
UNIT 1 RACE AND GENDER

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Learning Objectives



After having read this unit, you should be able to:

- understand race and gender as forms of social stratification;
- understand the relation between race and gender inequalities and emergence of black feminism;
- appreciate the social construction of race and gender inequalities;
- understand the relation between race, caste and gender; and
- understand the origin of prejudice based on race and gender.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the linkage between race and gender, it will be relevant to discuss how gender studies grew as a separate area of study and what circumstances led to the inclusion of race in gender studies. This introduction will set the stage for deeper understanding of the two related concepts of race and gender. Establishment of gender studies as a separate area of study is not very old. It was in the latter half of 1960s that the discipline of gender studies got established in universities as separate area of study. This was a logical outcome of the feminist movement that aimed at demolishing the male hegemony and ensuring equal opportunities for women in the backdrop of male dominance. However, the feminist movement and its academic wing throughout its history has not been a homogeneous movement. It can be broadly divided into two time frames- i) from 1960s to 1980s and ii) from 1980s to the present. During the first part, where it emerged and got consolidated as an important field of study, feminism was concerned more with the difficulties and discrimination faced by 'white' women in the USA and Europe at the hands of male dominated society

of the west. It was the period when three different forms of feminist movements took birth. These were liberal feminism, marxist feminism and radical feminism. Liberal feminism focused more on individual rights, equal opportunities, legal and policy changes that are required to bring about a change in the status of women. Marxist feminism was concerned with the impact of capitalism on gender relations. Major issues raised under this branch was of the lower wages given to women workforce as compared to men and the issue of unpaid domestic work that women were obliged to do as primary care taker of the family. Radical feminism on the other hand dealt with the fundamental question of patriarchy as the basis of male dominance and women subjugation. Feminist anthropology as a separate discipline also emerged during mid 1970s and was largely concerned with the issues highlighted above since it got influenced- like other disciplines- by the feminist movement (Maynard, 2005).

However, after around 20 years of its existence, it was realised that the entire movement is highly skewed towards the experiences of women as a homogeneous group. Women as a social category are not homogeneous. There are different categories within this division that are based on race, religion, region, caste, class, etc. and this gave rise to the idea of “difference” that provided a new direction to gender studies. It was recognised that experiences of women are not homogeneous and different categories of women stated above have different experiences to share. It is in this backdrop that studies started with an aim to understand how gender is related with other social categories like race, caste, religion, region, etc. and how these categories influence and shape gender experiences (Maynard, 2005; Afshar and Maynard, 2003).

1.2 RACE AND GENDER AS FORMS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Race and gender as social constructs can be located against the backdrop of a fundamental conception of social stratification. Every society in this world is stratified on the basis of an underlying principle like sex, race, caste, income, etc. Societies, whether modern or traditional have either some or a combination of many factors that become a basis for stratification. The central idea in stratification is that, it is based on a criterion or a number of criteria that runs as a thread over which people are ranked or differentiated. Now, a fundamental question arises why we call it social stratification and not stratification only? The answer to this basic question could be found in the idea of social itself. Simply stated, social is something which is neither individual, nor physical or psychological. The underlying meaning of this assertion suggests that social signifies collectivity. It signifies collective mind. In every society there are largely two domains that operate- personal domain and social domain. The personal domain signifies individual’s thoughts and action whereas the social domain reflects the group’s thought and actions. Any system of stratification, when recognised at the group and community level then it takes the shape of social. Therefore when we talk about social stratification it means that the system of stratification gets reflected in society and has obtained some collective recognition and practice. In other words, a system of stratification can be called social only when it is visible in the society. The concept of visibility is the hallmark of social stratification. This visibility can be in terms of lifestyle followed by different groups, their language, religion, physical features and people’s perception and

behaviour towards each other that is shaped by these differences. To give an example race and gender are both based on differences that are visible at the level of physical features and secondary sexual characteristics and on this basis people's behaviour is shaped towards different racial and gender categories. Therefore, visibility can be defined at two levels- at the level of visible differences and at the level of people's perception and behavior pattern based on these differences (Gupta, 1991).

