UNIT 2 FEMINIST DEBATE ON DEVELOPMENT

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

Over 60% of the world population live on less than two American dollars per day, i.e. approximately Rs.120 Indian rupees. The poor, women, people of colour, people of lower castes i.e dalits, indigenous communities, minorities, differently abled and the migrants lag behind on most indicators of development. These indicators include freedom from poverty, malnourishment, unemployment, infant, child and maternal mortality, freedom from communicable diseases, education enrolment and achievement, access to safe drinking water and sanitation, political participation and ability to live a life free of violence. In several parts of India, China, Republic of Korea, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nepal and Vietnam female children are unwanted and their birth is considered a misfortune.

A majority of the global poor are in developing countries and growing economies like India, China and Indonesia and in Africa as well. Of late, poverty in developed countries has been increasing since global recession which began in 2007. There are different theories on what are the underlying causes of underdevelopment. Some important ones include modernization theory, dependency theory, world system theory and standpoint theory.
Some of these theories have coexisted together at the same time and reflect different world views on the causes of under-development and pathways forward, while others have emerged at different points in time. At one end of the spectrum modernization theory accepts the industrialization based economic-growth model based on the capitalist market, while dependency, world-systems view and standpoint theory challenge this perspective. The extent to which these theories on development acknowledge feminist perspectives on causes of marginalized women’s underdevelopment and suggest feminist strategies to address these causes has been varied.

Parallel to the theories of development in the academia there have been theories on development and women’s development in the ‘development policy’ sphere. Theories on development have moved from ‘trickle down of state led economic growth to poor’ theory, to ‘growth with equity’ to ‘basic needs’ to ‘rights-based approaches’ to ‘inclusive and sustainable market led growth and development’. Along with these theories on development policy, approaches to women’s development have varied from welfare, equality, anti-poverty, efficiency, women’s empowerment/equity to investing in gender-analysis for growth. Women were not seen as contributors to development in the welfare approach but as passive recipients, while other approaches perceived them to be active players in development.

### 2.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through the Unit you would be able to:

- Summarize the following theories on development in academia, viz. modernization, dependency, world-systems and standpoint;
- Discuss approaches to women’s development while locating these within theories on development in practice; and
- Critique development theories from a feminist lens.

### 2.3 THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT AND THEIR FEMINIST CRITIQUES

#### 2.3.1 Modernization Theory

Modernization theory developed against the backdrop of widespread poverty in some countries in the aftermath of World War II, increase in unrest in some countries, and to counter ideological competition from communism. The proponents of modernization theory came mainly from the American economists.
Modernization theory collaborated development with modernity. For a country or area to be seen as modern it has to show an advancement in science and technology, has to be industrially developed and has to move away from traditional values which prioritise collectivism to individualism, from hierarchy based on ascription (based on birth in a particular class, caste etc.) to one based on merit and from particularism to universalism.

Modernization theory, popular in the 1950s and 1960s, holds that all societies progress through similar steps or stages of development. Proponents of this theory hold that sometime in the past, today’s developed areas were in a situation that is similar to that faced by today’s underdeveloped areas. According to W.W. Rostow (1960) there were five steps in the evolutionary ladder of modernization. The first step can be seen as ‘traditional society’ characterized by poverty, primary production and traditional values. The second step can be seen as ‘pre-conditions for take-off stage’, wherein the West assists development through aid and industrial development. The third step is the ‘take off stage’ wherein high economic growth and investment begins. The fourth step is the ‘drive to maturity’ where economic and cultural factors lead to increasing prosperity for all. The fifth stage is one of ‘high mass consumption’. Some have argued that modernization would help break ascriptive roles in productive sphere and benefit women more than men (Lewis, 1955).

Modernization theory has been critiqued for its assumption that capitalism and Western culture is the best, turning a blind eye to growing inequalities between and within countries, assumption of unlimited natural resources for growth and industrial exploitation, lack of attention to ecological issues and spirituality and proposing a uni-linear pathway to development. Tariq Banuri (1987) argues that many problems in society are due to the presumed dichotomy between impersonal and personal, when in fact all actions including economic ones are a result of conflicting obligations and commitments. According to him progress will begin when there is awareness of oppression in society. The oppressed on realizing their own oppression will outline their own priorities and take the required social and political action. Elite social scientists should be wary of the long term effects of their prescription and be willing to give priority to indigenous knowledge systems. Decentralization is needed in the political, economic and social sphere. The solutions may differ from place to place according to culture.

