UNIT 6   STANDPOINT THEORY AND KNOWLEDGE LOCATION

Structure

6.1   INTRODUCTION

Education must be viewed in terms of its transformative potential by all the stakeholders of education. Gender inclusive pedagogic practices should emphasize participatory learning and teaching, within which subjectivity, emotions and experience have a definite and valued place. A gender sensitive education should focus on the development of the traits like being able to recognize the self, building a positive self-image and fostering self-actualization by stimulating critical thinking, deepened understanding of the gendered structure of power and reinforcing girls and boys to challenge gendered structure of power and take control of their lives. This unit attempts to explore Standpoint theory to see education, schooling and knowledge construction through the gendered looking glass. It also enables a teacher to evolve strategies to create a gender sensitive classroom   to critiquing existing knowledge and recognizing experience as "A Legitimate Basis of Knowledge Formation".

6.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of 'standpoint';

- understand standpoint theory in relation to knowledge construction;

- understand implications of standpoint theory for a classroom teacher; and

- plan strategies to create gender sensitive classrooms.

6.3 MEANING OF STANDPOINT

The Standpoint theory is a post modernistic approach to people's perception. A view point or an attitude towards the issue from their own perspective is called Standpoint. It states how the day to day experience alters and impacts a person's opinions. When people recognize the value of power that creates diverse groups within the society then standpoint tends to arise. The standpoint theory focuses on gender perception focusing on the feminist viewpoints. Through the book "The feminist stand point: Developing ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism" Sandra Harding and Nancy Hartsock's developed the stand point theory. Nancy Hartsock works were greatly influenced by the concepts of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a German philosopher who studied the standpoints of the people belonging to various socio-economic classes. It has emerged from the early feminist theory which studies the socio-economic status of women in the society and is also termed as feminist standpoint theory.

6.4 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF STANDPOINT THEORY

Standpoint theory is organized around two central principles, the "situated knowledge thesis" and the "inversion thesis". The situated knowledge thesis claims that knowledge production is conditioned by social differentiation: knowers are always embedded in a particular historical moment and socio-cultural contexts. Also called the thesis of epistemic advantage, the inversion thesis gives epistemic authority to those marginalized by systems of oppression insofar as these people are often better knowers than those who benefit from oppression. Put simply: social dispossession produces epistemic privilege. Part of the rationale for this thesis comes from the fact that the beneficiaries of systemic oppression have little reason to critique background assumptions, while those who are marginalized are privy to the knowledge, for example, the structure and effects of capitalism, since they live with its gritty realities of day-to-day.

First-wave Standpoint Theory

While the origins of standpoint theory lie in Marx's view of class oppression, feminist philosophy popularized and developed standpoint theory in the 1970s and 1980s. Central to the initial impulse of feminist standpoint theory was challenging forms of scientific neutrality and objectivity that presupposed a generalized knower. Early standpoint theorists sought to understand the way in which the gendered identity of knowers affected their epistemic resources and capacities (Wylie 48). Nancy Hartsock provided one of the earliest articulations

of standpoint theory, combining object relations theory and a Marxist feminist perspective to interrogate gender socialization and the sexualized division of labor. For Hartsock, sexual divisions of labor could be accounted for by the internalization of gendered psychological processes that produce distantly gendered cognitive and psychological orientations.

Equally influential was Evelyn Fox Keller's intervention in the philosophy of science. Drawing again on object relations theory, Keller (1978) argued that gender produces different scientific "postures." Stereotypically masculine and feminine traits overflow into scientific practice to produce an association between the masculine and objectivity, and the feminine and sympathetic understanding. Given their socialization, for example, women in this reading are better at engaging with and being immersed in their objects of study.

Second-wave Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory has seen a renaissance in the past 15 years. While the critiques of standpoint theory are well founded, they have often failed to engage with the fundamental challenge that standpoint theory poses to conventional theories of knowledge-production, nor have offered constructive responses of their own (Wylie 61). Taking the epistemic effects of social differentiation seriously is thus a project that should not be quickly abandoned. Part of standpoint theory's return to favor comes from a rearticulating of its methodology, aims, and limitations that directly answer the criticisms mentioned above. Wylie has perhaps provided the most succinct articulation of second-wave standpoint theory. For her, a standpoint does not mark out a clearly defined territory such as "women" within which members have automatic privilege but is a rather a posture of epistemic engagement. Responding to the claim that the situated knowledge thesis reifies essentialism, Wylie thus argues that it is "an open (empirical) question whether such structures obtain in each context, what form they take, and how they are internalized or embodied by individuals" (Wylie 2012, 62). Identities are complex and cannot be reduced to simple binaries. Likewise, she argues that the criticism of automatic privilege falters insofar as a standpoint is never given, but is achieved, "characterized by a kind of epistemic engagement, a matter of cultivating a critical awareness, empirical and conceptual, of the social conditions under which knowledge is produced and authorized" (63). To occupy standpoint is accordingly to cultivate a critical awareness of the effects of one's situated place in society on the ability to know.

Primary and Secondary Standpoints

Unmoored from historical, biological and essentialist categories such as "women," second-wave standpoint theory recognizes that it is an open question of who can participate in or achieving a standpoint. A distinction between primary and secondary standpoints may clarify the issue. Primary standpoints are traditional standpoints, being self-generated from direct experiences of marginalization. Those occupying secondary standpoints, however, do not have direct access to experiences of marginalization and are accordingly grounded in primary standpoint agents. Secondary standpoints must be continually renewed in primary standpoints to maintain the epistemic privileged constitutive of a standpoint. This distinction enables us to think of the ways parents, partners, and allies participate in privileged knowledge production with marginalized people.

6.5 STANDPOINT THEORY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology is in general a "theory of knowledge," the study of how one knows things about the world. Standpoint epistemology or, more generally, standpoint theory is concerned with the impact of one's location in society on one's ability to know. Because men and women, for example, are gendered differently and accordingly have different experiences, how they know and what they are capable of knowing will differ. More specifically, standpoint theory insists that those who are socially marginalized can most easily pick out biases and gaps within systems of knowledge production. From the perspective of standpoint theory, people with disabilities, including eugenic survivors, are best suited to understand how ablest knowledge and systems of oppression are produced and maintained. First-person testimony and oral history accordingly have a central role to play in understanding the legacy of eugenics.

6.5.1 The Standpoint Theory and the Perspective of Marginalized

The core concepts of the standpoint theory lead us to understand the perspective of the marginalized society particularly the women. The standpoint may vary from one person to the other but when certain groups share common environments the collectiveness in perspective can be easily recognized. The perspectives can be basically objective and subjective. The person belonging to a higher strata or from a higher position in the society usually sees the issues one-sidedly whereas the person belonging to an average position or the lower strata of the society takes the issue more practically. This is because of the dissimilarities in circumstances in which these two sets of people live. In case of women in the society, the perspective differs majorly. Here the marginalized group that is the women tends to accept the perceptions of the powerful groups. So the circumstances change the perspective of the women. (You may like to consider migration and the phenomena of single headed households in the rural context)

6.5.2 Questioning Objective Knowledge

Sandra Harding and Julia T. Wood founded Standpoint Theory. This theory is about objectivity in society. They present the idea that where someone falls in the social hierarchy sets the tone for how open and objective he is. If you are on the lowest rung of the social ladder, then you have to look up and be able to see and understand everyone above you. However, if you are at the top, you have no one to worry about but yourself. Harding and Wood believed that being able to see and understand the people above you leads to a more correct viewing of the world, and those at the top with limited viewpoint have a false view of the world. They felt that women, people with low socio economic status, homosexuals, and minorities had a less false view of the world than the white male because of their place in the social hierarchy.