The concept of social stratification envisages two fundamental categories that help in defining social stratification viz., hierarchy and difference. These two concepts of hierarchy and difference are fundamental to the concept of social stratification. As you may have noticed around you that there are stark differences between different people, groups and communities that may be based either on their income, lifestyle, dressing pattern, sex, color of skin etc. Especially in the Indian context, these differences are manifested in many other domains as well like language, religion, caste etc. These differences, when arranged in the order of hierarchy, or ranked, take the shape of social stratification. Famous sociologist Pitrim Sorokin defined social stratification as “the differentiation of a given population into hierarchically super-posed classes. It is manifested in the existence of upper and lower layers. Its basis and very essence consists in an unequal distribution of rights and privileges....social power and influences among the member of a society (Sorokin, 1967).” This definition points towards an important dimension of social stratification where it is perceived as a system in which rights and privileges are unequally distributed. The idea of inequality is found ingrained in the idea of social stratification and this is what we have been seeing in often coated examples of social stratification viz., caste and class, where on the basis of social differences based on birth, purity of body and wealth accumulation, population is ranked into layers and people falling in different layers have different sets of opportunities, privileges and rights. One important point should be made clear that although these differences are neither supported nor patronised by the state which is based on the principle of equality but still in the social realm, differentiation and unequal distribution of rights and privileges exist. The same logic can be extended to other forms of social stratification viz- race and gender (Gupta, 1991).

After understanding the idea of social stratification, now we move towards delineating the concept of race and gender in the backdrop of the great debate of whether these categories are socially constructed or have a biological basis of differentiation.

1.3 RACE AND GENDER AS SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS

We all must have experienced that every human being is not morphologically similar. There are differences in our body types (phenotypes) and genetic constitution (genotype). People inhabiting different geographical areas exhibit differences in some basic physical characteristics. What accounts for these differences, is the basic question one needs to ask? “Through the process of natural selection and genetic drift, populations inhabiting different geographic regions will come to exhibit some differences in biological traits. When differences within a species become sufficiently noticeable, biologists may classify

different populations into different varieties or races.” (Ember and Ember, 2002) On the basis of this definition there are broadly three racial types in the world- Negroid, Caucasoid and Mongoloid. However, anthropologists have classified different populations into many groups. Even in the Indian sub-continent, we may find different racial groups based on their physical traits. If the term would have only accounted for these physical differences then there would have been no controversy whatsoever. But the concept of physical variation is also attached with value judgments of superiority and inferiority. A concept that has provided important insights for the theory of origin of human species and their spread across the world (Bhasin and Bhasin, 2002) has fallen into disrepute after its association with judging human behavior based on physical traits.

A question which arises is- whether race is a biological or a social construct? Anthropologists contend that the idea of race and racism is social in nature. Racism is a belief that some groups of people are genetically superior and some are inferior in basic human capabilities. Besides this, the idea of race is filled with prejudice and bias. Is there any biological basis for such belief? The answer to this question is NO. It has been demonstrated, both historically and biologically that all human beings have the same overall human potentials and capabilities. People all across the world, irrespective of their different morphological features have produced rich cultures. However, people still hold this belief that morphological features (basically skin color) and human behavior is linked. This kind of prejudice and ethnocentric bias is the basis of racial discrimination. People who are believed to be belonging to an inferior race are discriminated against their so-called superior counterparts. It is due to this reason that the concept of race has become derogatory and the word itself elicits negative connotation.

