CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before delving into the methodological and technical aspects of the study, it was thought desirable to arrive at semantic clarification of the various concepts involved in the study. Therefore, concepts of variables under study has been given in this chapter so is to have a meaning but context.

2.1 GENDER

Gender is a socially constructed word or concept while sex is biologically determined. Gender can refer to the biological condition of being male or female, applied to humans, animals, plants, and other sexual species. In this aspect it is a synonym of sex (retrieved from www.wikipedia.org.).

Kessler and McKenna provided the first fully developed ethnomethodological account of gender in 1978. They preferred to use gender in order to underline the social origins of differences between women and men even when referring to differences assumed to be biological. They suggest that the recognition of gender differences is always a social act, whether that recognition is part of scientific procedure or everyday interaction. Hence, they are critical of those formulations, such as Rubins (1975) sex/gender system, which are underpinned by naturalistic assumptions. Rubin’s account, as they point out, is 'still grounded in, and takes for granted, the objective reality of two biological sex’ and therefore ‘does not question the facility of two genders (Kessler & Mckenna, 1978).

The existence of a gender social order depends upon the division or distinction of gender itself. Hence, it is impossible to rid ourselves of gender ‘role’ or gender inequalities without ridding ourselves of gender itself.
If gender is social rather than natural, change and variability are always possible. Hence, continuities also require a social explanation. One important continuity is the hierarchical relationship between women and men, which has persisted despite many changes in the meaning of femininity and masculinity and in the social activities of women and men. While male dominance can and does change in form and degree, it seems that gender hierarchy can coexist with a wide variety of beliefs about gender and with differing division of labour between women and men. Gender, thus denotes a hierarchical relationship between women and men, not merely differences between them.

Stoller (1968) found the distinction between sex and gender useful in describing the situation of those people whose biological sex was found to differ from the gender category in which they had been placed or in which they located themselves. Following Stoller, Oakley (1972) defined sex as the anatomical and physiological characteristics that signify biological maleness and femaleness as socially constructed masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity are products not of biology but of the social, cultural and psychological attributes acquired through the process of becoming a man or a woman in a particular society at a particular time. Gender is thus a social characteristic, not a direct product of biological sex.

According to Rubins (1975), each society has a sex/gender system – a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention. These arrangements vary from one society and culture to another and serve as conventional means of organizing human sexual relations, especially through the structing of kinship and marriage. For Rubin, gender is a socially imposed division of sexes and ‘a product of the social relations of sexuality. The concept of gender enabled us to think of masculinity and femininity as historically and culturally variable rather than fixed by nature. Moreover, what it means to be a woman or a man can also vary with any given society at any one time often
reflecting other differences and inequalities such as those of “class” and “race”.

2.2 HISTORY OF GENDER

The origins of sociology are conventionally traced back to the nineteenth century, when a number of thinkers sought to make sense of the rapid social changes brought about by the rise of industrial capitalism. That these thinkers are collectively known as the founding fathers says something about gender. Not only were they men, but they paid little attention to issues of gender and sexuality, despite the fact that the social transformations which preoccupied them entailed major shifts in family life, in relations between men and women and in conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity (Seidman, 1997). Many of the ideas about gender we now regard as ‘traditional’, along with the practices associated with them, were established at this time. For example, the separation of the workplace from domestic space was accompanied by the notion that women and men were suited to separate spheres and that a woman’s place was in the home (Hall 1992; Davidoff & Hall, 1987).

Simmel observed that it couldn’t be overlooked that the woman forgets far less often the fact of being a woman than the man of being a man. This fact is evident in the extremely frequent phenomenon that certain judgments, institutions, aims, or interests which men, consider purely objective, are felt by women to be thoroughly and characteristically masculine.

This perspective statement presages much modern feminist thinking about the ways in which men are able to represent themselves as ungendered as pass off knowledge as objective when it is, in fact, constructed from a masculine perspective.