Feminist standpoint epistemology seeks to create a stronger objectivity by rejecting the traditional concept of objectivity, yet not becoming a relativistic epistemology either. In her article *Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong Objectivity?"* Sandra Harding, a prominent advocate of feminist standpoint theory, addresses this topic explicitly and argues that the objective

strength of standpoint theory is its belief that knowledge is socially situated. In other words, who we are as knowers, affects what we can know. Specifically, Harding uses the example of *spontaneous feminist empiricists* to demonstrate the dependency of research results on the social situation of the researchers. Harding defines the original *spontaneous feminist empiricism* as the "'spontaneous consciousness' of feminist researchers in biology and social sciences who were trying to explain what was and wasn't different about their research process in comparison with the standard procedures in their field". Harding, while not ideologically aligned with the spontaneous feminist empiricist, notes that research done by spontaneous feminist empiricists was often able "to produce less partial and distorted results" than research done by males. Harding therefore argues that the knowledge these feminist empiricists could produce was scientifically superior to that of their counterparts, precisely because of the feminist's socially situated standpoint. Hence the feminist endeavour of spotting androcentric assumptions in the production of knowledge is simply "good science" and can help "maximize objectivity" Objectivity, for Harding, seems to be more attainable if people are aware of their own social situation. Harding criticizes the concept of neutral objectivity. Harding refers to this concept as, in a phrased coined by Donna Haraway, the "God-trick", which is when researchers attempt to observe the universe with a complete impartiality that is supposedly bias free – what Thomas Nagel calls "the view from nowhere" (Crumley 213). Harding admits that while traditional science is good at eliminating social values so that experiments can have the same results across cultures, she also claims that "the scientific method provides no rules …for even identifying… social concerns and interests that are shared by all (or virtually all) of the observers". For standpoint epistemologists the scientific endeavour, as it is now, is flawed because it was created by people from a social situation who had influence and power. Harding argues that the system within which female empiricists are operating (traditional science) is one that lacks space and methods for researchers to reflect on their social situation, leaving them blind to their inherent biases. How then can people identify their own biases? Harding argues that marginalized groups have an advantage over others in spotting biases. The author likens standpoint epistemology in the production of knowledge to Marxism in politics with its production of goods by the marginalized workers. Harding argues that dominant groups are so engrossed in their dominance and power that they are blind to their own assumptions. For example, the Marxist worker would be acutely aware of the owner's assumptions and biases. Similarly, according to Harding, feminist researchers would be similarly aware of biases in the scientific community since the scientific community has historically been dominated by men and androcentric assumptions. For Harding, having women in science is helpful as in the case of the spontaneous feminist empiricists, but ultimately not enough: for feminist standpoint epistemologists, the system needs to be changed to incorporate marginalized groups.

Check Your Progress I

1.   What is primary and Secondary Standpoint?

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2. Why does the person belonging to higher strata or from a higher position in the society usually see the issues one-sidedly whereas the person belonging to an average position or the lower strata of the society takes the issue more practically?

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6.6 EXPERIENCES AS A LEGITIMATE BASIS OF KNOWLEDGE FORMATION

Some central questions in relation to knowledge are – How representative is knowledge of the learners' experiences of life? Does it address their needs and desires? Does it enable all learners – boys as well as girls – to achieve their fullest potential in terms of their cognitive, creative and analytical abilities? The mode of enquiry developed through gender studies can enrich educationists, who have been dogged by the question of how well curriculum content is able to represent the actual experiences of the learner. Can the textbook address the lived experiences and perspectives of those on the margins, or even always of those who are privileged? If, for example, textbooks depict families as two-parent two children units, at the most with a grandparent or two included, as the unexceptional norm, then how would children of the over 30 per cent of single parent (mostly female) headed households, even begin to situate themselves within this world where they are aberrations? It is important to recognise that education is a process, not an input, and experience is a significant part of this process. Unless the learner can locate her/his standpoint in relation to the contexts represented in textbooks, unless s/he can relate this knowledge to his/her lived experiences of society, knowledge is reduced to the level of mere information.

If we want to examine how knowledge gained relates to future visions of community life, it is crucial to encourage reflection on what it means to know something, how one can use this knowledge towards building a future vision. Consider, for example, the following responses of young boys that demonstrate how constructions of masculinity oppress not just girls but boys too: I suppose I learned early that I wasn't too interested in hanging with all the tough guys because I just thought they spoke a lot of nonsense... People pretend a lot, putting on a front, getting very aggressive. It wasn't something that I really appreciated, all that fakeness. You just didn't really understand where they were coming from. One moment they might be your friend and within a split second they wouldn't be and I didn't want to deal with it. What would the alternative and more humane, more realistic frameworks of masculinity look like? Clearly, such articulations create the possibilities of questioning assigned gender roles without a didactic talking down to the learner of the values that have to be imbibed. Implicit in this is a pedagogical approach that centres the learner as a proactive participant in his or her own learning. It validates the standpoint of the learner. It also recognises that there is a contradiction between social constructions of reality, which are determined by the relations of ruling, and

the learner's own experiences of this reality. Ideal or mainstream constructions of the kind we find in textbooks do not consider the child's nuanced understanding of his/her world. Feminist scholarship thus builds upon and links two levels of analysis: structure and agency. Structure looks at social institutions and cultural practices, which create and sustain gender inequalities and link it to other systems of oppressions. The focus on agency honors individual women's expression of their own experiences and includes individual self-representation and personal voice. Hence feminist scholarship posits the significance of "situated knowledge", where knowledge and the ways of knowing are specific to a historical and cultural context; and the standpoint of the subject/producer of knowledge cannot be divorced from the content of knowledge produced. In the Indian context, social structures in different context are in a flux. Migration due to several reasons, employment opportunities, growth of consumerism, demand for better quality life has made inroads into the existing social and class structures of our society. There is no rigid divide as horizontal and vertical mobility is visible in communities across our landscape. The worldview and aspirations are no longer fixed. Media has also influenced children in a very significant manner. Therefore, the Standpoint Theory needs to be understood in the context of changing scenario in rural and urban context in contemporary India. The textbooks in several states have contextualized their content at the elementary stage, along with themes that children can relate to. However, as suggested earlier, the dynamics of changing families can also be examined.

6.6.1 Diversity and Intersectionality

Located at the intersection of categories of caste, class, religion and community, one of the strengths of gender is its acknowledgement of the diversity of social experiences. And feminist scholarship argues that the experience of gender relations forms a basis for understanding the links between gender and other asymmetric systems. It is critical to account for race, class, ethnicity and culture as well as gender within social inquiry, since gender as a conceptual category clearly does not fully capture the complex web of relations that determine an individual's location in social reality. Gender analysis does not operate in a vacuum – it always works in tandem with forces of caste, class, religion, ethnicity, and in relation to the rural-urban divide. Gender relations are manifested in very specific and constantly shifting configurations over time and space. Issues of gender have been framed within diverse and more realistic frameworks that consider the intersectionality of different forces. From a gendered perspective, the popular representations of "Unity in Diversity" represented in textbooks seem extremely limited and superficial in that they evade more significant issues of diversity in confining themselves to foods of different regions, or ways of celebrating the festivals of different communities. Other diverse modes of living and being that are integral to people's lives are seldom represented, far less discussed. In fact, the last major educational policy document, rather than argue for the need to enable children to engage with and understand issues of diversity, even denounces aspects of diversity such as the existence of "single parents, unmarried relationships and so on" in contrast to the joint family system, as the result of an "alien technological ethos" that has distanced the elite members of society from "the religio-philosophic ethos" and an "understanding of the heritage of the past. "Instead it advocates an easy "cohesion" without any understanding of the ground realities, for what is evident in such pronouncements is the lack of knowledge of the lived realities of the poor, rural and marginalised

sections of society. In our context of lived diversities it is critical to acquaint children with the perspectives of diverse groups, and equally so the gendered standpoints of these groups. Textbooks rarely represent the diverse forms of economic activity the people engage in. Farmers, doctors, teachers, nurses, labourers, shopkeepers and at the most bankers are represented in school textbooks. Other occupations rarely find visual representation nor are they included in the content matter of textbooks. The implicit assumption is that farming is the only economic activity in rural areas and urban spaces are populated only by professionals.