Social stratification based on racial categories has also been studied by applying the analogy of caste to understand the racial discrimination. Most influential work in this area is that of Lloyd Warner who studied caste and class in the United States and asserts that the discrimination and difference between the races and classes in United States resemble caste characters as in the case of India. Therefore ‘black’s and ‘white’s should be regarded more as castes rather than races or classes. The notion of superiority and inferiority as seen in the case of caste categories is similar to those seen in racial categories. There have been some ethnographic studies in the United States during the 1950s that clearly shows that ‘black’ and ‘white’ racial categories do not inter-marry. The basis of caste perpetuation rests on the rule of endogamy that is marrying within one’s own caste. This kind of consideration, when made evident in racial relations gives it a shape of caste. Gunnar Myrdal in 1940s has contrasted between ‘black’ and ‘white’ racial categories with that of caste categories and came to the conclusion that these so-called racial categories are basically caste categories because they are more socially defined than having a base in biology (Beteille, 1991).

This debate of social vs. biological determinism of social stratification holds legitimacy in the special cases of race and gender as forms of stratification systems. Division of society on the basis of race and gender and the subsequent discriminatory attitude towards the categories that are placed at a lower level in the hierarchy is determined socially, although biological differences are quite visible. Sometimes these biological differences can be arbitrarily linked to characters of specific groups and hence provide a basis for discrimination. One of the path-breaking researches in this direction that influenced feminist research

in anthropology during the 1970s was that of David M. Schneider. Schneider's book *American Kinship- A Cultural Account* dealt with the question that whether kinship relations are determined by blood (biology) or culture? He argued that kinship is rooted less in biology and more in culture. This argument was carried forward to its logical conclusion by feminist anthropologists when they tried to demonstrate that like kinship categories gender is also rooted more in culture rather than in biology. Thus, a common thread that binds both race and gender is the contention that discriminations based on these categories of social stratification are determined more by social and cultural specificities rather than biological truths (Brodkin, 2006). This assertion will help us in appreciating the fact that social ranking of population according to these categories and interrelationship between people of different rank within these categories are a product of social structure and cultural values that reproduces such inequalities. There is no biological basis for such inequalities.

1.4 ORIGIN OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RACE AND GENDER

One might wonder why at all such discriminations and prejudices exist even when we know what the facts are. Answer to this question is rather complex in nature. One has to understand the ideological basis which historically advocated such biased views that later became incorporated into public consciousness and are hard to eliminate since other factors reinforce such beliefs. The growth of evolutionism as an ideology during the nineteenth century is at the base of racial discrimination. Evolutionists are largely divided into two camps- monogenesisist's and polygenesisist's. Monogenesisists were of the view that all human beings have a common origin whereas polygenesisists believed that different human groups are indeed different species and they do not have common origin and thus they differ from each other on certain basic premises of biology and culture. Even the monogenesisists were of the view that although origin is similar but few groups are superior to others. This ideology however was considered to be liberal at that point of time as compared to polygenesis. European travelers, missionaries and soldiers who were travelling to different places came across such groups that were stateless and having simple technology. This reinforced their superiority paradigm and formed a basis for supporting and glorifying colonialism (Barnard, 2004).

Similarly, gender discrimination is supposed to have consolidated with the concept of settled agriculture and private ownership of property (ownership of land mainly in the name of male members of the society). It is contended that stages of hunting and food gathering and shifting cultivation provided equal opportunity for both male and female members. The idea of common property resources (CPR) is in favour of gender equality. However with the emergence of settled and ploughing cultivation that was also labor intensive, the position of women started deteriorating and they were confined only to the domestic domain to look after the children and prepare food for the males. The idea of private property (ownership of land) and its transfer to the next generation gave rise to patriarchy which later became the single most influential factor in female subordination and suppression. "In settled agriculture, the man, as landowner, takes most decisions concerning production and division of work. In shifting cultivation

(and hunting, gathering) men and women share the burden....As a result, the division of work is more gender-friendly in shifting cultivation than in settled agriculture.” (Fernandes, 2006: 113,114). However, some scholars have criticised this hypothesis and instead made a point that female subordination is seen even before the advent of settled cultivation and private ownership of property. Gerda Lerner one of the pioneers in the study of gender relations in her book- *The Creation of Patriarchy* contends that control over the female sexuality and reproductive capacity is seen even among the hunter gatherers and tribal societies. Women were an object of exchange during wars and conflicts and this fact entails their subordination and suppression (Lerner, 1986). However, one thing can be said with some amount of surety that private ownership of property and settled cultivation has brought in new dimensions of gender inequality and discrimination when compared to common property resources and its implications on gender relations. But still, this will remain a conjecture and one needs to dig in deeper for better understanding of its origin.

