UNIT 4 MANIFESTATIONS OF POWER

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

After reading the earlier three units of this Block you would have understood how gender is situated with respect to class, caste, race and ethnicity. In the present unit you learn about various facets of power, how and in what form and ways it is manifested in interpersonal relationships. The unit also talks of what is the effect of power on the recipient and how power impacts the power wielding agency. The unit will introduce you to various theories of power and implications of power on class and gender. Towards the end we will discuss how and why women have been historically placed at the receiving end of power dynamics in society.
4.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you would be able to:

- Define the concept of power;
- Explain different types of power;
- Analyze the effect of power on individuals;
- Examine gender differentiation in the use of power;
- Learn about theories of power; and
- Critically examine the position of women with respect to power.

4.3 NOTION OF POWER

Our century has fore grounded the role of power to an unprecedented extent: power over forces of nature, power over information, power of the people and power of some groups over others. Power has been embodied in empires, gangs and global corporations. We have seen power being exercised by force, compulsion, influence, propaganda, charisma and bureaucracy. Let us dwell on manifestations of power in the context of gender.

If you look at the development indicators you will find women at the lowest rung of the ladder. The UNDP Report of 2004 shows that the world has nearly one billion illiterate adults out which two-third are women. According to another estimate, two-third of 130 million children worldwide who are school drop-outs are girls.

Participation in decision making is where the women world over are worst discriminated against. Their representation in political processes is negligible as well. The majority of women, on an average, earn about three fourth of the wages to that of males for the same work in both developed and developing countries. In most of the countries, women approximately take up double the unpaid work than what the men do. Participation of women in the economy is more in primary sector and less in secondary and tertiary sector (www.hrw.org). Globally, the health status of women is lower than the health status of men. The primary victims of today’s armed conflicts are not soldiers but civilian women and their children. These facts reflect the reality that women are more powerless than men and become easy prey to exploitation and subjugation. But why have they become so powerless? Let us first define power and then analyse the theory of power in this context.
4.4 DEFINITIONS OF POWER

For your understanding let us first define what is understood by ‘power’.

Power, in its most general meaning is the ability to pursue and attains goals through mastery of one’s environments. Gender stratification results from the unequal distribution of power between men and women.

Box 4.1

**Definition of Power**

*Weber (1968) conceptualizes power as a form of legitimate authority derived from organizational positions that people occupy. Power is connected to authority, domination, exploitation and is an entity that an individual or group may possess. Power, to summarize, is the control, by one person, group or nation over the behavior and conditions of life of another. (Clegg, 1975, p. 57)*

A general account of societies, their structure and history can best be given in terms of the interrelations of, the four sources of social power: ideological, economic, military and political relationships (Mann, 1986, p.2).

Power has two central aspects, ‘control over resources’ (physical, human, intellectual or financial) and ‘control over ideologies’ (beliefs, values and attributes). Thus, power is one’s capacity to have control over others. Scholars have, over the years, focused on the power found in specific institutions (i.e religion, business, education, government etc.) while little attention is paid to the study of power vested in individuals. Power is first and foremost an interpersonal concern. Let us first look at issues like what power is, how it influences the person who holds it, how it affects the relationship between people and finally, how it rests with some (men) more than others, specifically, women.

4.5 SOURCES OF POWER

You may know that there are various sources of power in human relationships and our dealings in day to day life. As said earlier, power can be exercised by an individual over another individual, an individual over a group of people, or a group of people influencing an individual, as well as when a group influences another. In this section we shall read about types of powers that are singularly or collectively manifested in human behavioral dealing.

Let us discuss the sources of power that Mann (1986) has discussed in his book titled ‘Sources of Power’ Volume I. He describes sources power in the following ways:
• **distributive and collective**

Power relations between men and women, when they take the form of domination of one gender over another, represent the distributive aspect of power. The extent of domination depends, then, on the collective power of each gender. Gender differences in political and economic power are connected with the distributive power of men over women and made it possible for men to control women's education and occupations. Distributive power of men over women is backed by the ideology of separate spheres, an ideology emphasizing traditional femininity.

• **extensive and intensive**

Extensive power is the ability to organize a large number of people over far flung territories in order to engage in minimally stable cooperation. Intensive power refers to the ability to organize tightly and command a high level of mobilization or commitment from the participants whether the area and number covered are great or small.