6.7   GENDER AND KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION

As a general practice biases regarding gender, in knowledge construction are identified in the given forms- invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance/selectivity, unreality, fragmentation/isolation, linguistic bias, visual bias and cosmetic bias.

Invisibility

Invisibility occurs when a gender, male or female, is not included in the work. Invisibility can only be detected after an entire work has been reviewed. Random sampling of the text is not sufficient to show that a certain gender is not included in the entire work. Occurrence of invisibility is a general phenomenon in Social Studies textbooks where instances of not including the role of women are very common.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping occurs when gender is assigned a rigid set of characteristics in the text confirming to their "traditional" roles. Stereotypes cast males as active, assertive and curious, while portraying female as dependable, conforming and obedient.

Imbalanced Selectivity

Imbalanced selectivity is an imbalance in presentation of materials by selective interpretation of events being reported. Textbooks sometimes present only one interpretation of an issue, situation, or a group of people, simplifying and distorting complex issues by omitting different perspectives. This can lead to a distorted reality.

Unreality

Unreality is like imbalance in nature. It occurs when the author chooses to avoid controversial issues, or reduces large complex issues to simple. When discussions on discriminations, harassment and inequality are dismissed as remnant of bygone days, students are being treated to unreality. Portrayal of women as involved in non-productive activities, even though they are directly or indirectly involved in productive activities leads to unreality.

Fragmentation/Isolation

Fragmentation/Isolation can occur when, to include women or minority in their works, authors, editors, and/or publishers, add an additional chapter on women. Isolation presents a group and topics on them as peripheral, less important than the main narrative. Obvious forms and some not so obvious forms can be detected by viewing the material.

Linguistic Bias

Language can be a powerful conveyor of bias, in both blatant and subtle forms. By linguistic bias the researcher is intended to explore whether bias reflected in cross-sex and same sex discourse behaviour of male and female characters wherein subordination is very much obvious in female discourse behaviour and authority and dominance in male discourse behaviour. Detecting linguistic bias can be overlooked due to cultural background or upbringing. Linguistic bias also leads to language wherein the general use of masculine terms and pronouns, to reflect a composite audience is very common. Ranging from 'man' our 'forefathers',' mankind' and 'businessman' to the generic 'he', this form of bias denies the full participation and recognition of women.

Visual Bias

Visual bias refers to the pictures and illustrations in a work, and the ratio of male to female representation. Other than inequality, visual images can also contain stereotyping.

Cosmetic Bias

Cosmetic bias offers an "illusion of equity". Beyond the attractive covers, photos, or posters that prominently feature all members of diverse groups, bias persists. For example, a textbook may feature a glossy pullout of female scientists, but it gives little narrative of the scientific contributions of women.

Activity 1

While teaching a chapter on any festival or celebration discuss in your class whether the chapter explains the participation of women and men (in the festival or celebration) in a realistic manner. Ask them to reflect how and why experiences of men and women are different related to a festival or celebration.

6.8 INSIGHT PROVIDED BY THE 'FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE

The term 'feminist' refers to all those ideas and all those persons who seek to address and end women's subordination. In the past two decades feminist critiques, nationally as well as globally, have been instrumental in challenging accepted definitions and expanding the extant boundaries of knowledge across disciplines through critical engagement with traditionally excluded issues relating to gender and other social inequalities relating to caste, class, race, and ethnicity. At the intellectual level, the critique encompasses a number of challenges to established ideas, including insights into the nature of power and hierarchy, analysis of the importance of gender division of labour, the division between public and private, and a re-valuing of women's experiences.

On the other hand, the linkages between gender and curriculum are complex and challenging. School textbooks are a crucial component in the acquisition of knowledge and unless syllabi are revised to incorporate a gendered perspective–along with other marginalized perspectives–schooling will reproduce the narrow biases. Therefore, it is important to recognize that regardless of

all the work produced by feminist scholars, unless a gender perspective is incorporated in the syllabi each generation of children will absorb the biases of existing ways of understanding society and reproduce these ways of thinking into the future. Hence, it becomes imperative that we address the larger context of feminist critiques of knowledge to clearly understand how we can progressively inform, transform, and map the gender contours of disciplinary knowledge to delineate a more inclusive and democratic curriculum framework. This implies not only addressing the initial "invisibility" and under-representation of women across the disciplines but also the manner, when, in which they enter it, and the inter-linkages between competing inequalities of caste, class, race, ethnicity, and gender. In addition, it also implies that true knowledge is liberatory, crafted with the goal of social transformation. This requires that individuals, be it teachers, textbook writers, or students, read, write and relate to the text with an awareness of their positions in the complex hierarchy of domination and subordination in which we live.

History

The field of history has conventionally been associated with the power–of events and people that are believed to have impacted the world–and therefore it has excluded most categories of men and almost all women since most human beings have been subjected to power, and only a few have wielded it. Conventional history has therefore marginalised most people and its gender bias has therefore been almost intrinsic. However, this limited framework has over the last century been expanded to include social, economic, political and cultural processes and institutions as well as accounts of what is called history from below or people's history. Unfortunately, these new developments have continued to exclude women subsuming them mechanically under men, even as the focus shifted to peasants, labourers, tribals, and dalits. The 'add women and stir' approach has been particularly unsatisfactory in the case of women because by a mere mechanical enumeration of such and such women who 'also' on occasion wielded power (like Razia Begum, Nurjahan or Rani Lakshmibai), or took part in movements, or worked on the lands, or helped to make pots etc. only serves to consolidate the position that women did/do very little. This is partly because the sources have either reflected the biases of history in terms of emphasising the role of a few men and even fewer women or excluded the roles of women in social, economic and political life altogether.

Feminist historians have therefore argued that given the sexual division of labour, and the concurrent creation of a public/private dichotomy and the hierarchy of values attached to them, women will remain marginal in any account of history. Hence, while it is important to outline women's participation in production of food and goods which has been invisibilised as they are rarely the owners of resources and their work is subsumed under that of men, this is clearly not enough. Therefore, unless there is a paradigm shift in the framework of history and it expands to become not merely the history of production but also the history of social reproduction—of the reproduction of the household and of the labour-force and human and cultural resources more generally, women will never feature adequately in history in a way that does justice to their work, their lives and the totality of their experiences.

Geography

Geography in India continues to remain andocentric i.e., male-centric and part of this myopic vision stems from the intellectual history of Geography's evolution

as a discipline not only in India, but also in the Anglo-Saxon world that had dominated the Indian Geography for long. But while the Anglo-Saxon world has moved ahead in terms of developing a distinct branch of Geography variously called Geography of Gender and/or Feminist Geography, Indian Geography has lagged far behind in this respect. Part of the problem is the unresolved debate about what geography is and what is not, with an emphasis on the latter rather than the former, which makes bringing women as a subject matter in geography more problematic, particularly at the school and undergraduate level. This is particularly distressing in a situation where theory and praxis have moved from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to a trans-disciplinary approach elsewhere in geography teaching and research. The tendency in Indian geography has been to produce research of a descriptive nature facilitated by the historical tradition of empirical data gathering made possible largely because of extensive reports, gazetteers and a record keeping system of colonial origin.