These early factors set the stage for prejudice and discrimination, but many other factors also contribute towards such practices. Researchers have pointed towards the role of conflict between scarce resources and competing groups for such resources as the basis for generating prejudice towards certain groups. Similarly, stereotypes play an important role in generating prejudices. Stereotypes are the beliefs that we have about the capabilities and characters of certain groups, they are the dominant traits that characterise a group and can be accurate or inaccurate. For example we consider women as warm, emotional, kind, sensitive, weak, friendly, gentle, etc. and this forms our basis for behavior towards them. These stereotypes help in the formation of glass ceiling above which certain groups are prohibited to expand. Besides this the role of social learning plays very important role in maintaining the prejudice. Through the process of social learning we learn about people’s attitude towards certain groups and behaviors that should be portrayed at different situations and while interacting with different groups (Baron and Branscombe, 2006).

1.5 TOWARDS A UNIFIED UNDERSTANDING OF RACE AND GENDER

Studies on race and gender started off separately. Before studying the interaction between the two categories, research on these issues were independent from each other and advancement of research in one area did not influence the research in the other. Studies on race as a social category and a system of stratification developed in the backdrop of racial discrimination of “black’s” by the “white’s.” Such studies focused on the kind of interaction between the two categories of ‘black’ and ‘white’. Scholars such as W.E.B. Dubois, E. Franklin Frazier, Robert E. Park and Louis Wirth wrote extensively between 1920s to 1950s on the issue of race relations and interactions (Maynard, 2003). In the field of anthropology, with the advent of urban anthropology as a separate discipline, studies on immigrants to urban settlement began and within this scholars tried to understand race relations between the racially different immigrants. The entire process of colonisation was based on the concept of racial superiority and “white’ man’s burden to civilize the world.’ Historical records provide a testimony to such racial discriminations and such historical accounts also formed a large part of the literature on race. But all these accounts whether historical, anthropological

and sociological were confined largely and towards the male members of the society and they grossly neglected the domestic domain or the presence of women in the public domain, where the forces of patriarchy has traditionally oppressed the “second sex.” Similarly, gender studies were carried out within the framework of universalised notion of suppression of women as a homogeneous category by the males. Sometimes, however a comparison was made between the gender relations among the tribal societies with the gender relations among the non-tribal societies where it was contended that with the destruction of community ownership of property and the idea of common property resources (CPR) and with the advent of the concept of eminent domain (private property) the egalitarian character of gender relations was also destroyed which was once supposed to be the hallmark of tribal societies. However the notion of race as a variable in gender relations did not find much ground before 1980s.

The idea of understanding difference in experience across women of different racial backgrounds had some bearing on methodological issues in conducting research. The branch of study which is now established as a separate discipline of gender studies had to bring a shift in its research methodology. The whole issue of ‘difference in experiences’ called for a qualitative research method based on collection of diverse narratives and analysing these narratives using ‘content analysis’ and ‘grounded theory.’ The theoretical tradition that guided such research can be found in post-modernism. This theoretical tradition emerged as a school of thought based on the premise that there cannot be single theory to understand diverse human experiences. Post-modernists were basically anti-foundational in their approach and challenged the grand macro-theories like Marxism for being very generalising and thus missing out at nuances of diverse voices. Post-modernists emphasise at deconstructing the nature of gender oppression and how race acts and interacts with gender to produce an identity which becomes highly contested (Maynard, 2005).