Talcott Parsons believed that there was a complementary division of labour between husbands and wives that stabilized the family and integrated it into the wider society (Jackson & Scott, 2002).
2.3 ENGENDERING SEX

Gender role comprises all the things people do to express their gender identities. Gender role are the learnt behaviours and responsibilities prescribed for each gender by a community or society at large. These are learnt in the family, from parents and others members who are the role models. The difference between males and females that appear early in life are reinforced and maintained through differential socialization of boys and girls (Hyde and Rosenberg, 1980). Socialization for the development of appropriate sex traits and roles starts from childhood. Girls are given dolls while boys are given guns to play with. A male gender role could include wearing male clothing, going to the pub occasionally, drinking alcohol, playing darts with his friends, seeking heterosexual relationships, maintaining an executive job, etc.

Gender role is a culturally created concept that arises from early socialization. By five years are children develops clearly deformed sex role stereotypes regarding appropriate behaviour, traits, etc. boys become children while girls remain little women (Aries, 1962). Boys are encouraged to develop masculine characteristics (aggression, dominance & independence) whereas girls are encouraged to acquire feminine characteristics (submission, nurturance and dependence) (Baligar, 1999).

In most cultures, males are expected to be more aggressive, assertive and achievement oriented while females are expected to be nurturant, sensitive and responsible [Whiting and Edward 1973].

Ideas of appropriate behaviour according to gender vary among cultures. For example, marital combat has been seen as mostly appropriate for men, while child-rearing has been seen mostly the female domain. Barry, Bacon and Child (1957) found that greater pressure is put through socialization for the development of nurturance and obedience in girls and towards self-reliance and achievement striving in boys.
It is mostly observed that women and girls have low self-image and a negative self-concept. They do not feel themselves as needed, important or valued.

Child rearing practices have a marked effect on the development of self-concept of children. In India experiences are given to children on the basis of their sex. Girls are given lesser value. They are seen as economic liability to be got rid off. Girls encounter gender bias at almost every stage of their lives.

In traditional Indian family, the values of patriarchy and male supremacy largely determine the differential socialization and reinforcement of a separate set of behavior for boys and girls. The socialization of a girl is guided by traditional concepts of proper feminine. Behavior and by the fact that her action are inextricably limited to family honour and prestige (Jacobson, 1977)

In the modification of behavior, a cultural content in upbringing of an Indian child is the lack of praise. The technique of discipline employed by parents is of punishment for wrongdoing. Rewards are infrequent and praise almost non-existent in the fear of “spoiling” the child. Girls are more likely not to receive any rewards for good behaviour than boys (Anandalakshmy, 1994 & Kaushisk, 1993).

Kaushik (1993) and Anandalakshmy (1994) found that parents & other elders in a traditional family allowed more freedom to boys than girls to move around in the physical environment without special permission or adult accompaniment. There were more restrictions on girls in laughing, going out and wearing non-traditional clothes as compared to their brothers.

The onset of puberty is seen as a disaster as now starts the period when the girl has to be guarded till her marriage. Kalkdina (1975) pointed out that when a young Indian girl reaches puberty, her movements outside the house are restricted unless accompanied by an escort. As a result, she is believed to become more dependent individual than a male child.
The early socialization of a girl in the family eventually moulds her into a stereotyped person of her gender. This process of gender socialization however is discriminatory towards the girl child. Gender socialization as pointed out by Poonacha (1993) is a violation of basic human rights, as it attempts to control a woman’s autonomy and her independence of thought and action. It makes her meek and subservient (Baligar, 1999).

Butler (1990) points out that if gender does not follow automatically from sex there is no reason to believe that there are inevitably only two genders. As soon as we begin to question this belief we must also begin to ask where there sex itself is simply a fact of nature. Once the immutability of sex is contested it becomes apparent that “this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed perhaps it was always already gender.

Performativity works because it is ‘citational’; it entails citing past practices, referring to existing conventions, reiterating known norms. For example, saying “It’s a girl” at a baby’s birth brings a girl into being, begins the process, as Butler puts it, of “girling” the girl. The process is effective because “it’s a girl” cites the norms of sex, draws on the authority of the conventions that establish what a girl is. According Butler, sex is materialized through a complex of much citational practices, which are both normative and regulative.