Moreover, physical, regional and social–cultural discourses moved independently of each other with the result that grounded realities were rarely seen as providing a backdrop for human activities to unfold. Even the seminal narrative of Spate's Geography of India and many more (regional) works that followed were not free from such limitations in the sense of having masterly descriptions without linking the physical and the regional with wider social and cultural processes in a mutually interactive framework. The quantitative revolution that followed in the positivistic tradition of the West was once again delinked from the understanding of processes embedded in space. Data gathered were mostly on readily quantifiable attributes perhaps because of the intellectual preconceptions of geography as an ideographic rather than a homothetic discipline. Even otherwise, it was the men who spoke for humanity at large even though historically women were at the forefront of transition from nomadic to settled lives. This was essentially because women were confined to the private domain of hearth and home whereas the outside was associated with men. Scholars have pointed out the inadequacies of such binaries and the fluidity of private and public spaces and that given the division of labour between men and women, women can experience their environment differently as compared to men. The current discussion on environment and the differential consequences of depleting natural resources on women vis-à-vis men because most of the forest-based informal activities are carried out by women for livelihoods of their families is a good example. Women's exposure to and interaction with natural and built environment may be limited also because of their limited physical and social mobility resulting in quite a different experiential world. Many recent developmental reports in India have brought out how spatial location in which women live makes a difference even to such basic well-being as longevity, i. e. a woman in Kerala can expect to live longer by 18 years than a woman in Madhya Pradesh despite slight difference in per capita incomes between the two states (Kalyani Menon-Sen and Shiva Kumar 2001; Rastogi 2003, also see Agarwal 1994). Until recently, survival chances of girls as compared to boys (sex ratios) had a distinct regional pattern of its own (Atkins et. al. 1997; Kumar et. al 1997) and yet for quite some time geographers have been slow in recognizing that the spatial implication of place may differ for women and men and there can be geography of women (Raju et. al. 1999). For one, those who produced geographical knowledge in India were men. A critical perspective on Geography of Women is yet to come. A relatively recent body of research by individuals and a small number of university departments (as well as through seminars and workshops), sporadic or small it might be in terms of overall outreach and impact, does demonstrate an intellectual growth in terms of moving from descriptive

pattern identification (based on statistically segregated data by men and women) to critical analyses of processes pushing women to margins. Given this situation and the mandatory gender inclusive understanding of development processes, it is imperative that the younger generation is systematically exposed to issues of gendered deprivation and marginalization that have distinct spatial and regional character in India.

Economics

Three distinct theoretical frameworks are identifiable in economics: neo-classical, orthodox Marxism, and institutional economics. Among the three, it is the neoclassical economics that asserts considerable power over the economic imagination of the rulers and is addressed in school textbooks. The other two schools are usually excluded from the economic textbooks.

Over the last two decades, feminist critiques of knowledge have no doubt made considerable inroads into traditional domains of the humanities and the social sciences. However, among the social sciences, mainstream economics, namely neoclassical economics, has been the most resistant to engaging with gender as a socio-cultural construct with an impact on construction of knowledge. Although this has not restricted the successful emergence of feminist economics as an area of scholarship; unfortunately, its proponents have not been able to mainstream their critiques as effectively. Economics is particularly an important discipline to address because it remains to be the hegemonic discipline. Over the last half a century, it has increasingly ventured into studying areas that are the subject matter of other disciplines: economic theory of politics, economics of education, and even that of marriage and divorce among others. Not only has it strayed into other disciplines but holds considerable sway in informing the policy process. Hence, it is more important to interrogate the basic assumptions of the discipline and make students aware of not only the gender of economics but also understand the economics of gender (Folbre 1994, Jacobsen 1994). Having established the masculinist biases implicit in the discipline, it is also important to explore how gender differences lead to different economic outcomes for the sexes. The outcomes are measured in terms of earnings, income, poverty rates, hours of work, and other standards used by economists to determine economic well-being. As opposed to the "atomized" individual, it is important to acknowledge that economic agents can be male or female, and they interact in families as well as in firms and in markets (Jacobsen 1994).

Three types of economic inquiries need to be pursued in order to explore the economics of gender: i) theoretical models based on two sexes ii) empirical work that addresses similarities and differences between the sexes iii) analysis of economic policies that affect the sexes differently. Within the context of India, it is also important to introduce within the school curriculum the gender and development discourse to understand better and explore how gender is constitutive of the larger economic development trajectory and alternative ways of understanding development (Kabeer 1994, Sen 1987). Key areas on which school texts are usually silent and are critical in exploring gender issues include:

Women and Work: Traditional economic analysis has tended to make a substantial proportion of women's work invisible because economic activity was directly or indirectly associated with the market. Income earning activities were conceptualized as work; so was agricultural family labour that produced market oriented goods, even when labor was unremunerated. A wide range of unpaid

activities – producing goods and services for the family consumption, were not economically seen as work along with domestic production and voluntary community work. A high proportion of women concentrate in these activities, the result was economic invisibility and statistical underestimation of women's work. Further women's activities remain undervalued because of viewing the market as the central criterion for defining 'economic'. Even when women are "economically active", they are still working in a segmented labour market, primarily in areas defined as 'feminine". These also tend to be the more low-paying jobs. There have been considerable efforts to make women's work more visible at the theoretical and empirical level. The 1991 census expanded the category of work to include subsistence activities – removed the statistical purdah that had rendered women's work invisible. However, the debate continues with "caring work" and the care economy remaining outside the purview of "work". If children are supposed to grow up as sensitive young men and women, it is important that they are aware of issues and debates around the seeming natural sexual division of labour.

Looking at Intra-household Dynamics: Households are treated as the basic socio-economic unit of analysis and viewed as being internally undifferentiated and homogenous structures, especially by economists. The neo-classical view of the household as the proverbial "black box" treats them as undifferentiated units which are safe locations of mutually benefiting reciprocal interests with an "altruist" patriarch, a construct of New Household Economics, at the helm of household affairs (Becker 1981). Individuals and households are discussed interchangeably as if they are one and the same unit. On one hand, the household is treated as an individual by another name as though it has interests and logic of it's own; and, on the other hand, individual behaviour is interpreted as being motivated by household interests and reflects the household needs (Folbre 1986, Wolf 1990, Kabeer 1994).

Sociology

Textbooks of sociology in India are usually divided into two parts dealing with theoretical and substantive themes respectively. Essential to the theoretical section are references to the "Founding Fathers" such as Durkheim, Marx and Weber. This cannot be resolved simply by adding the contributions of women sociologists, though this is important. What is required is a gendered analysis of the thinkers. Indeed, resources for furthering a gendered understanding can also be drawn from them. Further the gendered assumptions underlying theoretical approaches such as Talcott Parson's structural functionalism, though almost invariably dealt with in sociology textbooks, is left unquestioned. Within the substantive sociology the focus is on structures such as caste, class, tribe, family, culture and processes such as modernization, westernization, sensitization, urbanization, industrialization and lately globalization. Neither the structures nor the processes are gendered entities and the fact that these structures and processes mean different things to men and women are often overlooked.

Visibility is very important in social sciences where women have by and large been missing. But in Indian sociology the fact that women are not treated too well in the contemporary Indian society (if remarked at all) would be an aberration from the normative status and the role of women in the ideal Indian society. This must be understood in the context of the prevailing influence of the "book view" rather than the "field view" in Indian sociology. The distinction between the "book view", often coinciding with the Indo logical perspective and the "field view" has been much labored upon in the discipline. Yet, most

textbooks reflect no understanding of this distinction. Thus, an image of the typical "Indian joint family" crumbling under the forces of social change but epitomizing the values of Indian womanhood override all the empirical studies that sociologists themselves have conducted about the regional, caste, tribe variations in family patterns. The high status of Hindu women is eulogised with reference to women as key symbols of purity and honour of family, lineage and caste. It is entirely unproblematic that a woman is recognized as a person when she is incorporated into her husband's family only then does she become a social entity and in that state, she is auspicious, a sumangali (auspicious woman), a saubhagyavati (fortunate woman). Both terms are used only for a woman whose husband is alive. A gendered understanding of the ideology of honour would for instance go a long way to make explicit in textbooks the relationships between gender, caste, and labour. The many instances of honour killings or even dowry deaths could then be explained sociologically rather than being seen as 'deviance' or 'social problems'. The engagement between "questions of visibility" versus questions of "interrogating the cognitive structures" of the discipline is rarely explored.