Esther Boserup (1970)’s pioneering work on women’s role in agriculture systems challenged the assumption that modernization would improve position of women and instead the female farming systems in Africa were getting marginalised. She distinguishes between Africa characterised by low density of population and hand ploughing systems in which women predominate and agricultural systems in Asia and Latin America characterised by plough
systems and higher density of population in which men dominate. She argues that capitalist penetration of subsistence agriculture in Africa had led to marginalization of subsistence agriculture in which women dominate. Hence when colonisers trained farmers in modern technology and cash cropping they focused only on male farmers.

Further, the introduction of private ownership of land by colonisers marginalised women’s position in rural areas as land was registered on men’s names. Boserup’s thesis argues for women’s inclusion in capitalist development from the point of view of equality. **Lourdes Beneria and Gita Sen** (1981), while agreeing with Boserup in some respects, argue that her analysis was essentially descriptive and the problem was not that women were excluded from capitalist production, but that capitalist production benefitted from women’s low paid labour. Further, they argued that Boserup’s thesis concentrates only on women’s role outside the household, and thus ignores women’s role in reproduction and domestic responsibilities which subsidises capitalism.

### 2.3.2 Dependency Theory

Dependency theory proposed by **A. G. Frank** was popular in the 1960s and 1970s. It rejected the modernization theory, arguing that underdeveloped countries are not merely primitive versions of developed countries. In fact wealthier countries of today had become wealthy by exploiting poorer countries in the following three respects:

1) Poor countries are export destinations for obsolete technology and for markets for the wealthy nations, without which, the latter could not have the standard of living they enjoy.

2) Developed nations actively perpetuate a state of dependence of poor nations on wealthy ones by controlling economics, media, politics, banking, finance, education, culture, sports and all aspects of human resources.

3) They counter all attempts made by dependent nations to resist their influences by means of economic sanctions and at times, by the use of military force.

Dependency theorists oppose free market economics and argue that underdeveloped countries need to reduce their connectedness with the world market so that they might pursue their own path-more in keeping with their own needs and less dictated by external pressures. Some dependency theorists argue that import substitution industrialization and not an export orientation is the best strategy for underdeveloped countries. **Paul Baran** (1957), taking India as an example, argues that surplus produced by labour was extracted by colonialists, with the extraction being supported by feudal landlords.
The heightened foreign indebtedness of less developed countries has increased their economic vulnerability. It has exposed them to pervasive external intrusions into domestic policy making in the form of conditionalities imposed by international financial institutions. The establishment of World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1994, significantly constricted the policy space previously available to developing countries. National development, which was an accepted objective in the era of decolonization, was replaced by the **mantra** of global integration—which conceals new forms of dependency.

**Feminist critique**

While dependency theory does explain how traditional feudal structures of exploitation like race, caste or class in colonies were used by the present developed countries it does not examine how power relations of gender within colonies were made use of for such development. Neither is the exploitation of women’s labour by multi-national corporations under the WTO regime analysed by most dependency theorists. Black, Dalit, or tribal women are not only paid lower wages than men, but subsidise capital by doing free reproductive work. However, Frank (see Frank and Gills, 1996. Frank, 2005) and the theorist Immanuel Wallerstein developed Frank’s ideas to put forward ‘The World Systems’ approach and argued that American capital made use of women’s labour in garments factories on the Mexican border to amass profits.

Maxine Molyneux’s (1985) made the distinction between ‘practical gender needs’ and ‘strategic gender needs’. While the former are a response to an immediate practical need in response to women’s position in the gender hierarchy, the latter arise from an analysis of their subordination and the formulation of a more just and equitable social order.

### 2.3.3 World-systems Theory

World-systems theory emerged in the 1970s and different versions of it exist even today. World-systems theory, like dependency theory, is critical of modernization theory. It indirectly sees development as a world free of exploitation. The main point of departure of world-systems theory from dependency theory is the fact that it is multi-disciplinary in nature and not just restricted to economic or culture sphere. It encompasses disciplines such as economics, politics, history, sociology, anthropology and development studies (Wallerstein, 2004; Vela, 2003).

The world-systems theory perceives that there have been two types of world-systems: world-economies and world empires. A world-empire (for example, the Roman Empire) is a large bureaucratic structure with a single political centre and an axial division of labour (i.e spread across core, semi periphery and periphery), but multiple cultures. A world-economy (e.g. global-capitalism) is a large axial division of labour with multiple political
centres and multiple cultures. Mini systems- bands, tribes, chief-doms did exist outside dominant world-systems earlier, but they have more or less become extinct.

