MWG-002: Gender and Power
Guess Paper-1

Q1. What is capitalist patriarchy

Ans. It is important in this discussion to also examine some of the ways in which patriarchy has been used in the contemporary world, including so-called advanced societies such as Britain or the US. Otherwise we run into the danger of supposing that patriarchies only existed in older civilisations and that the term has little use in the present time. But this is not the case. During the 1970s, a number of feminists who were also Marxists, and were therefore interested in looking at capitalist social relations, came up with the notion of a "capitalist patriarchy". These were among the earliest explicit efforts on the part of scholars who were very active in both left and women's movements to theorize the nature of women's oppression by drawing from existing theories of Marxism and the new efforts to understand male domination. These feminists have looked for ways to integrate Marxism and feminism in terms of finding the relationships between a capitalist class structure and hierarchical sexual structures. In order to proceed, they begin with an account of Marxist class analysis: In its barest form, the class relation beween the capitalist and the worker has been theorised in two complementary ways: in its economic form as a structure of exploitation, and secondly as a form of consciousness about their condition as workers, thus implying the potential of change through political struggle. Thus, the fact that marxism embodied both a theory of society and a politics has made it very attractive to feminists, who have undertaken analogous investigations into the position of women. They criticise Marx's writings for having very little to say about women, though acknowledging the efforts of someone like Engels. An important point made by the socialist feminist Zillah Eisenstein in her edited volume Capitalist Patriarchy and the case for Socialist Feminism (1979), is to distinguish between the worker (whether man or woman) under capitalism and the woman in the household. Workers are exploited in the workplace (by the capitalist factory owner or the landlord) by paying them wages that are less than the value of the labour they do, so that the surplus goes to the owner. However, most women are dependent for their livelihood and security on a specific set of social relations, defined by marriage and motherhood, and their daily work takes place in the context of these relations. In this situation where women are working in the home but not being paid wages, the nature of their domination in the household is similar and different to that of someone engaging in paid work. It is similar in so far as she has to labour for others – typically she will be engaging in all kinds of housework, cooking, cleaning, looking after children and all those who need care, including her husband and others living with them, – but does not receive the just value for this work. She gives much more than she receives in terms of her own needs, care and protection. This relationship is not very easy to define, and has been called a relationship of patriarchal oppression by feminists. It should be obvious why it is so difficult to name, because firstly, most women do not think of themselves as workers, since they are not being paid a wage, and secondly, because their labour is interwoven with notions of love, care and duty to the family – typically towards their husband, children and others who may be living with them. Calling this relationship one of oppression has therefore been a major theoretical and political statement on the part of feminists, and allowed many women to realize that the long hours of drudgery they performed everyday, which is taken for granted by others, deserves to be called work, as much as any work performed for a wage. Think, too, of the double shift of domestic workers, who labour in other people's homes and then have to undertake housework in their own homes as well. There has been considerable debate by feminists about how to understand the work that women perform in the home, and therefore its relation with the nature of patriarchy. Should women then be paid just wages for this kind of work as a step forward? Or would this only serve to further confine them to the home? Is the solution to transform housework in a social activity, such as through collective kitchens, creches for children and so on, so that women no longer have to undertake this kind of work alone and can be freed up like men to work elsewhere? What about the domestic work of servants, who receive some of the worst wages ever to be paid to a worker anywhere?

