

# MODULE-2

## GENDER STUDIES AS A DISCIPLINE



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- Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary branch of knowledge
- had link with wide range of disciplines in social sciences including media studies; and literature.
- It includes women studies, masculine and queer studies.
- It incorporates the approaches and methods of these disciplines.



- But each discipline differs in its approach to how and why gender is studied.
- Gender studies basically looks at how the historical, cultural, and social events shape the role of gender in different societies.
- Gender Studies is developed from the Women Studies which came into being in late 1960's.
- Women's Studies developed as a discipline at the universities in 1970s and 80s.



- Following the strong second wave of feminist mobilization in this period, the pressure for the development of scientific teaching and research about women's position in society was growing.
- As late as the 1960s, university students in the social sciences did not receive any teaching about women's position and gender relations in society as part of their studies.



- The basis of this negligence was no doubt that ‘women’ or ‘the family’ were mostly seen as ‘natural’ phenomena without any interest for the (male dominated) universities.
- In the beginning, the opposition to Women’s Studies as a university subject was severe.
- Women’s Studies were accused of being ‘political’ and ‘un-scientific’.



- Feminist scholars answered that male dominated science was itself biased and gender-blind.
- In the beginning, Women's Studies were accused of being 'political'.
- Feminist scholars answered, that traditional gender-blind research in itself is biased and unable to understand the complexity of society.



- **The Women's Studies Quarterly and Feminist Studies Journals** are founded as interdisciplinary forums for the exchange of emerging perspectives on women, gender, and sexuality in 1972.
- 1980s: Women's studies undergoes an intensely self-reflective period in 1980s
- -with the issues of how to identify the concept of "women," which had largely been defined as white, middle-class, heterosexual, Christian, education women of privilege



- Key areas on which women studies relied on
- a. Critique of knowledge-Knowledge is seen as generated and controlled by men and which excludes women's knowledge.
- b. Recovery of women's texts, modes of knowing and experiences
- c. Shift from liberal feminist views to more socialist and radical views of gender roles and culture.
- Of late, Women's Studies is engaged in the move to eliminate the term women and replace it gender.





- The change to gender studies suggests that the field needs to be **paying attention to the relationships between men and women rather than focusing predominantly on women's experiences and knowledge itself.**
- The main argument against the change to Gender Studies is **the claim that this shift will undo the past forty years in bringing women and women's standpoints to the forefront in research, knowledge, and cultural production.**



- But there are also **many arguments for the change to Gender Studies.**
- One is that it is a **more appropriate title as it also includes gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals.**
- The title change would also **make it possible to include Men.**
- Gender Studies is today well established as an **interdisciplinary field of study which draws on knowledge from both the humanities, the social sciences, medicine, and natural science.**



- The basis for the academic field of Gender Studies was in many countries laid in the 1970s, when women in Academia protested against the ways in which academic knowledge production made women invisible and ignored gendered power relations in society.



- Interdisciplinary study environments started -in many European countries and in North America, where so-called Women's Studies Centers were set up, gathering critical teachers and students who wanted to study gender relations, and women, in particular.



- A common denominator for the development was **strong links to women's movements, activism, feminist ideas and practices.**
- The aim of the academic project of **Gender Studies** was to generate a new field of knowledge production which could gain impact on science and scholarly practices and theories.



- Against this background, a critical and innovative approach to existing science and academic scholarship is one of the characteristics of the subject area.
- The relationship between knowledge, power and gender in interaction with other social divisions such as ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality, age, disability, etc. is critically scrutinized in gender research.



- From the beginning, there has been a lively debate among those who identify with the field about its contents, conceptual frameworks and theories:
- What is Gender Studies?
- What is the "object" of study?
- Is a delimited "object" of study needed?
- Is it more interesting to ask critical questions about the role of the subject of scholarly knowledge production?



- Since the start in the 1970s-gender research has been inspired by and embedded in many different and sometimes partly overlapping scholarly traditions,
- empiricism,
- marxism,
- psychoanalysis,
- post structuralism,
- critical studies of men and masculinities,
- critical race theory,
- critical studies of whiteness,
- postcolonial theory,
- queer studies,
- lesbian, gay, bi and trans studies (so-called lgbt studies),





- critical studies of sexualities,
- body theory,
- sexual difference feminisms,
- black feminisms,
- ecological feminisms,
- feminist techno science studies,
- materialist feminisms.
- The field of study has grown and expanded rapidly on a worldwide basis, and given rise to a diversity of specific national and regional developments.