According to the proponents of the world-systems theory, the capitalist world-system emerged in the 1450-1500 and became stronger by end 1980s/early 1990s ousting communist system, which existed in parts of the world beginning with Russian Revolution in 1917. The world-systems theory recognizes the present capitalist world-system as comprising 1. a tripartite pattern in division of labour consisting of core (which dominate other countries), 2. semi-periphery (which are dominated by core countries, but dominate peripheral countries) and 3. periphery (which are dominated by both core and semi-peripheral countries). This is in contrast to majority of dependency theorists who believed in a bimodal system of only cores and peripheries. Domination occurs through control of core and semi-peripheral countries over the following economic aspects of peripheral countries viz. means of production (e.g. land), raw materials, surplus created, capital investment, and drain of top end skills. Peripheral countries are also forced to import products that are not wanted by core countries.

I. Wallerstein (2004), one of the key proponents of the World-systems Theory, further recognises four temporal features of world system. Cyclical rhythms represent the short-term fluctuation of economy, while secular trends mean deeper long run tendencies, such as general economic growth or decline. The term contradiction means a general controversy in the system, usually concerning some short term vs. long term trade-offs. For example, lowering of wages may benefit capitalists in the short term, but the long term decrease of wages may have a crucially harmful effect by reducing the demand for the product. The last temporal feature is the crisis: a crisis occurs, if a constellation of circumstances brings about the end of the system. There is bound to be a global class struggle at this juncture.

Critique of the world-system approach comes from several directions, namely that the theory is prone to generalization and lacking quantitative data, second that the concept of class structure is not given importance in the analysis. Third, the boundaries between state and businesses are getting blurred in the theory. Others have argued that the world-system theory puts too much importance on economy and politics and not enough on culture.

Feminist critique

While a feminist critique of world-systems theory was not available; however interesting critiques can be culled out from several articles. Recent analysis by Pearson and Sweetman (2011) notes that crisis in developed countries since 2007 is linked to crisis in developing countries which are export dependent and in a way supports the world-systems Theory. They observed
that the crisis has had gender, race/ethnicity and class differentiated impact in both the developed and developing countries. Gender, race, class and ethnic differentiated analysis of world-system through the different stages are not part of the world-systems theory. Though Pearson and Sweetman (2011) claimed that developing countries with a big economy like India, China and Uganda have been less affected by the economic crisis in the year 2012, the effects are visible.

Box 2.1: Gender and Diversity Differentiated Impact of Global Economic Crisis

Pearson and Sweetman (2011) note that the main victims of economic crisis in developed countries have been low income families. Women and ethnic minorities in developed countries have been worst hit not just by job losses but also by reductions in hours of work, wage rates and non-wage benefits. Women have been affected in the three following sectors:

- **Finance**, productive and reproductive work. In finance sector, women as the main target of micro finance institutions- have been borrowing more than they can repay and are becoming indebted (India).
- **In production sector**, women labourers in garments (Thailand and Cambodia), agri-business (Peru) and electronics, telecommunications and garment industries (Philippines) have been hit the hardest.
- **In the reproductive sector**, restrictions to visas in Middle Eastern countries are affecting visas to foreign, domestic and care workers from developing countries. This will lead to more poor migrant women entering illegally into these countries.

2.3.4 Standpoint Theory

A standpoint is a position from which human beings view the world. It influences how the people adopting it socially construct the world. Social group membership affects people’s standpoints. The inequalities amongst different social groups create differences in their standpoints and are partial. So for example, one standpoint can coexist with other standpoints. As per standpoint theory class/race privileged position gives a limited perspective on social relations. Ruling groups dominate subordinate groups and take the subordinate groups’ opinions away from them. As a corollary, development can be seen as a process wherein standpoints of marginalized groups hardly shape discourses on development and underdevelopment.