2.4 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Approaches to gender may be divided into three basic categories: essentialist, mythopoetic and constructionist. Essentialist often implies nature (“biology is destiny”) whereas constructionists may imply nurture (“the personal is political”).

Gray (1987) speaks of male instinct and female intuition as though these were part of a genetic code, making gender biological and essentialist rather than conditioned. According to him, biology is destiny, and the best that men and women can hope for is to develop a way of communicating cross culturally with each other.
The mythopeotic stream within the men's movement is founded on the neo-Jungian conviction that masculinities derive from deep unconscious patterns or archetypes. These patterns are best revealed through a tradition of stories, myths, and rituals.

Essential and mythopoesis are not the only influences in the contemporary movement among men to find a healthy gender identity. Clatterbaugh identifies eight “perspectives” within the men’s movement. The moral perspective is essentialist, seeking to protect institutions and practices grounded in traditional society.

The profeminist perspective understands masculinity as a set of limitations imposed upon men, often reflecting misogyny and violence against women. The men’s rights perspective argues that men are discriminated against in an increasingly profeminist world, particularly in issues of child custody.

The socialist perspective holds the workplace accountable as the primary site of sexism and gender inequality. Standing between essentialism and constructionism in men’s studies in Gilmore. Manhood is defined as “the approved way of being an adult male in any given society”. He explores the way that all masculinities are structured around three basic roles: protector, provider, and impregnator. The specific manifestation of these roles, however, is worked out differently from one culture to the next.

Men and women, as individuals differ in their perceptions of gender. Essentialism theory suggests that there are innate properties, or essences, that are shared by members of a group and male them what they are (Haslan et al., 2000).

Mahalingam, Rodriguez and Taylor are of the view that cognitive psychologists have described essentialism as a heuristic bias that help us understand confusing issues that we face, and research has demonstrated that even children hold essentialist notions of gender (Mahalingam & Rodriguez, 2003; Taylor, 1996).

The implication of essentialism theory is that there are certain norms that prescribe how women ought to behave, i.e. – they should
be caring, docile, submissive, nurturing etc. and this is biologically based. In other words we can say that the differences in social status and power are confirmed or declared by the essentialisation of biological differences.

Women writers are much less likely to write from the point of view of essentialism, but rather employ social, historical or narrative constructionism.

Chodorow (1974) is a social constructionist, arguing that motherhood reproduces itself because women are programmed to see children as replacements and for their own loss, and because capitalist society needs new generations of children to perpetuate it. In this sense, Chodorow builds her argument upon classical freudian oedipal theory and Winnicottian object relations theory, both of which she feels explain women’s drive to reproduce motherhood better than either biology or role socialization. Yet within the socially constructed expectation of women’s mothering are inbuilt tensions that produced over mothered daughters and emotionally shutdown sons. In her epilogue she calls for a deconstruction of this gender asymmetry to yield new forms of equal parenting.

Gilligan (1982) questions that if the mothering role is so important, why are women not more valued in our societies, and why are we unable to hear their voice? To answer her own question, she critiques Piaget’s and Kohlberg’s, arguments on moral development psychology, are based on research samples or clinical experience of males only. As long as this is so, women will be measured as deficient. The gender stereotype of male identity is forged in relation to the world and measured by individuation and separation; female identity is forged in relationships of intimacy with others. Not every development “voice” is voice of justice, rules and power; there is another voice, common but not exclusive to women, which is the voice of care, contextuality, and relationality. The different voice- the ethic of care is necessary to bring balance to the ethic of justice, and hence to bring cultures to a mature balance.
Development psychologists Belenky et al. argue that Gilligan’s “different voice” is systematically buried by methods of education that ignore the ways of knowing that women have cultivated and learned to value. They identify five non-stage like epistemological perspectives common to women, conceptions of knowledge and truth that are often devalued both at school and in home life. The five are: silence (mindless and voiceless), received knowledge (from higher authorities), subjective knowledge (personal, private and intuitive), procedural knowledge (ways of acquiring and communicating), and constructed knowledge (contextual and narrative, both subjective and objective).