Q2. Discuss about contextualizing sex and gender

Ans. Who hasn't heard about the difference between sex and gender? At least in the English-speaking world, the sex-gender distinction has probably become one of the most well-known aspects of feminism. Once you have even a bit of familiarity with feminism and women's studies you would almost certainly have come across these terms. At one level, they are easy to distinguish – sex refers to the biological differences between male and female bodies, while gender refers to everything else that goes into making us "men" and "women" – social and cultural processes, economic and political structures. However, as this unit will try and help you understand, questions of sex and gender turn out to be not so simple or obvious at all, and have become some of the most hotly debated concepts in feminist theory. First of all, let us notice that the actual terms themselves – sex and gender – exist in this way only in the English language. No other language – whether French or German, Tamil, Hindi or Chinese — has two terms that refer to the biological and social differences of the two sexes. The sexgender distinction is thus different from the previous term we had discussed, namely patriarchy, a term which did not offer such difficulties of translation. The distinctions between "biology" and the "social" have also been approached in much related ways. The most common pair of terms to have been used is nature and culture. These two terms have also played an extremely significant role in feminist theorizing. Let us begin this unit with some background information on the terms sex and gender. The term sex has of course a long history of being used to refer to men and women (apart from its second meaning which has to do with sexual activity). Think of how the term was used in classic texts like Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1972), written at the end of the 18th century in England. Wollstonecraft uses the notion of sex in order to discuss and criticise the entire process that went into making "women" different from "men", which today we might call processes of social construction. Wollstonecraft believed that women were brought up to be the weaker sex unlike men who were granted the capacity for rational thought and political action. Or again, take the famous work of the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex (written in France in the 1949 and translated into English in 1955), which has been another classic treatise on the nature of women's oppression in society and history. So, in the history of feminist thought we have those who did not see any reason to make a distinction between biological sex and social gender, and used the term sex to make their arguments. The term gender has a very different history. It originates in grammar and linguistics – where it originally only referred to the use of different genders in particular languages, and had no other connotations. Thus, for instance, chair in Hindi has a feminine gender, and the sun in Hindi has a masculine gender, and so on. Different languages have different patterns of gender in this way. English is not as strongly gendered in the way German and French are. Among Indian languages it would be interesting to look at their grammatical gender uses, as there is considerable variation. It is, therefore, noteworthy that for the first time in the 1950s, certain American psychologists, followed by sociologists, used the term gender to connote the gender identity of human beings. They made a sharp contrast between the biological notions of male and female (such as genital differences, chromosomal or hormonal differences) and the way we get our sense of who we are as boys and girls or men and women. Some of these psychologists argued that it mattered very little what exact biological characteristics a particular body might have – what really mattered was how such a child was socialised by their family and by society more broadly

Q3. Discuss about the concept of the paradox of gender

Ans. The Paradox of Gender: Let us now look at another way of discussing the problems with the sexgender system which can be called the paradox of gender. Consider for a moment some of the major aspects that are involved in the biological distinction of the sexes – for example, while the body size of men and women show considerable internal variation, on average, male bodies are somewhat more muscular and taller than female bodies. (This has been the basis for making sharp distinctions between men and women in the field of sports for instance.) Another anatomical and physiological difference has to be with procreation – it is women as a sex who can bear children as a consequence of sexual intercourse with men. Till about the mid nineteenth century in western societies and till the

middle of the twentieth century in countries like India, women had, on average, very high rates of fertility, giving birth to many children in the course of their reproductive lives. As a consequence, women under these conditions also experienced high rates of child mortality and maternal mortality. In such situations, where everyday life was subjected to considerable uncertainties and physical hardship for the vast majority, both men and women would have had to endure the consequences of their biological vulnerabilities to a considerable degree. This condition was to change substantially only well after the rise of capitalism and colonialism, the consequent creation of wealth in western societies of a scale unprecedented, the expansion of cities as new sites of production, including the gradual increase in standards of living. Correspondingly, for reasons that are not entirely clear, western families underwent major transformations, especially among the new middle classes, so that by the end of the nineteenth century families had far fewer children and, under improved conditions of public health, mortality rates also came down. Moreover, children started attending schools in increasing numbers. The nature of work also changed – with productive labour moving outside the household into factories and offices in urban areas, and agricultural production being the province of smaller and smaller proportions of people. With all these developments a plausible argument could be made that the significance of biological difference – childbirth for women and physical strength for men no longer enjoyed much social significance. Women had more opportunities to engage in new kinds of work, married at later ages or stayed single, did not have to be worn out by repeated child birth and childcare. Work was increasingly technologised. Coming back to the paradox of gender: the differences of gender – that is to say, beliefs about the roles of women and men and the corresponding sexual division of labour, political rights for men and their denial to women, the division between public and private realms of society, and so on – were maximised precisely at this time. Thus, the new
middle-class home in the nineteenth century was reinvented to become a space of love and care, (unlike the pre-industrial household of the peasant, the merchant or the artisan where economic production was central), so much so that production was now associated with public life. Women were thought of as inherently weak and incapable of rational thought or the exercise of political rights, whose primary duties were the care of the home as wives and mothers – middle class men were, on the other hand, rational, public and political. It has therefore been said that a kind of bipolar gender regime was sought to be created during this era. In other words, precisely when the significance of basic biological distinctions ware reducing, gendering was increasing. This is understood by the paradox of gender and its normative structures