Standpoint theory did not look at power relations of gender in the beginning, but subsequently standpoint feminism emerged. Standpoint theory began when Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a German philosopher, studied the
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Karl Marx also discussed that the position of a worker in a worker-capitalist relation shapes his or her knowledge. From these two scholars’ studies, Nancy Hartsock examined Standpoint Theory by using relations between men and women. From this view, Nancy Hartsock published “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism” in 1983. Hartsock used Hegel’s ideas of masters and slaves and Marx’s ideas of class and capitalism in the context of sex and gender. She refers to sex as a biological category and gender as a behavioral category (Hartsock, 1983). She called this theory “Feminist Standpoint Theory”. Hartsock argues that sexual division of labour is central to understanding society and women’s subordination. Further, from a feminist standpoint perspective she argues that it is not that the class structure is the cause of women’s oppression, but that the class structure is made possible because of women’s oppression. She argues that women’s ways of resolving conflicts-like reciprocation of gifts-maybe a better way of resolving conflicts than that of men who get into war. Black feminist standpoint theorists in US describes black women as a unique group that exists in United States’ social relations where intersectional processes of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation shape black women’s individual and collective consciousness, self-definitions and actions (Few, 2007).

Standpoint theory has great relevance when approaching and assisting marginalized groups. It has been presented as a method to improving the welfare system by recognizing suggestions made by those within the welfare system (Edmonds-Cady, 2009). In Africa, standpoint theory has catalyzed a social movement where women were introduced to the radio in order to promote awareness of their experiences and struggles (West and Turner, 2010).

Critiques

Interestingly, two different critiques of standpoint feminism can be seen. One is that it is essentialist and other that there is no real theory of change underpinning standpoint theory. West and Turner, (2010) argue that standpoint theory reeks of essentialism, that is it assumes that all women (or for that matter at all workers) are essentially the same. The proponents of feminist standpoint theory do not realize that there are different cultures present even amongst women. Therefore, some researchers have argued that standpoint theory is essentialist in some respect (West and Turner, 2010).

This critique of essentialism while true of many Standpoint theorists cannot be extended to Black feminist standpoint theory which has looked at intersections of different shifting positions based on social relations that one occupies and cannot be termed as essentialist. Yet, another critique is
that beyond negotiating with the state on their welfare needs, creating awareness at grassroots level, or spread of women centered values there is no deep rooted solution offered for transformation of gender and other hierarchies. If one were to build upon Paulo Friere’s *Pedagogy of Oppressed* approach (when individuals learn from their own situation, it becomes the tool for liberation) from a feminist lens, one needs to adopt a pedagogy of revolution with women oppressed by multiple relations, dialogue with them, understand their varying standpoints (while at the same time raising awareness on causes of their oppression) and promote action for change. Friere refers this mutual process of action-reflection as Praxis. In a similar sense, the feminist standpoint theory offers possibilities for knowledge building from the position of the oppressed women.

**Check Your Progress:**

*Name the different theories of development and discuss.*
2.4 THEORIES OF WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT

2.4.1 Welfare—Precursor to Women in Development

After the Second World War in 1945, the United Nations Organisation was established. ‘Decades of Development’ commenced in 1960s. During the first decade of development (1961-70), it was assumed that economic growth in general resulting out of modernization, would trickle down to the poor and lead to economic and social benefits to all households. Within the household it was assumed that women and men would benefit equally from economic growth. The poor and women in developing countries were seen as those who failed to benefit out of markets and families, requiring welfare measures. “Poor women in the Third World had become the main beneficiaries of welfare programs begun by national and international relief agencies soon after the end of the world War II, these welfare programs were designed to relieve poor women’s needs exclusively in terms of their roles as mothers and wives” (Buvinic, 1983, p. 24)

According to Carolyn Moser (1989) the productive role and community management role (for example, participating in community meetings for benefit of all like in water users associations) of women were ignored, and the emphasis was mainly on practical gender needs. Family Planning Programs and Maternal and Child Health programs are a few examples of welfare approach. The approach was not very threatening, and continues in various forms even today. This has been termed as the welfare approach, and is seen by Moser (1989) as precursor to Women in Development Approach.

2.4.2 Women in Development

During the Second Development Decade 1971-80, the discourse on development shifted to various themes like basic needs approach, growth with equity/equality (by International Labour Organisation) and assault on world poverty (the World Bank). The importance of full integration of women into development was emphasised from a both intrinsic lens (benefiting women directly), as well as instrumental lens (that women are important for something else, like central to food production). Women were seen as important players in development, and the focus was on integrating them productively into development. It coincided with the pressure from American women’s movement to declare 1975 as the International Women’s Year and to declare 1975-85 as the International Women’s Decade. Equality, Development and Peace were the three themes for the International Women’s Decade. While women from developed ‘First World’ countries emphasised equality, women from developing ‘Third World’ countries with development, women from conflict ridden ‘Second World’ (now no longer
in use, but earlier used to refer to industrialised communist countries) were concerned with peace.