• **authoritarian and diffused**

If the social control or discrimination is exercised by social institutions such as universities or professional associations, we deal with authoritative power. Diffused power is relatively spontaneous, unconscious, decentralized and widely spread among the population. Diffused power results in similar social practices that embody power relations but are not explicitly commanded. It is more of compliance or obedience or rather understanding that these practices are natural or moral or result from self-evident common interests. Patriarchy is an example of diffused power.

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**Box No. 4.2**

**Sources of power**

*French and Raven (1965) listed six different types of powers that people use in their interpersonal relationships viz. reward, coercion, referent, legitimate, expert and informational.*

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**4.6 INTERPERSONAL POWER**

To begin with, it is important to understand what interpersonal power is. Also referred to as ‘social power’, interpersonal power is the ability to achieve ends through influence. It can also be said that when power enters into a relationship, power holders have the ability to achieve ends by
Let’s take a hypothetical situation to analyse different types of powers and the messages that power transmits. Rani is being pressurized by her family to get sonography done to find out the sex of the child that she is carrying. Her husband says, ‘I will buy you a gold chain if you get sonography done’. He is using the power of reward. He may also say, ‘I won’t let you visit your parents unless you get sonography done.’ The power being exercised here is that of coercion. Third type of power that can be manifested by being ‘referent’ (pacifying) e.g the husband mollifies the wife by saying that if she gets sonography done and know the sex of the child they can plan their future in a better way. Having expertise on the matter of reference can be yet another type of power. Here, it can be the doctor who says that it is a punishable offence to get sonography done to know the sex of the child. Another type of power can be legitimate, as acquired by way of social positioning. In this case it can be the mother in law who wants Rani to undertake this investigation. Lastly, power can be informational (ability to explain why the person should or should not change) e.g here in this case Rani’s friends may support her by saying that it’s unethical to go in for such investigations.

Next you will read about the bases of these six types of powers and their consequences on relationships between targeted persons and the power holders.

- A person possesses reward power when the power holder has some sort of resource or a thing of value for which the targeted person is willing to do something. Resources can be concrete or tangible (like money, gift) or personal or less tangible (like affection, friendship, cordial relationship). With this type of power play the targeted person feel encouraged towards the power holder who uses reward power.

- When we say coercive power, it is held by one who threatens to punish or withdraw a reward, unless the target person complies with the power holder’s wishes. You can say that coercive power is one of the strongest forms of power that one can have over the other. It instills a strong dislike or even hatred for the power holder. Coercive power does not generally assure a long term compliance with the power holder’s wishes, especially when the power holder is not present.

- A person who is admired or liked by the other has what is called referent power. For example if you like your mother, you are more likely to comply with her wishes than you would have had you not liked or respected her. Most of the time people with referent power do not know that they are exercising a kind of power over others. Here the
power holder enjoys a positive relationship with the target person and the compliance with the power holders wishes may last for a considerable time even in his or her absence.

- **Legitimate power** comes to a person by virtue of his/ her social position in society that confers authority over others. Here the basis is social roles or positions one holds in society (doctors, police, and judges). Suppose person X is being treated by a doctor. X’s dos and don’ts of life are controlled by X’s doctor. In most cases the target person feels indifferent towards the person with legitimate power and compliance is almost complete. This kind of a power is more complicated form of power as it entails knowledge of society’s social structures and the roles played out by its members in their social statuses.

- **Expert power** is possessed by one who has superior knowledge or ability in a specific subject or area e.g one cannot interfere in the work of a plumber or an electrician as the person is more knowledgeable in the area of plumbing or electrical work. Again the target person is indifferent to the person with expert power and in most cases the target person goes by the wishes of the expert power holder so as to save oneself from trouble arising out of non compliance.

- A person with access to some information that others might find important or valuable, is one who holds **informational power**. One need not be knowledgeable or skilled to have informational power but simply be the possessor of some information that others desire to have. The essential feature here is that one person holds information that others will be influenced by. The power holder’s personality or social status and other such attributes are of little importance.

Lets us now look into how power is used by both men and women in their day to day life.

**Check Your Progress:**

1) Define ‘power’ and list the types of power that you have studied in the earlier section of this unit.