2.5 THEORIES OF GENDER

Gender related behaviour and gender bias in behaviour is not the result of either biology or social environment. It is the result of multiple factors. In other words, it can be said that every individual has her/his own perception or idea about the extent to which of the two factors, i.e., biology or social environment are responsible for gender or sex difference. Already done research has shown that while individuals tend to rate social factors as more important than biological ones, they also believe that biological factors have some role in determining group differences (Martin and Parker, 1995; Taylor and Gelman, 1991).

Eagly and Wood contrasted two theories that have been dominant in the field of gender research in their discussion of the origin of sex/gender differences. The evolutionary theory of sex differences focuses on differences as the product of adaptive problems as men and women evolved and the different strategies that developed in order to ensure their survival and reproductive success. The social structural theory, on the other hand, says that sex differences originate primarily from the contrasting social positions of women and men. As the social position and roles that men and women occupy are tied to some extent to physical differences, the social structural theory emphasizes the power of the environment and the social world in constructing ideas of gender. Though these two theories emphasize
different factors related to gender and gendered behaviour, it is noted that the theories do not necessarily oppose each other (Eagly and Wood, 1999).

### 2.6 THEORIES OF FEMINISM

#### 2.6.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminists have followed a long tradition of campaigning for improved rights and opportunities for women without seriously questioning the existing organization of society. This stand of feminist thinking and political practice is widespread around the world, and is the version of feminism most clearly understood by non-feminists. Liberal feminism assumes that women suffer injustices because of their sex and are organized around campaigns for equality and redistribution, equal pay, equal civil rights, equal access to education, health and welfare, equal access to the democratic political process. Liberal feminism acknowledges that women are widely discriminated against because of their gender, but does not identify the relations between the sexes as specific power relations. Liberal feminist movements can be found whenever women fight for health, work, education, legal rights, decent housing and an improved standard of living for women in general. These struggles do not, however, seriously challenge non-feminist understanding of the causes of the inequalities between women and men.

#### 2.6.2 Radical Feminism

Radical and revolutionary feminists have been the real innovators in establishing new wave feminism as an understanding of social relation to be reckoned with. Radical feminism is the most difficult version of feminism to define because it has always been diverse and has become more so over the years. Yet radical feminists can be identified as sharing some common assumptions, which differentiate their approach to women’s oppression, by men from other groups of feminists. Many feminists have adopted an explicitly anti-intellectual stance. They have objected to the intellectual evolution of feminism. But it was the radical feminists who inspired an
international movement, which differed substantially from 19th and 20th century liberal and socialist women's movement. Radical feminism focused directly on women's relation to men as politically problematic. Radical feminists produced knowledge of women's oppression by challenging conventional assumptions. By redefining the most intimate of human relation as political, rather than as private, radical feminists politicized sexuality and exposed men's normal, everyday behaviour as a widespread social problem.

2.6.3 Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminism is in a way more inherently contradictory than radical feminism. Socialism is a struggle for the interest of a particular class at a particular historical stage of human development. Marxist feminists have a commitment to struggle for the interests of woman, as women regardless of class, power or economic interests, while at the same time having a commitment to struggle for the interests of the exploited working class, which entails struggling with some men and against some women. Different Marxist feminists have taken up different versions of Marxism. These differences are crucially important in determining the exact relationship between Marxism and feminism. Marxist feminists questioned the adequacy of Marxist theory and politics, since socialism, although it could produce improved material conditions for women, clearly did not produce women's liberation from men. Marxist feminism came into conflict with radical feminism, particularly in Britain and has remained in a state of some tension ever since. Like radical and unlike liberal feminism, Marxist feminism focused on power differences between women and men. Marxist feminists have criticized liberal and radical feminism on the grounds that their political strategies ignore the different class interests of working class and bourgeois women. Working class women are economically exploited in ways that the women of bourgeois are not.