The subject matter of the discipline has conventionally been understood as about marriage, family and kinship, about customs and rituals where perforce it is not easy to ignore the presence of women. Accordingly, the problem never was that women were entirely absent. Indeed, sociology is popularly considered a soft option and therefore more suited for women students. I therefore focus on the family to problematize the notion of visibility. In the study of family and kinship the relevant structures and processes have been seen from the ego's (the man's) point of view. Thus, practices such as patriliny, patrilocality, kanyadan are presented in an apparently gender-blind fashion. Experiential aspects of family life (with which students are familiar) are completely neglected. For instance, the inclusion of wedding songs sung in patrilineal societies is a good pedagogical device to illustrate the gendered nature of patriliny and patrilocality; as would be the inclusion of common gendered sayings from matrilineal societies. Since very often the North Indian, upper caste, patriarchal joint family norm is presented as "the Indian norm". An inclusive treatment of other kinds of family and kinship structures in different regions and across caste class hierarchies is required. I use the word "inclusive treatment" for very often treatment of 'other customs" is done in a fashion that renders them as the odd, exotic, less developed remnants to the dominant, homogeneous norm. It is evident that women are visible in chapters on family and kinship but the fundamental point that the private and the public are inter related is usually completely missing from standard sociology textbooks. A common way of making women visible or of questioning stereotypical gender roles is to bring in stories of successful women or of showing boys doing atypical tasks like housework. It is more difficult to challenge the cognitive structure of sociology itself. Sociology of family and kinship is a mandatory chapter in any sociology textbook. Central to the nineteenth century social movement had been a concern with ameliorating the condition of widows. No modern history book fails to mention this. Yet widows are invisible in chapters on religion, on caste, on family, on religion, on culture. In this case even making them visible would be cognitively unsettling. Apart from "unsettling" the question of visibility, it is important to interrogate why women are treated under "deprived groups" or "social problems". This reflects the broader problem of understanding gender as an additional topic to be covered. Issues such as child marriage, widowhood, sati, rape, dowry and wife beating are aberrations and not central to the structure and processes that sociology studies. A gendered sociology must locate these as intrinsic to societal arrangements. For a gendered sociology, it

is imperative to make linkages between the micro and the macro, the public and the private. Gender must be an organizing principle of society, and no topic, whether caste or industrialization, religion or globalization, tribes or media can be dealt without a gender perspective. Finally, it is important that an attempt towards a gendered sociology does not lead to gender essentialism. If the role of social sciences is to develop a critical awareness, engendering sociology would be a step in the right direction.

Political Science

The mainstream discipline of political science has remained largely focused on politics in the narrow sense – party politics and party systems, elections and electoral alliances between diverse groups in Indian society, transformation of institutions. Social movements are studied to some extent, particularly Dalit and women's movements, but from the point of view of institutions and party politics – for example, the representation of women through the 72nd and 73rd amendments, or through studies on reservations in general. Within this framework, gender and feminist theory are invisible. Existing work on gender and politics is done by feminist scholars from other disciplines – sociology, economics, and history. Even in the sub-field of Political Theory, where one could expect an engagement with the existing rich field of feminists, theorizing that challenges mainstream political theorists, entire courses on Contemporary Political Theory or Western and Indian Political Thought can be taught without any feminist understanding whatsoever. For example, Marxist thought without any reference to socialist feminism, Rawls without any reference to Susan Moller Okin's critique, and so on, except where individual teachers make their own intervention in the syllabus. There have been some optional courses introduced on "Women and Politics" which have largely remained like ghettoes. More disturbingly, such courses can be taught with no reference to feminist scholarship at all, in a "status of women in India" mode, along the lines of government policies on "gender and empowerment." The real challenge is to ensure a feminist perspective in mainstream courses, and to shape the form of teaching through specific sets of readings, so that whoever teaches the course, it cannot be done without reference to the readings developed by interested teachers in consultation with scholars in the field. Indeed, this last point is one that needs to be made for political science teaching since it has tended to be textbook centered. We need to develop a set of readings (chapters/sections from books, key articles) that delineate debates around the topics in the syllabus, and make these available to teachers. Further, these reading sets need to be translated into the local languages.

Science and Technology (S&T)

In recent years, many countries in the world have adopted policies for greater gender equality in education. Measures have been taken to increase access to education, and to have a common curriculum in schools. However, worldwide, female enrolment in tertiary level Science and technology (S&T) is less than male enrolment and less than in other subjects (World Education Report, 1995). The school experience plays a key role in influencing the decision of students to continue higher education and their choices of study. Women have historically had a limited access to S&T and are almost excluded from intellectual, scientific and technological communities. They have always been associated with nurturance, childrearing and house-keeping. Areas, in which women have excelled, such as, nutrition and midwifery, were never considered S&T. Further, the contribution of women to S&T is "hidden from history" as documentation is rare (Wajcman, 1995).

Historically, images of men and women and their gender roles have changed and have accordingly been justified on different grounds. These justifications have ranged from the irrational to the psuedo-scientific. Paradoxically, modern science with its professed objectivity, far from demolishing biased perceptions about women, is strengthening them. The organized knowledge of the ancient ages (or sciences), often viewed women as unique creatures, distinct from men. These sciences rationalized that women were incomplete men and thus inferior. The 'science' of craniology claimed that women were intellectually inferior because of their lighter brains. The fact that corrections for body size were ignored indicates that the processes of science are not free from bias (Gould, 1981). Nature, the focus of the scientific study has been figuratively considered to be female and was symbolically depicted as female. Most languages use the feminine gender for abstract nouns like science and knowledge. However, scientists were depicted as male and with time the popular images of science became masculine (Scheibinger, 1989). The emergence of social structures of the scientific enterprise (e.g. the formation of the Royal Society) reflected as well as fed these images (Haggerty, 1995). Language used in the scientific circles also reinforced the masculine image of science. These ideas gradually took strong roots in the social milieu. Gendered language continues even today in science, perhaps in a less offensive manner than in the past.

The objective sciences (mathematics, physics) are dubbed as hard sciences with the implied connotation of being masculine, while the subjective branches of knowledge (sociology, psychology) are dubbed as the soft sciences, implying that they are more relevant to women. The stereotypes they generate are self-fulfilling. Far fewer women opt for mathematics and physics than for other subjects (Jones and Wheatley 1988). The under-representation of women in S&T is often 'explained' by suggesting that there are biological differences in cognitive ability between men and women. Recent remarks made by Lawrence H Summers, president of Harvard University, suggesting that fewer women succeed in science and mathematics due to innate gender differences show that similar ideas exist in the highest echelons of academia. The issue of sex differences in cognitive abilities keeps raising its head regularly and is often played up prominently by the media. Research in this area has been by and large inconclusive. The differences, if any, in ability, turn up only at ages when it is difficult to separate the effects of genetic factors from socialization. There may or may not be biological explanations for sex differences in learning but it is obvious that social factors play a key role. From the earliest possible stage, girls and boys are treated differently by those close to them, differing expectations are held from them and later, the mass-media constantly bombards them with messages of what it is to be male or female in the society.

The key forms of identified bias in textbooks are (i) exclusion or invisibility of girls and women from textbooks, (ii) sex-role stereotyping, (iii) subordination of girls or women to boys and men in texts and pictures, and (iv) lack of female figures in history (AAUW, 1992). These biases in the curricular material relate often not only to women but also to all minority groups (Sadker. et. al., 1989). Textbook analysis continues to show the existence of these biases in Indian textbooks. The image of S&T as the male-only domains remains the dominant perception in most students' minds. Studies have shown that young children given information of generic language such as "mankind" and "he" draw pictures of men and boys when asked to visually present the information or story they had heard (Martyna 1978, in Rosser 1993).