The question of identity, its formation and persistence provides another analytical tool to understand the nature of interaction between race and gender. The concept of identity emanates from a simple question that ‘who am I’ or ‘who are we’. Every one of us has a consciousness of self and being part of a social group. This forms our self identity and social identity. Self is largely made up of one’s personality traits which are different from other individuals, however a social identity is formed after recognition of the fact that one belongs to a social group. Race and gender both are social categories which reproduce social groups whose members are aware that they are different from others or are made aware by attitudes people portray about such groups that generate a feeling of alienation among members of such groups that are oppressed and subordinated at various levels and occasions. For example a ‘black’ woman and a ‘black’ man have an identity different from that of a ‘white’ woman and a ‘white’ man. Such difference in identities is produced as a result of different social positions that are accorded to people belonging to different groups. Such identities are not only formed but they persist and gets perpetuated generation after generation through the process of socialisation. A ‘black’ girl will be socialised in an environment where she grows up seeing attitude and behavior of people towards her mother and such experiences are then internalised and hence transferred across generations. Similarly, the culture of oppression also gets perpetuated by internalising prejudices and discriminatory attitudes towards ‘black’ women and ‘black’ men (Afshar and Maynard, 2003).

1.5.1 'Black' Feminism

The emergence of research on perspectives relating to race and gender began with the criticism of 'white' feminism at the hands of 'black' feminist scholars. 'Black' feminist scholars contended that early feminism was overburdened with experiences of 'white' women which to a large extent were used in formulating hypothesis and theories. This gave rise to an entire body of literature that largely viewed gender through the lens of 'white' women. With this realisation, a new scholarly tradition and movement began that gave rise to the study of interrelationship between race and gender. Such studies focused on how race relationships are gendered. However, during its formative year's research largely focused on how race add to the experience of subordination among women. It was considered as if race simply adds on to the pre-existing subordinate position of women. This argument however later got elaborated to understand the qualitative difference in experiences of 'black' women and not just simple addition of race to gender oppression.

One of the pioneers in the field of 'black' feminism is Patricia Hill Collins who generated a great amount of data through research on the issue relating to race and gender. She focused on understanding how 'black' women became an object of oppression in almost every domain of public and private life. The underlining theme that binds race and gender together is the idea of social injustice and inequality. Research, particularly by 'black' feminist scholars, has pointed towards such inequality and injustice that needs to be highlighted and resolved for peaceful co-existence and a just world. One point needs to be understood clearly that the oppression and discrimination based on race and gender is not a discrete phenomenon rather such oppression and discrimination has been institutionalised. This means that the inequality is ingrained into the social structure and gets reflected at every stage. 'Black' women as a category have been a victim of racism in everyday situations like in workplace, stores, school, housing and daily social interactions. If understood through the vulnerability paradigm then it can be said that being 'black' and being a woman makes a person even more vulnerable against the forces of oppression and a kind of double jeopardy defines the situation. Historically it can be understood in terms of 'white' supremacy and male superiority that has been the norm and 'black' women have struggled to survive in such a contradictory and conflicting situation (Collins, 2000).

1.5.2 Ethnicity

The concept of race and ethnicity are sometimes used as synonyms but they differ when used within the academic discourse. Race can be defined in terms of visible physiological differences like skin color and body type, whereas when we talk of ethnicity then other cultural attributes like dress, language, lifestyle etc takes the center stage and thus a group of people showing similarities on these attributes is defined as an ethnic group. It is sometimes preferred to use ethnic group instead of race because of its integrating notion, like we often talk about multi-ethnic societies and multi-culturalism which gives importance to pluralism and co-existence. The concept of race and gender has been understood in terms of African 'black' woman and African-American woman and one will find good amount of literature on 'black' feminism but racial categories are not only understood in terms of 'white' and 'black' (that is Caucasoid and Negroid). There are other racial categories like Mongoloids that form not only a distinct racial category but a separate ethnic group as well with their own culture and

lifestyle. Likewise there can be other ethnic categories like Muslim women, Indian women, etc who have distinct cultural values and mores. The concept of ethnicity adds dynamism to the concept of race and hence opens up a wide range of possibilities to understand gender in it. Ethnicity provides a whole range of variables that can interact with gender like language, territory, culture etc. and thus can be analysed to understand the dynamics between race and gender or ethnicity and gender (Maynard, 2003).