Women are only recognizable women in any general sense because of biological sex and potential reproductive function. As a
gender, women’s experiences, power or lack of power, relationships to men, economic activities, beliefs and values are all historically and culturally variable. The sex is what all women have in common, but it is as a gender that women are oppressed by men. The idea of women’s oppression was a means of conceptualizing the supposedly natural inferiority of the feminine as natural. Feminists challenged the conceptual separation of nature and culture that had allowed men to dominate women and had allowed women’s oppression to develop in the guise of women’s feminine nature.

Klein (1946) points out that, despite the prevailing belief in ‘real’ differences between men and women, there is very little agreement among ‘experts’ or the general population about what constitutes ‘feminity’ ‘there are almost as many opinions as there are minds, and it is hard to find even two essential characteristics on which the common man or the majority of experts would agree. Klein suggests that feminine traits are sociologically rather than biologically given. A key determinant is women’s domestic responsibilities, which absorb ‘a preponderating part of women’s energy’. Klein conducted one of the first studies of women’s strategies in combining paid work with domestic work. That woman at home experienced social isolation and boredom exacerbated by the financial dependence being a housewife entailed and the low esteem in which the role was held.

Komarovsky (1946) explored the tensions between the pursuit of educational success and the demands of sexually desirable femininity. The college women, she found, admitted to ‘playing dumb’ in male company, allowing their boyfriends, to explain things they already understood, often better than the young men who displayed their supposed intellectual superiority, in order to flatter the young men’s egos and preserve their own ‘feminity’.

Beauvoir (1949) laid the foundations for a feminist analysis of gender. Her famous assertion that ‘one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’ emphasized the social character of womanhood as distinct from biological femaleness. According to Beauvoir, bodily
differences between women and men may be ‘inescapable’ but ‘in themselves they have no significance’, since they depend for their meaning on the ‘whole context’ in which actual women and men live their lives.

Mead (1950) in her anthropological study of three New Guinea societies, which represented very different ideas about the temperament of each sex. She sought to establish that feminine and masculine attributes and roles were largely cultural rather than natural. In her later work (1962) she suggests that despite the diversity in the human organization of sex differential activities, what is deemed masculine is always universally deemed also to be superior. Men may cook or weave or dress dolls or hunt humming-birds, but if such activities are the appropriate occupation of men, then the whole society, men and women alike, votes them as important. When women perform the same occupations, they are regarded as less important. In a great number of human societies men’s sureness of their right, or ability, to practice some activity that women are not allowed to practice.

She presupposed that the two sexes were fixed, but that the qualities attributed to each varied, along with the tasks allotted to them.

2.7 SUMMARIZING NOTE ON THE THEORIES

There have been many versions of feminist thought throughout human history and these are being shared and rediscovered after years of isolation and neglect. Women’s emancipation or liberation has developed numerous meanings over the years, not least because the ideas and political aims of those who have struggled for women have varied. These tend to vary according to the period and to the way in which they define ‘Women’ rather than attempting to impose uniformity on diversity. Some feminists have simply accepted feminism as a loose term for a variety of conceptions of the relations between men and women in society, their origin and how they might be changed for the better. The way in which feminism is defined as
contingent upon the way the definer understands past, existing and future relationships between women and men. Ultimately a conception of feminism rests upon a vision of the future and, as with all such visions, the relations between what we can understand of human history, of present societies, and of what might be, become critical strengths or weaknesses. There is a convention of grouping different theorists loosely together on the basis of the assumption they make about human nature, the relative importance of biology, ideology and material conditions in determining social practices, and on the basis of their strategies for change.

There is a paradox existing in the society as to why education and economic independence (from western point of view) is looked upon as tools for women emancipation, still in the Indian context there seems to be little visible impact of these tools. There has been substantive increase or expansion in educational opportunities, access to women leading to increased career options for economic participation but there is deep rooted social desirability element limited to certain psychological variables that have remained untouched in the psyche of the modern social milieu also. The impact of education as it exists has not been able to lessen gender discrimination, so it is imperative to explore why the above stated tools have been impotent in tackling gender discrimination and identify those correlates which should be targeted in the socio-political and psychological areas for emancipation of women in the society.