‘Women in Development’ approach emerged during the 1970s and the late 1980s and within this approach three different strands of development can be differentiated: equality, anti-poverty and efficiency.

**Equality Approach:** The equality strand of the Women in Development approach was the first to emerge during the 1970s and emphasised that women could not make use of development in productive sphere because opportunities provided to women and men were unequal. The proponents of the equality strand perceived that patriarchy and men’s lack of willingness to provide equal opportunities as the main cause of women’s unequal ability to make use of opportunities. They emphasised the need for equal opportunities as well as legislation to promote gender equality in all spheres. To name a few, affirmative reservation for women in employment and legislation on equal wages for work of similar value were evolved during this period. While governments constituted committees, women’s organisations emerged which put pressure from below towards equal opportunities. However, the gains were limited, as the gender-specific barriers which women faced in making use of opportunities in productive sphere like care responsibilities were not addressed. Further, equality approach was found to be threatening by the men in power. The concern was with meeting strategic gender needs of women in a top down manner. Women were not organised effectively to meet these needs and neither was there any emphasis on working with men to change negative gender attitudes. An example of the equality strand in India is the landmark study on status of women leading to the Report ‘Towards Equality’ in 1974 (Department of Women and Child Development, 2001). Researchers argued that development was not reaching the poor and that poverty in developing countries was indeed feminised. The emergence of many women headed households was highlighted. According to Moser, this strand was most popular in 1975-85 in reality it is popular even now.

**Anti-poverty Approach:** It is in this context that the anti-poverty strand evolved in late 1970s and early 1980s. The primary reason for poverty was not seen as the direction of mainstream capitalist development or the skewed distribution of resources but the fact that the poor did not have access to credit, skills, extension and employment which would increase their income and productivity. The main reason for feminization of poverty was seen as exclusion of women from income generation activities and not really capitalist-patriarchy which denied women right to means of production. The anti-poverty strand isolated poor women as a separate category and recognized only the practical gender needs related to productive role. In India, the microcredit based self-employment program Integrated Rural
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Development Program introduced in the 1978 targeting individuals (with 33% reservation for women), reflects the anti-poverty strand. The anti-poverty program continues to be popular even now with the Government of India, reflected in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS), which you will be reading in the next unit in the context of change.

Efficiency Approach: The seeds of efficiency strand emerged in the 1980 in Copenhagen where the UN Mid-decade Conference on Women was held. The conference was dominated by debates on trade, development and politics. By late 1980s it was clear that the burden of structural adjustment (which entailed privatization and de-regulation, as well as reduction of trade barriers) and stabilisation policies (which involves a combination of restrictive fiscal measures to reduce government borrowing and monetary tightening) was borne by women. With serious cuts in health care spending by government, the focus on efficient development meant that the existing burden of care shifted even more towards women than before. Further, in the economic sphere, women’s resilience and ability to adjust to crisis was recognised. Women in the formal sector were prepared to work longer and for lesser pay. It was also more-easy to fire them. All these qualities attracted development planners to focus their programmes on women.

Another stream of efficiency is the shift in micro-credit programs from individual focused self-employment generation ones with low rates of interest, to group based micro credit schemes targeted at women with higher rates of interest. Women were seen as better is repayment of loans. Equally, women were mobilised into water and sanitation committees, as they were seen as better managers of these common resources. However, rarely did these programs address strategic gender interests. In mid 1990s and 2000s in fact poor women are seen as sites of investment by Non-Banking Finance Companies and formed into joint liability groups with little investment in capacity building, gender training or social capital formation. The focus was on micro credit, insurance and small enterprises without really expanding asset base of poor women, leading in worst case scenario to women committing suicide like in Andhra Pradesh.

Critique

Critique of WID approach has come from several quarters, including the proponents of Women and Development approach. It has been argued that WID approach saw humans including women as atomised self-interested individuals, isolated from social structures. It operated on the premise of roles rather than power relations (Kabeer, 1994). It assumed that irrational prejudice and sex role stereotypes of policy makers and planners were the main problem. Further women were seen as having homogeneous needs and the diversity of practical gender needs and strategic gender interests amongst women based on race, caste, class etc. was not recognised. For example,
while a thresher may be useful for women whose households have agriculture land, it may displace labour of women whose households do not have land. Further, the WID strands while challenging the stereotyping of women as passive players in production, overlooked their biological needs (e.g. related to menstruation, breast feeding etc.). As observed by Naila Kabeer (1994) what is required is the unravelling of male power relations, analysis of conflicting gender interests amongst women based on their location in other power relations (e.g. race, class), shift in discourse from roles to relations, and prioritisation of not just a planning solution but also a political solution.