1.6 GENDER AND RACE RELATIONS EXEMPLIFIED

Race and gender together interact to produce such situations where subjugation, oppression and subordination become key issues that need to be addressed. It has been documented and studies mainly by 'black' feminist scholars that 'black' women have always been on the receiving end both at the workplace and family. Issues related with their discrimination is highlighted when we underscore the fact that we often find them working at low wages and doing jobs that are to some extent not regarded as dignified and worth doing by 'white' females. Particularly in the United States where much of the work on 'black' feminism has taken place, 'black' women have always been objects of exploitation, being exploited at the hands of 'white' males and females alike. Studies have been conducted mainly at two sites that are considered to be important in understanding race and gender relations viz., paid domestic labor and unpaid family work. It has been found in both the cases black women are expected to work like mules without complaining to anyone. A majority of black women are employed as paid domestic workers, but their job profiles are looked down upon and are exploited due to lack of organisation in such employment sectors. It has been a central theme in understanding the relation between race and gender that at workplace black women are being victimised as mules and this has got ingrained into their psyche which is passed on to future generations by oral histories. Narratives and oral histories play an important role in the construction of prejudice and thus in the formation of a stressful situation among the victims. Such narratives have also become part of the popular culture and are depicted time and again through films and theatre which apart from bringing out the discriminatory attitude, also helps to organise women groups against common enemy and for equality and their rights. Studies among the domestic workers in South Africa, where black women form a major chunk of such work force, has revealed that they are also victims of worst form of violence (Collins, 2000).

Race and gender relations are not restricted to the United States alone but examples can also be cited from our homeland that is India where although racial discrimination is not at the center of affairs but examples that relate to such discriminatory attitudes do get reflected. If one looks at the historical records then one would find that the *varna* model of social stratification came with the coming of Aryans from the northwest region of the Indian sub-continent. The word *varna* itself denotes color as in '*gaur varna*' (white color) and '*shyama varna*' (black color). It has been argued that the Aryans were of *gaur varna* and the indigenous people of India were of *shyama varna*. This led Aryans to marry within their *varna* and thus such an endogamy was based on color. Even, the word caste is derived from the Portuguese word *Casta* which means race or descent (Kakar and Kakar, 2007). Again with the advent of British rule in India the Indian

population came in contact with people who later became their 'white masters.' As far as gender relations with race is concerned, even today people place great emphasis on their brides being fair in complexion. You can pick-up the matrimonial column of any newspaper and you will get to know that how much emphasis is put on the bride being fair. Even the corporate sector has exploited this tendency and is promoting products that ensure fairness of skin color. This is an example where gender is located against the backdrop of expected skin color for better job opportunities and marriage and fairness can ensure an overall positive response from the people around them. "Evidence of the pan-Indian preference for fair skin and a denigration bordering on scorn for the dark-skinned is all around us...Television commercials for 'Fair and Lovely' cream for women....the natural equation of light skin with nobility, beauty and high birth in proverbs, tales and legends; matrimonial in newspaper and on internet websites specifying 'fair' brides-all these are accepted as being in the natural order of things." (Kakar and Kakar, 2007: 36). Racism by definition is a belief that some groups are superior and some are inferior by virtue of their birth and in India although racism does not exist consciously (as it is in US and Europe) but unconsciously, discrimination which is the hallmark of racism can be seen and gender can be related with it.

Besides colour other examples from India itself exhibit where females of different racial stock are considered to be more vulnerable. There have been incidents where women have reported cases of sexual exploitation and eve-teasing which is related to a mistaken perception that women of certain area, group and racial character are morally weak and easy targets. Such behavior can be explained in terms of in-group and out-group feeling that is generated based on physiognomic traits and hence a perception that people of out-group possess negative traits whereas in-group people possess positive traits. However, this particular example comes closer to ethnicity and gender relationship.