How do students view science and scientists? In a study conducted at the HomiBhabha Centre for Science Education (Chunawala and Ladage, 1990), girls and boys drew a male scientist, who was young and worked alone, in a chemistry laboratory. They used masculine pronouns (he, his) when referring to scientists in the singular. Not only the scientific focus and application but also the very conceptual organization of scientific knowledge, is influenced by the social and cultural milieu of the time. Feminist theory builds on this insight and examines in detail how gender ideology permeates the social construction of knowledge (Keller, 1985). With respect to technology the perception that what women do is non-technological persists, despite their involvement in survival technologies since the dawn of history. One cause for this perception lies in the way we define technology. Even the term 'work' is often reserved for those activities that result in monetary rewards or payments. Women's work is perceived as 'domestic', and outside the purview of technology. Various socio-cultural factors keep women from entering fields that are overtly called technology. One such factor has been the deliberate exclusion of women from certain areas of work. Craft unions have played an active role in resisting the entry of women into trades, thereby relegating women to unskilled jobs and identifying skill work with men. The gender stereotyping of jobs is remarkably ubiquitous and even very young children strongly project that there are different occupations for different sexes. One result of such all-pervading stereotypes is that women may choose to avoid areas that are hostile to them directly and which indirectly the society is hostile to as career choices for women. This is confirmed by the low percentage of women entering fields, labelled S&T. Women account for only 9 per cent of the scientific personnel in India (Expert group meeting on training of women graduates in the development process, Thailand, 1999). The gendering of technology occurs since technology is the product of social relations and forces. Of all the possible technologies, only some may be selected, their development paths may vary, and their effects on different social groups may be different. These choices are shaped by social arrangements and are often a reflection of the power structures in society.

Mathematics

Everyone does mathematics, and yet, for many students within formal education, it remains a distant and inaccessible area of knowledge. School mathematics is given a prime place in the hierarchy of school knowledge, but it tends to get constructed as a closed system made up of rules and methods to be memorized, rigorous practice of skills and application of precise methods. This construction masks the relationship of mathematics to the organization of power and privilege in societies. The assumption of mathematics as a discipline exemplifying perfect rational and logical argumentation gives it an exalted status in the school curriculum of the modern nation state, which places the rational, detached, autonomous epistemic subject at its center. This construction is premised on an understanding that mathematics constitutes the highest point of human reason, that 'logico-mathematical structures are the structures of rational thought' (Walkerdine, 1988, p.6). As Walkerdine (1989) elaborates ideas about reason and reasoning cannot be understood outside considerations of gender. Since the Enlightenment, if not before, the Cartesian concept of reason has been deeply embroiled in attempts to control nature. Rationality was taken as a kind of a rebirth of the thinking self, without the intervention of the women. The rational self was a profoundly masculine one from which woman was excluded, her powers not only inferior but also subservient. The historical evolution of mathematics as a discipline has thus come to define it as a masculine domain.

Women and others without power in the society are excluded by this definition, as lacking in the rationality required to access mathematical knowledge. In the case of women, this view acquired legitimacy through notions of women's 'innate' inferiority which originated in the 19th century and continues to circulate in contemporary times. While mathematics appears to be value free and to report universal truths is based on masculine values and perceptions. The construction of this 'masculinist domain' is aided by the complete lack of references in textbooks to women mathematicians, the absence of social concerns in the designing of curricula which would enable children questioning received gender ideologies and the absence of reference to women's lives in problem sums. A study of mathematics textbooks found that in the problem sums, not a single reference was made to women's clothing, although several problems referred to the buying of cloth, etc. (AWAG, 1988).

Classroom research also indicates a systematic devaluation of girls as incapable of 'mastering' mathematics, even when they perform reasonably well at verbal as well as cognitive tasks in mathematics. It has been seen that teachers tend to address boys more than girls, which feeds into the construction of the normative mathematics learner as male. Also, when instructional decisions are in teachers' hands, their gendered constructions colour the mathematical learning strategies of girls and boys, with the latter using more invented strategies for problem-solving, which reflects greater conceptual understanding (Fennema, 2000). Studies have shown that teachers tend to attribute boys' mathematical 'success' more to ability, and girls' success more to effort (Weisbeck, 1992). Classroom discourses also give some indication of how the 'masculinising' of mathematics occurs, and the profound influence of gender ideologies in patterning notions of academic competence in school (Manjrekar, 2001). With performance in mathematics signifying school 'success', girls are clearly at the losing end. It is important to acknowledge that mathematical competence is situated and shaped by the social situations and the activities in which learning occurs. However, school mathematics has little relation to the social worlds of children where they are engaged in mathematical activities as a part of daily life. Open-ended problems, involving multiple approaches and not solely based on arriving at a final, unitary, correct answer are absent in the way mathematics is approached in our schools. An overriding assumption of school mathematics is that an external source of validation (the teacher, textbooks, guidebooks) is always needed for mathematical claims. This approach acts to the disadvantage of all learners, but often acts to the disadvantage of girls. Is it possible to think of a gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive mathematics curriculum at the school level which goes beyond textbooks? Do we know enough about how girls learn mathematics, how they approach problems, what kinds of problems they find appealing and challenging? Is it possible to think of a 'less masculine' mathematics? Feminist mathematics educators are struggling to define what a feminist approach to the study of mathematics might be. Some are examining the ways that females and males think and how they learn mathematics. Some are concerned with using women's voices and their histories to identify important questions. Others are examining the language of mathematics to determine whether it is gendered. Folk mathematics provides a rich resource to draw on for such an approach, and needs to be incorporated in the curriculum.

Language

Language is an integral component of culture. It encodes a culture's values and preoccupations and transmits and disseminates them. It cuts across all disciplines,

is basic to the construction of knowledge and has pervasive and wide-ranging implications for gender relations. Hence it is very important to examine how gender is encoded in language. Like other representations, linguistic representations too are a marker of women's position in the society. We need to question our commonsensical assumption that the sexes share "a common language". Existing language is patriarchal and inscribed with the inequitable power relations of society. Since language is andocentric there is a need to change it: to make it responsive to not only for women's use but for society. While gender differences are crucial in understanding how language functions differently, it is also important to remember that men and women are not homogenous groups — they are in turn defined by class, culture, ethnicity differences. Therefore, it is essential that we recognize differences while rejecting stereotypes of sex difference in language use. Feminist critique of language can be mapped along several axes: Feminist critiques argue that the fundamental semantic and grammatical structures of language construct male as positive and female as negative, attributing value to "male" qualities and denying them to the "feminine". Language functions as a carrier of ideas and assumptions which are naturalized and reinforced through everyday exchanges. They become so conventional that we miss their significance. Sexism pervades language — it penetrates its morphology (e.g. word endings), affects stylistic conventions and functions through something as common and everyday as the generic use of "man" to designate all humanity. Similarly, in naming conventions women were traditionally marked either by their father's or their husband's surname — passing from one to the other. The titles Miss and Mrs. indicate women's marital status, whereas there is no such indicator in men's titles. Therefore, the need to sensitize students to the way that language functions and how it entrenches ideas and naturalizes power differences is pervasive. This is not just an issue of certain words being offensive. However, it is also important to highlight that because these norms have been historically constructed they can also be unmade - hence the need for feminist deconstruction and reconstruction.