2) Can you recall any instance from your life or in somebody else’s life around you where there has been a display of interpersonal power? Discuss with others in your peer group or at the Study Centre.
It is important for you to know that people attribute different power bases to males and females. Traditionally males have been viewed as having and using both reward and coercive power more than females as the males have greater access to various concrete rewards (money, land etc.) making compliance mandatory. For centuries men have used coercive powers - threat and punishment to get their way. It might be suggested that women would be more likely to use referent powers than men because women are traditionally viewed as more sensitive to others, more concerned with harmony in groups and thought of as less aggressive than men. However, males are taught early that they should not identify with women (‘boys don’t cry’) and to view women in negative ways (‘women are always bad drivers’). In most societies men have an abundance of legitimate power because of their access to a variety of positions that sanction them authority over others especially women and children. In the conventional family for example, the mother has legitimate authority over the children but the father still has absolute authority over all the family members, including the wife. Men are always found in positions that bring with them some amount of expertise or superior knowledge. Till late during the last century, most people felt little need for anything more than just basic education for their daughters, although boys were sent to school to get knowledge and building skill. As a result, it was observed that in all high status professions, men out numbered women.

Men with their superior training and education are more apt to have more access to expert power as compared to women. Even when women do show evidence of expert power they are considered less likeable and less feminine. A similar situation arises when the gender base of informational power is analysed. As a result of socialization, males have greater access to information than women. Thus it can be said that men have greater informational power in comparison to women. Now it would be interesting for us to know how power affects the person who uses it and how it differs in its manifestations in different situations.

**Box 4.3**

**Power bases of men and women**

*Men appear to have greater power bases than women and except for referent power bases all other types of power bases show a favourable inclination towards men.*
4.8 EFFECTS OF HOLDING POWER

Here you will read about what the effects of holding power on the power holders are. Having power over others can have various effects. The most evident effect can be that it makes the power holder happy or it can be of greater personal satisfaction and pleasure in his/her life. According to Kipnis (1976) power can bring about a feeling of being lauded or worthlessness. People who have power over others think of themselves as superior to those over whom they have power, producing an exaggerated or enlarged self perception. On the other hand such superiority may foster resentment, anger, bitterness or hatred in the targeted person.

The other effect may be that the power holder assumes that he or she is in control of his or her life rather than being controlled by external forces. The power imbalances between men and women make men believe that they are more in charge of their life and women seeing themselves as being controlled rather than controlling.

Enhanced self-esteem can be another effect of holding power. People with power also hold more resources thus satisfying their desires. Power holders are more likely to be flattered or praised by targets of their power. But one with little power may not get the attention and will rely on tactics like helplessness to achieve their desires.

There may be a change in morality as a result of holding power as the person may feel above the common rules that govern others. In fact the person may frame his or her own rules of conduct especially if these values or norms are constricting his or her power base. Lastly, the power holder may view the target person with contempt or disrespect. Thus we see that power has significant effects on both the power holder and the target person. The notion that power can have a corrupting effect on an individual is not an idle observation.

4.9 SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY OF POWER

Till now we dealt with power more from a psychological point of view. Here we will enquire about power from a sociological perspective. As you may have concluded by now that power is a measurement of an entity’s ability to control its environment, including the behaviour of other entities. The term authority is often used for power as its legitimate outcome. Exercise of power is seen as widespread amongst humans as social beings. Often, the study of power in society is referred to as politics. Much of the recent sociological debate on power revolves around the issue of the enabling nature of power. Thus, power can be seen as various forms of constraints on human action, but also as that which makes action possible, although in a limited way.
Because power operates both relationally and reciprocally, sociologists speak of balance of power between parties with regard to a relationship: all parties have some power with regards to all relationships. The sociological examination of power concerns itself with discovering and describing the relative strength equal or unequal, stable or subject to periodic change.

4.9.1 Theories of Power

Let us examine theories of power from the politico-sociological point of view in the upcoming section.

- **Plurist Theories**
  Here power is seen to be apprehended by a range of groups in any society. Every society has some groups more powerful than others and these groups struggle with each other to hold power. Because of checks and balances built in the democratic government system no specific group is able to dictate terms to other groups i.e societal power is dispersed, widely shared and derived from many sources. On the other hand, the state stands for institutionalized power and authority, its key role being to promote harmony within the system, to safeguard equilibrium and order. Individuals with common interest exercise authority on decision makers by collective action. Thus, common citizens can have meaningful contribution to decision making.

A variant of this theory- elite pluralism focuses on elite rule and egalitarian principles. That is to say that democracy has changed from one of direct popular rule to that of competition between and within elites to control the state. Here elites are not a single entity but multiple centres of political powers. This theory also distracts mass participation in politics. This theory is criticized for its provincial focus and not on widely based application. Also there is no concern for sharing of power with masses.

