER ISSUES

The Indian situation, as far as the question of women’s writing is concerned, presents a very complex picture. There are so many components and inestimable number of discrepancies deviating according to the cultural surroundings, family structure, class, caste, etc, that a colossal idea or a generalization is well high impossible. Women scholars and historians have even taken up two epics and anticipated a gendered description of these. Sukumari Bhattacharya (1981) has argued that in “Mahabharata” there are two different pictures of women, one standpoint and subordination and one of the more synchronized prominences. Chakravarti (1983) has looked at the “Ramayana” and she finds the weight age on chastity and female forfeit seem to be grafted in a simple story and over the centuries has become crucial in shaping feminine identity. Prabhati Mukherjee (1978) has correspondingly found the “Arthashastra” of Kautilya and Manusmriti as being normative texts for determining the behavior of women. Even our rituals reinforce this subaltern status of women.

In order to analyze the substantiation and contestation of women one must come to an accord about what women is. De Beavuoir (1961) says that “One is not born a woman but becomes so”, we understand that ‘woman’ is a cultural construction. The discrimination has seeped into every walk of life and living the household, the work place, the bus queue etc. It is this divisibility of roles and duties at different sites that poses the challenges. It brings up the whole question of differentiation and therefore separation, discrimination, and segregation which has divided the world into two unequal halves. A volume of “Economic and Political weekly” (April 29, 2006) attests to the women’s project of asserting themselves as still being ‘ongoing’. That is say that even 36 years after Kate Millet’s “Sexual: Textual Politics”, which brought in the second wave feminism, the debate about whether women have a voice or not is till unanswered. It is being felt that vociferous voices from the
past need to be re-emphasized in order to be evidence of the agency of women in our society. Jasbir Jain writes about women from a latter period of independence that re-established the idol of “Mother India” and reworked the myth of Sita through films like “Agnipariksha, Lajja”, and others. Apart from all these writers, historians and feminists, there is one live example of a woman who broke all the rules and boundaries to set her own rules i.e. Dr. Kiran Bedi. Despite the fact that she belonged to a typical patriarchal family, where all women were assigned household roles and decision making power was in the hands of the head of the family i.e. her grand father, she kept herself away from all these things and concentrated toward her career and finally set an example for other females to come forward and make their own niche in this male oriented world. Throughout her career as a police officer, Dr. Kiran Bedi has dared to swim against the current and explore new grounds. She has maintained all along that police priorities should be prevention and correction in its course of law enforcement. This feisty cop, has however, windswept a lot of feathers in government and out of it and her tendency to give a larger dimension to her work has been seen by the powers that be as her interpreting rules to suit her convenience. Many in India and abroad have made her their role model. Whatever assignment Kiran Bedi may be in, her career graph starts soaring from the day she joins only to discover her in the eyes of a storm towards the end. Being a female she dared to cross all the boundaries and served the country but she faced many problems from her male higher officials, politicians, etc. She was hounded out of Delhi, threatened with her life to leave Mizoram, declared absconding from Goa and charged with compromising security in Tihar jail, but she continued her duties with all her confidence and zeal. But all these problems faced by her proved one thing that it does not matter whether a woman is holding a good position and strong position in administration rather she will be discriminated on the basis of her gender. It is often said that when women take to pen they remain confined in the dimensions of love and lack of it, domesticity, and its oppressions, biology and its outrages, but this is necessary, for articulation is the first step in the process
of empowerment and communication the next as “Namita Gokhale” (2001) argues in “Women’s Writing”.

GENDERED VIOLENCE

The problem of violence against women is not new. Women in Indian society have been victims of ill treatment, humiliation, torture and exploitation for as long as written records of social organization and family are available. The records are replete with the incidents of abduction, rape, murder, and torture of women. Women and men do not enjoy equal status anywhere in this world. There is considerable difference in the opportunities for both men and women. Sociologists in the west started taking interest in social problems like gender inequality and female exploitation, likewise, criminologists particularly radical crime scientists, have started taking interest in problems such as criminal violence against women ever since they initiated reappraisal of the old assumptions underlying certain crucially socially problematic behavior.