Feminist critiques of language are also concerned with whether the world is "named" or represented from a masculinist point of view or whether they reproduce a stereotyped view of the sexes. "Names" are a culture's way of fixing what will count as reality. It is argued that language does not merely project something that is out there and already exists but also shapes and constitutes it as well as our attitudes towards it. Thus, using language differently can change conditions and situations. Students should therefore be taught that language matters, not only on the superficial level of "political correctness" but on the deeper level of changing attitudes and thereby situations that obtain in the world. Using the word "black" instead of "negro" or "differently able" instead of "disabled" or "sex worker" instead of "prostitute" is not just about greater social acceptability but about being aware of histories of oppression, segregation and moral condemnation and the will to change it. A critical exploration of the sexist terminology in human sexuality clearly illustrates how women's passivity is linguistically reinforced through the lexicon and its implications for the identity formation of boys and girls. The language used to describe intercourse whether colloquial or clinical constructs the male as active ("penetration" as opposed to "enclosure" etc.). Feminist scientists have shown how the language of biology reinforces these stereotypes in the sphere of cell reproduction too. Also, words which are "neutral" take on sexual also negative connotations when applied to women. Schulz points out how words like "professional" and "tramp" when applied to women mean "loose woman". Also, how certain words like "slag",

"slut" etc. are only feminine in application and use. Parallel instances to characterize male promiscuity do not exist or at least are rare. These words are consistently used to sexually harass girls as well as to regulate their sexuality. Not only are the girls subject to sexual harassment, but are also denied access to the language of sexuality. Women are thought unfeminine or coarse if they write or speak of sex. The need to make a language of sexuality, physicality and bodies available to our students, particularly girls is extremely important. We have heard cases of young girl students falling ill because of their inability to articulate bodily needs, functions or dysfunctions particularly in mixed classes or in mixed pedagogical situations. The language of sexuality in textbooks is caught between the awkward evasions of Moral Science texts and the clinical abstractions of biology books. None of these address the ground realities of students' sexual lives and particularly the socio-cultural aspects of sexuality as it obtains within the entrenched gender systems. The language of literature, conventional metaphors, ways of writing also do not reflect female lives, bodies or ways of being. The language of female subjectivity is absent in traditional male dominated literary discourse. This makes the subject of teaching literature texts (which are usually male authored texts, very few women authors are represented in middle or high school "rapid readers" or literary selections) in classrooms particularly challenging. In producing textbooks for literature teaching as well as in class-room situations we need to question the liberal humanist invocation of "universal values" or "human" values which refuses to take material distinctions of class, gender, location or identity into account. This is an attitude which pervades much of our literature teaching in classrooms. Teachers struggle to explain why a poem about a bunch of daffodils that delighted Wordsworth is a "universal", "human" document that children from say West- Midnapore who barely understand the language must relate to. However, this is not to suggest that no literature other than our own or describing experiences not our own should be taught, or that "relevance" should be decided along very narrow utilitarian lines. But perhaps the same sense of literary merit could be communicated to the student without insisting on the "universality" of the experience (which may really be quite specific and alien as far as the student is concerned) and without insisting on a complete identification on the part of the student which only confuses and distances her. This is equally true of teaching male authored discourses where the specificities of the authorial position should be made transparent so that as readers the students do not feel compelled to identify with situations patently not their own. However, this is not to say that they should not be encouraged to be sympathetic to these different situations. That would defeat the very purpose of teaching literature which should ideally be a means of sensitizing students to the specificities of human experiences and feelings. We must address the issue of silence in women's speech and writing. Women are silent because adequate words do not exist, because society censor's certain forms of women's articulation, because silence can sometimes also be subversive. Yet paradoxically women are stereotypically characterized as garrulous and gossipy. But their speech is disparaged. Also, women are associated primarily with certain kinds of speech like private confessional outpourings (letter, diaries etc.), story – telling etc. Most of these genres too are not taken seriously. They are "private" forms of language, confined to the home, family or the community. Women are rarely associated with public communication like religious rituals (there are taboos on women being ordained as priests, articulating prayers or preaching publicly), political rhetoric, legal discourse, science, poetry.

Female voices and concerns are absent from high culture. But they are equally

excluded from sub-cultures. It is considered inappropriate for women particularly from the upper and middle classes to indulge in swearing, joking, or using slang. There is a need not only to make women's silences heard, but also to break them by questioning taboos and dogma against women's speech within the existing structure. Textbooks should not replicate this system of silencing and exclusion and teachers should sensitize students to be aware of them in language and culture. Traditional linguists have suggested that women's language is timorous, conservative, overly polite, trivial in subject matter given to repetition, simple and illogical and incomplete syntax. According to Lakoff, female inadequacies of language are not markers of biological or "natural" inability in women but are signs of inadequacies in culture which socializes women as timid, meek and polite and deferential (which is part of the training to be subordinate). Other linguists have shown that women use language in a unique way and have seen the difference not as "inadequacy" but as a positive quality (Irigaray etc). These works have challenged the male standards of "good" or "adequate" language use. The fact that women ask more questions or use more "hedges" (like "rather", "somewhat", "you know" etc.) is not a sign of their insecurity but a mark of a more inclusive and less aggressive or dominating manner of speaking. Perhaps it is crucial to re- examine the values which underlie a certain mode of speech characterized as "male". So, while the girl child should be encouraged to be assertive in class etc., she should also be taught to question these values as the only desirable ones. She must be heard and not ignored, but she must not think that the only way of doing it is by being confrontational or undemocratic. So, appropriation of male prerogatives should go hand in hand with questioning the very rules of the game. Not only in the realm of the spoken language have women been silenced, the written language has also been monopolized by the powerful. Women are not the only group affected by illiteracy, but gender differences in literacy rates are striking. Where education is a scarce resource it is thought more profitable to educate boys. But besides economic compulsions there are political ones too. Powerful groups fear that education can empower the powerless and incite them to protest. In this context, the divide between written and oral communication becomes crucial. In modern societies, the language of permanence and authority is the written language and it is privileged over the oral. This is problematic because the oral is the means of communication most easily accessible to the powerless. Perhaps both in our text books and in classrooms we need to be a little critical of the written word in general and learn to challenge the dogmatic authority of the book. While the students should learn to value the text, the power of the written word should not overwhelm them or deafen them to the possibilities of other forms of communication.

6.9 IMPLICATIONS OF STANDPOINT THEORY FOR STAKEHOLDERS OF EDUCATION

Education of women has been justified in the interests of supplementary income generation, lower fertility rates and population control, better mothering skills, upholding "tradition" and spiritual values, and improving social cohesion. Most of these interests address women as instruments for upkeep of the family and society, sacrificing or ignoring their very identity and rights as individual human beings. The paradox here is that education, which has been a site for the reproduction of social values and stereotypes which bind and constrain, is also potentially a site for empowerment.

Moreover, the State and other agencies who "shape" and transmit education through curriculum and pedagogy are also caught in this paradox. On the one hand, they become instrumental in reinforcing subordination and perpetuate the status-quo and on the other, take on a progressive mantle. The contradictions and tensions that this situation produces is then replicated in the contradictory messages inherent in the construction of knowledge in textbooks too. It is very often observed that the same textbook can show women as equal in one lesson, and mock women in another.

If education policy is committed to gender equality then this contradiction needs to be addressed, and the development of unambiguously progressive perspectives, in the very construction of knowledge must be acknowledged as a focus of transformation. The curriculum's presentation of gender relations is frequently based upon popular assumptions or upon ideas perpetuated by dominant groups. And it normally posits the male as the normative epistemic subject. It rarely considers the differentiated contributions, capacities and perspectives of women. Alternative Gendered Frameworks of Knowledge require equal reflection of the worlds of both men and women and carry within them the seeds of a just social transformation.

Addressing the Hidden Curriculum

The Hidden Curriculum implies, organizational arrangements, including, rituals and practices in everyday school life like segregated seating, separate lines for girls and boys, or having them form separate teams, differential task assignment and sexual division of labour in school like boys allowed to go out of school, girls sweep, clean, serve water, present bouquet in functions, systems of rewards and punishments, disciplining of boys and girls through different strategies, teacher's labeling patterns, teacher-student and student-student interactions. Also teaching and learning materials, classroom practices, evaluation and assessment procedures and language policy are all components of curriculum 'learned' in school. It demands investigation of the contexts within which the children make meaning of, or respond to, these notions, through the filter of her/his subjective experience while growing up as female/male in society. While it is important to understand, the ideologies underlying the presentation of gender in school textbooks, it is equally pertinent to examine how these ideologies are expressed at the level of everyday school practices, experiences and pedagogic practices.