Q4. Write short notes on the following

1. **MASCULINITY AND THE BODY**
2. **RECENT SCHOLARSHIP ON MASCULINITY IN INDIA**

Ans. Masculinity and the Body: In common sense understanding of gender performances, it was assumed that the body is not central to men's ways of looking at themselves. Grooming was seen as the preserve of women, and it was assumed that material conditions were more important as far as men are concerned. It is also a common perception that in recent years men have been much more openly interested in their looks. This thinking is based on the explosion of images of well-groomed men in advertisements in various media, popular cinema and so on. Men who are comfortable with these images of themselves have been given the name 'metro sexual man' by the popular media – a term which has had a short but visible life. Most of these men, undoubtedly, are urban. Men's interest in fashion is not just a recent phenomenon as discussions of metro sexual men indicate. The lower class-caste aspirations have often been visualized through fashion statements. Though the dominant cultures have thought of such performances of masculinity as tasteless, the political significance of such performances needs to be underscored. A good example of such an analysis could be found in the discussion of the Tamil film Kaadalan (dubbed into Hindi as Humse Hai Muqqabala, directed by Shankar, 1994) by Tejaswini Niranjana and Vivek Dhareshwar. They contrast the representation of Dalit male body, which displays and performs consumerism and fashion, with the modernist

'tasteful' style of the upper caste hero of Mani Ratnam's Roja. The fashioning of the body of the Dalit man is read here as determined by its location in the hierarchies of caste and frames of fantasies that it engenders (Niranjana and Dhareshwar 2000). It is an ordering of consumption and of fashion as legitimate and illegitimate that makes for the different kinds of visibilities of the body of Prabhu Deva (the hero of Kaadalan) and that of the metro sexual man. In many cultures the muscled and chiseled body is seen as a significant attribute of hegemonic masculinity. The significance of this imagery needs to be underscored, without forgetting the pitfalls of universalist assumptions of hegemony, that we discussed earlier. From the wrestler's body to the six and eight packs of Shahrukh Khan and Amir Khan respectively, such a representation is common around us. In this way of thinking about ideal forms of masculinity, the visual aspect becomes very central. Judith Halberstam (1998) argues for the need to delink the assumed relationship between the visual component of masculinity and its relationship with the male body. Discussing images from American literary and film culture, she suggests that the normalized link between masculinity and the male body needs to be challenged. Men and women are often marginalized on the basis of them not conforming to visual frameworks of masculinity and femininity. She further discusses how gender is troubled by the everyday performances of cross dressing and transgender communities

Recent Scholarship on Masculinity in India: 'Masculinity' has become a central area of concern for researchers in India in the last decade. Unlike the earlier work that was historical in nature, recent research seems to favor the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. These studies are mostly ethnographic in nature and attempt to shed light on aspects of masculinity that have hitherto received scant attention. Most of these works centralize the experiences of men as gendered beings and talk about the nature of the intersection of power and powerlessness in their everyday lives. Sanjay Srivastava's research on working class masculinities in urban India is significant in this regard. He looks at the specific modes by which sexuality is negotiated in the metropolis in the context of consumption practices, with examples from pornography and popular magazines, and institutions like sex clinics. (Srivastava 2004, 2007). Other significant works in the area of men and masculinities are those of Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella on the practices of masculinity in Kerala (Osella and Osella, 2006), Deepak Mehta on communal conflicts, archives and masculinity and on the body, ritual and masculinity (Mehta, 2000) and Radhika Chopra on supportive practices among men (Chopra, 2003). Another significant domain of research on masculinity has focused on popular representations in cinema (Vasudevan, 2004 and Gabriel, 2004) and calendar art (Jain, 2004). T Muraleedharan's work on homosociality in the films of the Malayalam star Mohanlal (Muraleedharan, 2001) and his subsequent work on the subversive play of homoerotic desire in Malayalam films (Muraleedharan, 2005) alerted us to the interesting ways in which dominant texts could be read against the grain by using political standpoints. His work suggests that popular culture is often laden with material for analysis of marginal masculinities and marginal desires. A series of seminars under the title 'Exploring Masculinities: South Asian Traveling Seminar' were organized by the documentary filmmaker Rahul Roy for AAKAR (New Delhi) and supported by UNIFEM. The seminars were held in a number of locations in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. Apart from making two significant documentaries on the question of masculinity, Rahul Roy has also written 'A little Book on Men' which introduces the concept of masculinity.

Q5. Write down about colonial ordering of gender and the public/private dichotomy in India in detail.