Women in India are divided in terms of caste, class, rural, urban, educational, occupational, and linguistic groups; but marginalization is the common thread of uniformity among them. Marginalization begins with the non – recognition of women’s work as economic activity. The status of women in India is in comparable to that of developed western countries. Sex ratio is not favorable to men. Socially, politically, economically and educationally women are treated lower to men in India. Men have always monopolized the political space. There are many obstacles to the realization of women’s human rights in India as elsewhere. There are no women who have not suffered at one time or another harassment, humiliation, exploitation and violence that shadow her sex. A women’s life lies between pleasure at one end and danger at the other end. In India, women are way ahead their counter parts than else where in the matter of social legislation. But the implementation of laws granting rights to women has been so slow, unbalanced, and disorganized that socially,
economically and politically women are kept far behind men. Constantly scoffed and scorned at, frequently tormented, sometimes battered and occasionally burnt to death, they remain victims in every role. Indian women, thus, have been described as the underdogs of the society, where in theory the law of equality exists, and women’s are considered to be on a par with their male counterparts, but in actual reality, men remain all powerful and succeed at the expense of women.

The constitution of India guarantees equality, freedom, opportunity and protection to women, and various social legislations give them several exclusive rights. Yet, they enjoy unequal status. In recent years, incidents of aggressive violence against women are reported to be escalating alarmingly in our country. Rise in the rate of crime against women has been reported in all types of crimes ranging from eve-teasing to abduction and killing. For example, against 2,487 cases of rape in 1971; 5,409 cases were reported in 1981; 9,973 in 1991; 12,351 in 1994 and 13,754 in 1995 (Crime in India, 1995:222). (Cited from the book; Violence against women by Ram Ahuja, P.no- 143). This comes to 38 rapes a day or about three rapes every two hours. Similar increase has been registered in other crimes related to females too. Sadly, no statistics on crimes against women were collected separately by the ministry of home affairs till 1988. Of the total crimes committed in India under the IPC every year, about six percent crimes are against women. The statistics collected point out the total number of crimes against women (under IPC and the SL) (excluding murders) increased from 68000 in 1990 to 74000 in 1991, 79000 in 1992, 84000 in 1993, 93000 in 1994 and 106,000 in 1995 (Crime in India, 1995 : 222). Thus, in five years (between 1991 and 1995), crimes against women have increased by 45%. Of the crimes committed in one year against women under the IPC and SL, about 29% are torture cases, 27% are molestation cases, 13% are kidnapping cases and abduction cases, 13% are rape cases, 4.5% are sexual harassment cases, 5% are dowry homicide cases, and 0.5% are other cases (Ibid : 222). Broadly speaking, every year under IPC,
there are about 31,000 torture cases (cruelty by husband and other relatives), 28,000 molestation cases, 14,000 kidnapping and abduction cases, 14,000 rape cases, 5,000 eve teasing cases and 5,000 dowry homicide cases (Ibid : 222) (Cited from the book: Violence against women by Ram Ahuja Page number:15).

Of the total crimes against women, highest are recorded in Maharashtra, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. In 1995, of the 1, 06,471 recorded cases (under IPC and SL) in the country, 15.3% were in Maharashtra, 14.4% were in Madhya Pradesh, 11.2% in Uttar Pradesh, 8.8% in Rajasthan, 8.5% in Andhra Pradesh, 8.2% in Tamil Nadu, 6% in West Bengal and 27.6% in other states (Ibid:224&231). The incidence of crimes against women increased sharply in Rajasthan between 1994 and 1996. This sharp increase in the number of crimes against women prompted a weekly magazine to describe Rajasthan as ‘Rapisthan’. Many of these crimes have been committed by influential and moneyed people who could manipulate things in their favor. The “Shalini Sharma” sex scandal of Alwar, the throwing of acid on “Shivani Jadeja” in Jaipur, the J.C.Bose (Rajasthan University) hostel gang rape of a girl by seven persons( including the nephew of a minister, an advocate and a police officer), alleged rape of a woman in Jalore district by a Jain monk who later committed suicide etc. What is surprising in all these cases is that, the women involved were blamed and held responsible through character assassination.

Broadly speaking, ‘violence lies in the power of social situations’. Violence is not simply belligerence or injury performed by one individual (male) against another individual (female); it is more particularly the exploitation of authority. According to us, we believe violence as a, “behavior in which more influential person exercises his power over less influential person, he takes advantage of his influence and misuses it”. This relationship of power differential is clear in sexual violence against women (rape), in their
kidnapping and abduction, in physical battering of wives, as well as in dowry deaths and murder of women. This suggests the need to find out the dynamics of power and how it operates in and outside family (from violence against women by Ram Ahuja).