2.4.3 Women and Development

The proponents of Women and Development Approach held the view that that the problem was not that women were not integrated into development as assumed by those who held the WID position, but that they were integrated in an unequal way due to global capitalism which exploited women’s cheaper productive labour (than men) for profits. That is unlike the WID approach, the WAD approach perceived that society was not in equilibrium but in conflict. Class differentiated rewards are used by capitalists to keep the working class fragmented and in conflict. The main reason for women’s secondary status was the structure of capitalist patriarchy and not just gender role stereotypes according to this approach.

The main proponents of Women and Development approach were from the South (developing countries) with few allies from the North (developed countries). Women from the developed nations were slowly realizing that the concerns of ‘Third World’ women that profits were being made by the capitalists in developed countries using the subsidised productive work of women were also legitimate. The earlier patronizing attitude towards ‘Third World’ women diminished. Efforts were made to link issues of the family with that of politics at the local, national and international levels. The gathering at the Nairobi Third World Conference on Women (held in 1985) represents attempts by women from the first world and third world to forge an alliance. In this meeting the need for challenging laissez faire approach and patriarchy as a system was highlighted.

Critique

The WAD approach has been critiqued from several points of view. The WAD approach emphasised the use of women for accumulation of profit but overlooked women’s important role in satisfaction of needs in particular for care of sick, elderly, and reproduction of cheap labour for the market. The ‘biology-less’ assumption of WID approaches has persisted in the WAD approach. Further, though there was talk of capitalist-patriarchy, there was a tendency to read gender relations and class relations in isolation and not
look at how they interlock in different contexts. In fact the term gender relation (or power relation between women and men) was not used but instead the term ‘women’ was used. While gender relations are diverse and capitalism derives benefit from gender relations, household and work places are organised differently and in some contexts capitalist patriarchy has been emancipatory and in some oppressive for women (Elson and Pearson, 1981).

Kabeer (1994) also notes that the WAD approach does not explain how biological differences lead to social differences. That is it does not explain which social institutions lead to construction of gender, race, class, caste and other social relations. The construction of a uniform global patriarchy and capitalism was problematic. She also notes that reverting to subsistence production, as suggested by Mies may not be the way to move forward. Instead, it is important for women to negotiate with social institutions. These institutions were under contradictory pressure from capitalism, patriarchy, race, caste etc. and create spaces which can be used for negotiating women’s diverse interests (Kabeer 1994, Sen and Grown, 1985).

2.4.4 Gender and Development

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s when participatory approaches and rights based approaches to development became popular. In contrast to WID and WAD. GAD perceives that women do not have uniform interests. Women have multiple identities of caste, class, race, ethnicity, marital status, differential ability etc. in addition to gender identity. The gender and development approach recognises the relation between women and men as a power relation, and sees that such power stems from social construction of gender shaped by social institutions of family, community, market and state. The gender and development approach does not see women as passive victims but agents who are negotiating spaces within their multiple identities.

There are two strands of thought within the GAD approach, namely empowerment and equity.

Empowerment strand: The empowerment strand of GAD approach broadened the scope of development theory by addressing issues hitherto not considered relevant in conferences on women. These included oppressive gender relations, ecological destruction and the ethics of multinational control over the developing countries and so on. At the Nairobi Third World Conference on Women, 1985, some Third World feminists formed a group called Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) which interpreted development issues from a Third World women’s perspective. They pointed out that the concept of development followed in the post-colonial world has been guided by a western patriarchal and capitalist idea of economic development which believed that change was
linear. They rejected the aggressiveness of the dominant system and advocated the values of nurturance and openness, discarded hierarchy and recognized the diversity of feminisms in third world countries. Further, the empowerment strand recognised not only power relations of gender, but also relations of caste, class, race etc. as having a bearing on women’s subordinate position. According to Moser, sought to address strategic gender needs and practical gender needs through building new political, economic and social approaches. In India, the empowerment strand is best reflected in the Mahila Samakhya program titled ‘Education for Women’s Equality’ under which mainly but not exclusively poor women are organised into groups with an open agenda of discussing what issue is important for their village. Their capacity is built to challenge all hierarchies, including caste, class, race and gender. Further, the women’s groups at times take on challenges of multi-national corporations and domination by corporates.