- **Elite theories**
  Societal power is vested in the hands of elite groups who are in control of major societal institutions and are invariably not accountable to the masses. That is to say that the elite hold sizeable power; use each and every means to hold on to power so that power becomes an end in itself. This theory propagates the idea that rather than there being a simple plurality of competing groups in society, there is a series of competing elite. These powerful competing groups impose their will on the rest of society. This theory is based on two basic ideas:

  a) The theory of ‘circulating elites’ associated with writers such as Pareto and Mosca. Pareto stressed the psychological, intellectual and skill superiority of the elite. Circulation of the elite comprise of two processes- a process in which individuals circulate between
the elite and non-elite and the other one in which the whole group of elite is replaced by new one. Mosca laid stress on the sociological, organizational characteristics of the elite and the masses. Masses are more unorganized while the elite are organized groups. He believed that all societies are divided into two groups, the ruling class and the ruled. Personal characteristics like intellectual, material and moral superiority are influential and esteemed amongst the elite. Also the dominant interests of society comprising of the social and political forces gets reflected in the ruling class. Thus, the elite groups in any society govern the structures and values of that society.

b) The power elite theory - a more radical form of elite theory has C. Wright Mills as its main proponent. Mills says that power in modern society is centralized in the power elite as a result of historical changes that made the top three institutions (military, political and economy) so similar and powerful. They combine their interest and might. Here power is resultant of position and not personal characteristics. The elite tend to come from the same background and interact socially to achieve shared interests.

- Ruling Class Theories
  This is a Marxist form of theorizing which argues that power rests primarily with the owners and controllers of economic production i.e the bourgeoisie. Political power is drawn from economic ownership. Thus, the ruling class not only controls the means of production, distribution and exchange in capitalist society but also dictates and is in command of the institutions of political power. The theory of the ruling class is again seen in two main forms:

  a) Instrumentalism is associated with the work of Ralph Milliband. He focuses on the special relationship between the state and the capitalist class. The mechanisms of control of the state by this class transform it into a capitalist state. They do not occupy political offices but indirectly control political officials and institutions and directly influence state policies Thus; the theory emphasizes direct or indirect control of the state by a dominant ruling class.

  b) Structuralism is most ardently associated with Poulantzas who argues that by virtue of the system of production itself in capitalist society, it becomes a capitalist state even in the absence of direct control of state mechanism by the capitalists. That is to say, the direct involvement of members of the ruling class in the state mechanism is the effect and not the cause. He believes that the capitalist class is internally divided and the state protects the capitalist’s interest in general. Thus the state is autonomous in its functioning.
• **Weber’s Conflict Theory of Power:**

After establishing the fact that economic relations lie at the source of power and politics, Weber focused on the demonstration of class power exercised through the state. He consigns a quasi-autonomous role to the state in which bureaucrats appear to be serving their own interest and the bureaucracy appears to be a power unto itself. Bureaucracies are skilled bodies of specialists and experts, a kind of social machine with individuals as depersonalized objects. They have the monopoly of expertise and the capacity to carry out or not carry out the policies of the political leaders. Thus, citizens are removed from control of and contributing to political decision-making. Weber further argues that bureaucracy and power are manifestations of the real material forces that dominate socio-economic structure of modern society (Duke, 1976, p.38-39).

**Gramsci’s Neo-Marxist Theory of Power**

Gramsci focused on the ideological apparatus of the capitalist state. He introduced the concept of cultural ideological supremacy i.e the ruling class controls and shapes the ideas and hence the consciousness of the masses. The dominant class uses its political, moral and intellectual leadership to create its vision of the world as complete and universal. This dominant class also shapes the interests and needs of the subordinate groups. The role of the state, he suggests is to perpetuate and legitimize the social class system. It also maintains and reproduces the capitalist system and its class relationships. The state fosters prevailing ideology and values in the education system, media and other social institutions. It guarantees the conditions for capital production and accumulation, thus, financing economic growth.

**Check You Progress:**

*Can you recall the various theories of power and write two to three sentences about each of them.*

### 4.9.2 Gender, Class and Power

After learning about different theories of power it will interesting to see how power affects class system in a society. Gender, class and power are three abstract nouns that refer to social relations. You have read in the earlier unit that whereas gender and class refer to socially specific sets of relations, power - the ability to impose one’s will - refers to an ingredient of all these sets. Power can vary from hegemony, perceived as legitimate,
violence to threat of violence. Class is the relation to the means of production, especially the right to have direct access to the fruits of production. Gender has been used to mean the social form of biological sexuality, but is best understood as the relations between men and women. The three together constitute the fundamental social, economic, cultural and political relations that determine any social system.