Ans. One of the earliest works that critically used the concept 'masculinity' in India was by Ashis Nandy, who argued that British colonialism should be understood as the employment of the masculine power over the feminine (Nandy, 1983, p. 4-11). Nandy argues that the colonial ordering of sexual difference was based on an understanding that purushatva (manliness) was superior to naritva (womanliness), which in turn is superior to klibatva (femininity in men) (Nandy, 1983, p. 52). Gandhi on the other hand, argues and understood sexual difference as naritva being superior to purushatva, which in turn is superior to kapurusatva (failure of masculinity) (Nandy, 1983, p. 53). Nandy further

argues that, whereas earlier nationalist movements like Tilaks's, (who attempted to resurrect Shivaji), tried to articulate indigenous masculinities in opposition to colonial machismo, Gandhi tried to elevate femininity as the foundation for his anti-colonial politics. Nandy's work has been critiqued by many scholars as being essentialist in that it attributes gender to the colonizer and the colonized in a stable and unchanging way and by positing a binary of masculine/feminine to represent another problematic binary of West/East. Taking issue with Nandy's position, Mrinalini Sinha argues that it is indeed a fact that colonialism operated by continuously negotiating notions of masculinity but that it would be fallacious to think of these notions as fixed (Sinha, 1995). The attempt to theorize masculinity as a site for political negotiations helps Sinha present topography of 'masculinity', which by definition cannot be thought of as singular. For her, "... colonial masculinity points towards the multiple axes along which power was exercised in colonial India; among or within the colonizers or the colonized as well as between colonizers and colonized" (Sinha, 1995). Another contribution of Sinha's work is the idea that masculinities are not fixed; rather they need to be asserted and performed again and again. She takes up some of the key controversies in colonial India during the last decades of the nineteenth century such as the debates around the Age of Consent Bill to argue that notions of masculinity governed colonial relationships in India. She provides a historical map textured with the history of first wave feminism and the discussion on homosexuality in Britain, by suggesting that, "the figures of the 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate babu' were thus constituted in relation to colonial Indian society as well as to some of the following aspects of late nineteenth century British society: the emergence of the 'New Woman'; the 'remaking of the working class'; the legacy of 'internal colonialism'; The culturalist formulation, a la Nandy, has been forwarded for the study of masculinity outside the colonial period. These works set out to discuss male subjectivities and end up producing grand narratives of Indian masculinity based on sweeping generalizations. For instance, amidst easy slippages from 'Indian sexuality' to 'Hindu sexuality', Sudhir Kakkar argues that it is in the struggle between lust and celibacy that male subjectivities are formed in India (Kakkar, 1989). He claims that the mother becomes at once the desired and the dreaded in this narrative (Kakkar, 1989, p.129- 140). However, the argument favoring an 'intrinsic character' for 'Indian masculinity' appears to break down if we attempt an unorthodox juxtaposition of the argument with the work of historians such as Tanika Sarkar who have looked at a similar mother-son dynamic as deployed by the nationalist discourse. Here the deployment serves to imagine the 'mother nation' in the form of the Mother Goddess rather than present itself as a cultural trait of Indian masculinity Kakkar's argument suffers from his reliance on the truth-value of the narratives (the testimonies of his patients) that he is analyzing, and from his lack of attention to the historical locations in relation to the contexts of such tropes. He also presents the anxiety about the loss of semen as an important constituent element in this narrative. The latter argument, one that is now commonly referred to as 'semen anxiety', has been central to many studies on notions of masculinity in India, especially in an important work on wrestling (Alter, 1992). The explanatory frameworks that are employed in these writings seem to be based on a misplaced belief in the central role played by Hinduism in shaping male subjectivities in India. These works, in attempting to explain a cultural construct with more or less essentialist ideas about Indian culture and psyche, miss out on the complexity of everyday structures of gendered performances that exist outside of, and at times even untouched by, nationalist or culturalist discourses. The earliest writings on masculinity in the context of India were within the discipline of history. Works on modern history have effectively suggested ways in which notions of masculinity (and indeed, femininity) were important nodes for the organization of power in the colonial context. One of the most significant of these is the work of Partha Chatterjee, who has argued that the disappearance of the 'women's question' in the mid nineteenth century was caused by a discursive organizing in the nationalist framework, of the 'public' and the 'private' as masculine and feminine domains respectively (Chatterjee, 1989). He further argues that the separation of spatial domains was affected by constructing a series of binaries such as material/spiritual (or, cultural), world/home etc. to populate the binary between the masculine and feminine domains. This allowed the nationalists to argue for spiritual/cultural superiority while

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