The equity strand, outlined by Naila Kabeer (1994), states that a combination of women’s welfare, empowerment, equality of opportunity, anti-poverty and efficiency strands are required to achieve equitable outcomes (in contrast to equality of opportunities). She argues that the dichotomy between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests is artificial. Practical gender needs can be met through a strategic means of mobilisation by women, a first step to them demanding strategic gender ‘interests’. Further, unless women have access to water, child care, health services etc., they cannot claim strategic gender interests like right to land, political participation etc. Anti-poverty measures like access to credit are essential to make use of land. Further women’s work needs to be seen as central to efficient growth of economy. Naila Kabeer positions the equity approach within a broader social relations and institutional framework-highlighting the institutions of household, community, markets and state as important institutions wherein gender and social relations are played out.

In practice the term empowerment has been co-opted in many different ways by neo-liberal policy makers. The National Policy on Women’s Empowerment in India, (2001) espouses a goal of promoting women’s empowerment, but includes a mixture of welfare (e.g. nutrition of pregnant and lactating women), equality (e.g. removal of gender discrimination aspects in all laws), anti-poverty (e.g. strengthening access to skills training and housing), efficiency strand (e.g. micro-credit for women) and empowerment of women (strategies to prevent violence against women) (Government of India, 2001). Some donors like the World Bank see investing in Gender Equality as Smart Economics that is leading to economic growth (World Bank, 2010, pxiii). That is gender analysis- analysis of what women and men do- is used to promote efficient growth. This dilutes the power dimension within the concept of gender and social relations, and is at times called the Gender in Development (GID) approach.
A dilution of Gender and Development approach is the Gender in Development approach which is similar to the efficiency approach. Unlike the WID approach it includes a gender analysis, but not of power relations but gender roles in development. There are two streams within the Gender in Development approach.

- The analysis of gender roles so that project resources could be targeted at women and men so as to achieve project objectives.
- Working with men and boys to address both women’s equality, as well as to promote male specific issues that men and boys face as a result of their gender identity.

At a conceptual level, the social relations and institutional framework to looking at gender and development is indeed useful. However, in the present context two new institutions have to be added: interstate institutions (from arms of United Nations to World Bank Group to World Trade Organisation) and state-market institutions or public-private partnerships (see Murthy and Kappen, 2006)

**Check Your Progress:**

*How do each of the women’s development approaches account for the subordination of women, especially women from the marginalized groups?*
In this unit we attempted to engage with some major theoretical approaches to understanding the process of development and the role of women in the development process. We examined the relevance of modernization, dependency, world-systems and standpoint theories from a general and feminist lens. We concluded that the ‘modernization theory’ which held that developing countries follow a similar path to developed countries, i.e. capitalist development, export-led growth, industrialisation, spread of individualism and meritocracy was not a pathway leading to progress. In fact it was leading to further exploitation of developing countries and marginalised groups (including Blacks, Dalit, and women).

While dependency theory and world-systems theories have correctly observed that the process of integration itself is exploitative they have not adequately grappled with class, caste, race, gender and other relations in peripheral countries which keep these marginalised groups and women amongst them in an oppressed situation. The need for a world-system which puts economic, social/gender, political and environmental justice (for this generation and the next) at the center is not articulated. Further, we discuss how standpoint theory articulates that the vantage point of oppressed groups needs to be heard to shape policies. However, it does not state how this is to happen and what happens when standpoints of different marginalised groups are in conflict with each other. The unit concludes that social relations and institutional framework (within GAD) offer an interesting framework for looking at how institutions of household, community, market and state shape various social relations and allows for space for negotiation. It could be strengthened by placing justice as a central goal in such negotiations not only for women and men, various social/economic groups, nature or environment, but also for coming generations of girls.

2.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) What are the major theories on development? Critique them from a general and feminist lens?

2) Critically analyse the different approaches to gender and development in the Third World?

3) How do you relate theories and policies on development and approaches to women’s development to the Indian context?

4) If you were to frame an alternative theory on development and approach to women’s development what would it be?
2.7 REFERENCES


Bruno, J.P. *Third World Critique of Western Feminist Theory in The Post Development Stage*. University of Texas.


2.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