Freud called attention to the sexual power struggle that underlay the bourgeois civilization of his days; it has become commonplace to describe bourgeois civilization as sexually repressive. Foucault in his work ‘History of Sexuality’ describes power by stating that “Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization: as the process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, even reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system. And lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies”. (Foucault’s 1977, p.94)

He adds that power is everywhere not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere. It is permanent, repetitious, inert and self-reproducing. Power is not an institution and not a structure; neither it is certain strength we are endowed with: it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. Foucault says power is exercised through a web of relationships and that individuals circulate between its threads. They are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising power. Many followers of Foucault and postmodern philosophy have adopted a kind of ethical ultra-relativism that is, in part, based on the kind of deconstructive practice that Foucault developed.

Capitalist class relations and the modern state have long cooperated in promoting a universal gender system, based on the identification of gender identity and gender role or sexual differentiation in general and gender specific allocation of tasks in particular. In the next section we will learn about the relationship between power and violence.

**4.10 POWER AND VIOLENCE**

There is a good deal of evidence linking power concerns to violence, both at individual and collective levels. Numerous studies suggest that when a concern for power is more frequent in speeches or diplomatic communications, the likelihood of war also increases. On the other hand, it is observed that those cultures that do not take pleasure in domination
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and killing have little differentiation of sex roles and no ideal of brave, aggressive masculinity. Whereas the vice-versa is equally true that cultures professing domination and killings have strict gender differentiation in all spheres of life. Rape is often an explicit tactic of war.

Rape and Power Display

Few other human acts bring across such a gory image as rape. It is undoubtedly a gruesome act of violence and sexual assault instigated by one or more persons against another human being. In the earlier times rape was considered as ‘victim precipitated phenomenon’ but later the psychiatric and psychological community concluded that rape is the result of a disordered sexual impulse in a certain group of men. Rape, as studied in recent times is an act of violence, politics and acting out of power roles. A prime ingredient in rape is the element of aggression which is so deeply associated with masculine traits. In this light it can be said that rape is not a deviant act but an act of super conforming to the notion of masculinity which in its fold brings in all the other desired masculine traits like force, toughness, strength, power, dominance, superiority, conquering over etc.

Rape is now being seen as the violation of human rights of an individual. World over there are more women victims of rape because of men holding more powers than women. Thus, there is increased concern over women’s right as a result of women’s activism and movements. There is a greater emphasis on studying extent and locales of sexual assault and their debilitating consequences for the victim. As a result social scientists have turned their attention towards understanding the dynamics of rapists and their motives, the institutional and cultural factors and the factors affecting the victim and their reaction to the trauma.

4.11 WOMEN AS RECIPIENTS OF POWER

Here we would be learning about what is the effect of power on women when they the recipient and why it so that women are the most vulnerable section of the society when it comes to power display.

The distribution of power is hierarchical in nature. Women generally remain at the lower echelons of the power hierarchy. The process of hierarchy has arranged the social groups in steep ordering where powerful few with social and economical command decide for the society per se. Women rarely questions this power hierarchy. On the other hand they accept this subjugation willingly placing greater value to stability and integrity of the family. Women experience issues of powerlessness not just in the household but also in and through the interaction of multiple social, political and economic institutions.
According to Kumar and Varghese (2005) there are three approaches to understand women’s powerlessness.

i) Because of factors beyond their control, there is a focusing of patriarchal kinship system determining women’s roles and relationships

ii) Psychological factors are responsible for prioritizing women’s reproductive and productive roles within the household or place of work

iii) Multiple domains working simultaneously or sequentially. Socio-cultural factors condition women’s mind in particular ways in which gendered relations, specific ideologies, institutional processes, women’s self perception as well as their own understanding of the world gets coloured.

Let us now look into specific areas where women have power in their own way or are targeted for power and how they respond to such power equations.