Teacher as Facilitator

Feminist pedagogy emphasizes participatory learning and teaching, within which subjectivity, emotion and experience have a definite and valued place. While participation is a powerful strategy, its pedagogic edge is blunted when it is ritualized. Participation, when seen as an instrument to achieve certain specified, predetermined objectives and where the teacher's own ideas dominate classroom discussions is not meaningful. It involves appreciation of the importance of starting from experience of both students and teachers.

The curriculum also must accommodate pedagogic strategies that deal with the idea of conflict, between what is observed and valued in contemporary society, in the social worlds that children inhabit, and what can be in a gender-just and less violent world. To use conflict as a pedagogic strategy is to enable children to deal with conflict and facilitate awareness of its nature and role in their lives.

If children's social experiences are to be brought into classrooms, it is inevitable that issues of conflict must be addressed. Conflict is an inescapable part of children's lives. They constantly encounter situations which call for moral assessment and action, whether in relation to subjective experiences of conflict involving the self, family and society, or in dealing with exposure to violent conflict in the contemporary world. Yet the official curriculum tends to treat knowledge as neutral, erasing conflict to legitimize a certain vision of society and its knowledge, a vision that is related to dominant discourses.

The school teacher plays a key role in maintaining, modifying and reshaping her understanding of the location, in terms of her class, caste, gender, religion, sexuality and region. In the present scenario, where a considerable number of children belonging to diverse groups bring with them a variety of cultural practices, knowledge systems, ways of seeing and an understanding of identity becomes critical for the teacher.

What is expected from the teacher? Initiating processes of placing value on the world of the learner while simultaneously developing abilities in the child to reflect on her world and engage with new forms of knowledge, the teacher could facilitate the child towards positive identity formation. This would require the teacher to 'Unlearn' her own given assumptions regarding norms, values and ideals. In the absence of this, the teacher's own biases and pre-conceptions would make the adoption of such objectives and pedagogies mere rhetorical statements to be enacted through mechanical, ritualized processes. Issues of curriculum and pedagogy require critical attention to make education gender sensitive.

What a Gender Sensitive Education Should Focus On

Promoting self-recognition, a positive self-image and self-actualization stimulating critical thinking, deepening understanding of the gendered structures of power, including gender, enabling access to resources, especially to an expanding framework of information and knowledge, developing the ability to analyze the options available, and to facilitate the possibility of making informed choices, reinforcing the agency of girls to challenge gendered structures of power and take control of their lives.

Therefore, removal of biases and addressing inequalities are not simple tasks, they are complex and challenging. To meet the challenge, all the stakeholders must view education in terms of its transformative potential, as a social intervention that works towards re-examining existing realities. Then only education will become the single most powerful process for redressing the inequities of gender, and will facilitate the forging of new values and forms of society that would enable both women and men to develop their human capacities to their fullest and thereby moving from the given to realizing innovative ways of imagining our future.

Exemplar Gender Inclusive Activities

Many people believe an activity is a way of learning which involves physical participation of the children, and is something which is fun for them like dramatization, rhymes and songs, puppet play, fun games and so on. All these can serve as very good learning activities. The risk is that often these activities are conducted for their own sake by the teachers and therefore, although joyful, may not lead to any learning. Given below are some of the cooperative

learning activities which provide a scope for gender inclusion in teaching- learning process.

Activity 2: Just a Minute

* Take 10-15 small household objects like bangles, tooth paste, shaving cream, knife, one or two-rupee coin, lipstick, pencils socks etc. and place them in a tray.

* Put the tray on a table and keep it on the back side of the classroom.

* Ask each student to go one by one, and let him or her observe the articles in the tray for a minute.

* When a student comes back ask him/her to recall the objects observed and then write down the names of the objects he/she can recall.

* Ask them to share one by one how many articles each of them could recall.

* Have a discussion on the objects each student could recall, it is quite possible that a girl could recall stationary articles and a boy cosmetics and household articles. Give positive reinforcement for the type of articles they could recall, saying statements like:

* "It seems that Ram helps his parent's in house hold work. That is why he could recall more of household articles".

* "Sunita has a keen interest in studies that is why she could recall more of stationery articles".

* Ask the student to reflect and share why they were able to recall those specific items

Learning Outcomes

* Improvement in the skill of observation

* Improvement in the ability to recall

* Exploration of area of interest of students

* Learning about diverse types of objects we come across in our surroundings and their use.

* Removal of gender role stereotyping.

Activity 3: Think-Pair-Share

Think pair share starts with the individual and finishes with the whole group.

* Provide the group/class a topic like "how essential is water" or "road safety".

* Ask students to recall and write down points about what they already know about the topic.

* Ask students to make a pair with another student. Make sure that the pair includes a girl and a boy.

* Ask each pair to share their current understanding to reach an agreement.

- Finally ask them to share this information with the whole class, make sure that both boys and girls participate in the process of sharing.

Learning Outcomes

- Enhances thinking

- Sharing of knowledge

- Development of communication skills

- Equal participation of boys and girls

- Brings out a boy's and a girl's perspective on different issues and they learn from each other's experiences

Activity 4: Introduce Your Partner

- For a class of 20 make 20 slips. Take two slips at a time and write opposite words like Black-white, Day-night, Brother-sister etc. Put each of the slip in separate container.

- Ask boys of the class to pick up slips from one container and the girls from another one.

- Ask students to read the word written on the slip and find out the student who is having the slip upon which opposite word is written.

- This way you will have 10 pairs of a boy and a girl in each.

- Tell the pair to ask the following questions to each other.

  Your name

  Your father's name

  Your mother's name

  Number of siblings you have

  What does each member of your family do?

  Your hobbies, interest, likes, dislikes etc.

  Anything else they feel like asking

- Now ask all the pairs to introduce each other based on the conversation they had.

Learning outcomes of the Activity

- Rapport building

- Provides concrete learning experiences in Environmental Studies on the topics like "my family", "a day in my life", "my neighbourhood" etc.

- Improvement in communication skill.

- Improvement in socio-personal skills like sharing, cooperation and respect for each other.

6.10 LET US SUM UP

Feminist standpoint theorists make three principal claims: (1) Knowledge is socially situated. (2) Marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalized. (3) Research particularly that focuses on power relations should begin with the lives of the marginalized. It has been one of the most influential and debated theories to emerge from second-wave feminist thinking. Feminist standpoint theories place relations between political and social power and knowledge center-stage. These theories are both descriptive and normative, describing and analyzing the causal effects of power structures on knowledge while also advocating a specific route for enquiry, a route that begins from standpoints emerging from shared political struggle within marginalized lives. Feminist standpoint theories emerged in the 1970s, in the first instance from Marxist feminist and feminist critical theoretical approaches within a range of social science disciplines. They thereby offer epistemological and methodological approaches that are specific to a variety of disciplinary frameworks, but share a commitment to acknowledging, analyzing and drawing on power/knowledge relationships, and on bringing about change which results in more just societies. Feminist scholars working within many disciplines—such as Dorothy Smith, Nancy Hartsock, Hilary Rose, Sandra Harding, Patricia Hill Collins, Alison Jaggar and Donna Haraway—have advocated taking women's lived experiences, particularly experiences of (caring) work, as the beginning of scientific enquiry. Central to all these standpoint theories are feminist analyses and critiques of relations between material experience, power, and epistemology, and of the effects of power relations on the production of knowledge.

6.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Why do issues relating to gender and other social inequalities relating to caste, class, race, and ethnicity need to be addressed through education?

2. What are the challenges ahead in addressing social inequalities relating to caste, class, race and ethnicity, through education?

6.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Primary standpoints are traditional standpoints, being self-generated from direct experiences of marginalization. Those occupying secondary standpoints, however, do not have direct access to experiences of marginalization and are accordingly grounded in primary standpoint agents.

2.   This is because of the dissimilarities in circumstances in which these two sets of people live.

3.   The Hidden Curriculum implies, organizational arrangements, including, rituals and practices in everyday school life like segregated seating, separate lines for girls and boys, or having them form separate teams, differential task assignment and sexual division of labour in school.

6.13   REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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