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# INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

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## **MWG 002: “Gender and Power”**

As the name suggests, the course on “Gender and Power” will introduce various facets of power operating within the socio-cultural milieu of human society, especially in the context of India.

Gender is not the only system of oppression in any society. There may be other factors such as race, ethnicity, caste, class and even age and disability due to which a section of a given society may be oppressed. In fact, there can be a juxtaposition of one factor with others. Any system of stratification will result in the concentration of power in the hands of groups that are higher in a given hierarchy, at the expense of other groups from the lower strata.

Power and control is exercised in different spheres of operation, may it be home, work place or in the community. Culture, religion, traditions, customs, values and morality are the yardsticks that govern power and control in human society more so with respect to gender relations. While all of these may be important in providing directions to members of any society, oppressive practices make it imperative to examine the structures leading to such practices.

The course begins with providing an in depth understanding of the core concepts that shape the power dynamics within the purview of gender. This is followed by a discussion on how gender vis-a-vis class, caste and ethnicity and race affects the notion of power, as well as an examination of the various manifestations of power.

In the second block, we focus on some of the ways in which gender shapes the concept of a nation, a region and citizenship. Discourses on nationalism, regionalism, religious minorities and communalism are also discussed within the framework of gender. Finally, in the last block, the discussion dwells on the premise of how the institutions in our society are gendered.

lets us briefly summarize some of the major questions highlighted and discussed in this course:

- How is gender different from sex, and how is gender affected by the institution of patriarchy?
- How is gender located with regards to the debates on public and private dichotomy?
- What impact do class, caste and ethnicity have on gender?
- In what ways are power and its effects understood vis-a-vis gender?
- What is the role played by power in the context of citizenship, nationalism and regionalism?
- How do power relations function and how do they impact religious minorities?
- How do different institutions and systems of society, namely, family and marriage, education, law and work affect gender? In what ways does patriarchy operate within these institutions and systems?