- **Women, food and power**: In all kinds of societies (peasant, tribal, rural, urban, and industrial) women always had primary responsibility for preparing food and giving it to others. Particularly to pre-industrial societies, women contributed heavily to producing, processing and distributing food. The predominant role of women in feeding is a cultural universal and a major component of female identity. Hence, the power of women is to a great extent identified with the power of food. Interestingly, although control of food can be the strongest weapon of coercion, for women it is not. In no culture is it acceptable for a woman to deny food to the family whereas it is acceptable for politicians/traders (mostly males) to deny food to the entire population for political/economic ends. Women feed their children and husband in return for love, favours, good behaviour and the power that comes from being needed. It is a power exercised over family members and occasionally beyond it to the members of wider society. Giving food connects women to close relatives through an intensive emotional channel, thus, becoming identified with the food they offer. Their identity has been traditionally based not on the satisfaction of their own needs but on altruism and self-sacrifice.

- **Women, power and sex segregation in higher education and occupations**: Higher level of sex segregation in our society can be traced to well developed capitalism which empowered men not women and subjugated women to domesticity. This subjugation provided further power to men over women. Both human capital theory and social control theory focuses on social and psychological processes such as differential socialization of boys and girls. Education and occupational choices of individuals are assumed to be rational and therefore different for men and women. There are also social pressures on women preventing them from entering fields of study and occupation earmarked as those for
males. That’s why we see women heavily concentrated in a few fields of study and in a few lower status professions such as school teaching, nursing, social work, librarianship and secretarial jobs and why they have been drastically under represented in professions like medicine, engineering and law. The channeling of women in few fields of study and occupations was a result of the control being exercised by middle class men over higher education and the professional qualifications. Women’s education to a large extent, however, was detached from occupational structure and its importance was defined in terms of its benefits for marriage and well run household. A few occupational options existed for unmarried college educated women coexisting with the belief that marriage and motherhood are the most important roles for women and at the same time incompatible with a professional career.

Despite significant progress in socio-economic status and a rise in the number of working women, inequalities in workplace power still remain. A popular explanation for ascriptive inequalities in workplace power invokes the metaphor of a glass ceiling that describes barriers that women often face as they climb corporate ladders. It implies that employers might let women into low positions of authorities; they are much less likely to let them into higher positions that involve greater control.

4.12 WOMEN’S STRUGGLE FOR POWER

We have just read that women are comparatively powerless. Women’s struggle for power is justified from the point of view of social justice and human rights. The values of equality, fraternity and liberty are the noble humanitarian values in the democratic world. While women are equal partners of human destiny, there is no reason to ascribe subordinate status to half of the human race. Now there are economic reasons to justify women’s struggle for equality and power as persistent inequality between men and women constrain the productivity of society and ultimately slows economic growth. Thus, women’s struggle for equality and power balance is not only justified but desirable.

Gender subordination is seen as a complex, multi-dimensional, and all pervasive phenomenon affecting all aspects of women’s life. This psyche is embedded at many different mutually reinforcing levels- individual consciousness, the home, the workplace, legislation, state structures and international economic and political systems. Consequently, addressing issues of gender equality also implies affecting wider structural changes needing collective solidarity through vertical and horizontal networks and movements. The empowerment of women results in women having ‘power to’ (e.g.
acquire ability to make choices), ‘power within’ (to have agency in seeking higher levels of access and control) and ‘power with’ (sharing power with men or others).

4.13 LET US SUM UP

Let us recapitulate what we have learnt in this unit. We started with definition of power as control over people, resources and environment, connecting power with authority. Then, we discussed types of power - distributive/collective; extensive/intensive and authoritarian/diffused. Interpersonal power has been discussed keeping in mind all six types (reward, coercion, and referent, expertise, legitimate and informational). Next, we examined the use of power by men and women- men are usually seen to be using all but referent powers and women rely more on referent power. There can be several effects of holding power on the power-holder-superiority, enhanced self esteem, over and above norms or disrespect towards the target person. You also learnt about the sociological point of view of power, including theories of power viz. plurist, elite, ruling class, conflict theory and the neo- Marxist. The unit thereafter discusses the relationship between gender, class and power. Following this is the relationship between power, violence and ultimate display of power by men on women resulting in sexual assault and rape being the worst form. Towards the end there is a critical analysis of women as power recipients followed by justification for women’s struggle for power. You also read about how power is manifested through distribution of resources and opportunities in life. In the next Block you would be reading about the institutions that are affected by power dynamics in society.

4.14 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Critically analyze the types of power that men and women display.
2) Analyse the relationship between gender, class and power.
3) Discuss how power and violence are related.
4) Critically analyse the situation of women with respect to power dynamics that operate in the society.

4.15 REFERENCES


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4.16 SUGGESTED READINGS