Andre Beteille in his essay on race, caste and gender explains that how caste and racial discriminations can be situated against gender. There have been studies that compare caste with race which have already been mentioned earlier. However, we must now see that how gender is located within this matrix. It has been contended that caste is an endogamous group and inter-caste marriages are not allowed or looked down upon (however, this situation has changed in the past decade or so but still one can hear cases of honour killings) but there are two forms of marriage that are documented- *anuloma* and *pratiloma*. *Anuloma* marriage is a union of upper caste male with a lower caste female which to some extent is permissible but *pratiloma* is a union between a lower caste male with an upper caste female which is condemned in strongest possible way. These examples indicate that there is a control over the female sexuality and fertility. Purity of female sexuality is of utmost importance to the males and upper caste males want to protect it. This argument has been extended to understand race and gender relations. In racial terms a white male can marry a white female and also sometimes a black female. On the other hand a black male has a restricted choice over only to the black female. This example is quite similar to the *anuloma* and *pratiloma* form of marriage in caste groups. However the situation is changing and has changed considerably over the past decades but still this analysis provides an important tool to understand the relationship between race and gender (Beteille, 1991).

Erica Wheeler in her study has observed and experienced that mental health facilities needs to be shifted towards the black minority communities, especially women who find it difficult to properly use these services largely provided by 'whites'. She contends that this shift can only happen when a consciousness of a kind will develop among the black minority community to assert their rights of equality and dignity. This example points towards an important implication of studies on race and gender relations that they lead to some form of activism and political mobilisation among the victims of high-handedness of the dominant 'white-male' culture (Wheeler, 2003).

Activity

Create a community on your Facebook account for discussions on race and gender in the public domain. You can also share your views, poems, films, animations that depicts the relation between race and gender categories.

1.7 SUMMARY

In a nut-shell, it can be said that race and gender are social categories that can be defined in the context of societies that are stratified based on race and gender. These categories also interact and are interrelated with each other through the idea of 'difference'. This idea has given rise to a separate branch of study by the name- 'black feminism' which deals with the experiences of racially colored women. The concept of social justice, equality and peaceful co-existence will remain a casualty if such kinds of inequalities, prejudices and discriminations will be alive. It should be our collective effort to understand and work against such forces that take us towards such kinds of discriminatory attitudes. The following poetic expression summarises the interaction of race and gender in a very succinct and apt manner. It brings out the suffering and pain of women working in the unorganised domestic sector.

*We are called girls. We are called maids.
It is like we are small.
It is like we are children.*

*We are told what to do
We are told what to say
We are told what to think
We are told what to wear.
We are women. We are mothers.*

*Our bodies are strong from hard work.
Our hearts are big from suffering.*

*We struggle against hunger.
We struggle against poverty.
We struggle against sickness.
We struggle against suffering.
We are women. We are mothers.*

*Too much work can break our bodies.
Too much suffering can break our hearts.*

*Our problem is that we live alone.
Our problem is that we work alone.
Our problem is that we suffer alone.*

*But we find friendship if we meet together.
And we find answers if we talk together.
And we find strength if we work together.
And we find hope if we stand together.*

(Thula Baba, Raven 1987)¹

Note

¹ Quoted by *Bunie M. Matlanyane Sexwale* in her paper on Violence against women in South Africa bringing out the plight of black women engaged in domestic work and being victims of violence. RAVEN PRESS (1987) *Thula Baba*, Johannesburg.

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Suggested Reading

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Sample Questions

- 1) How do race and gender inequalities interrelate with each other?
- 2) Discuss the origin and perpetuation of race and gender inequalities.
- 3) Race and gender are social constructs. Explain.
- 4) Explain how race, caste and gender are interrelated.
- 5) Race and gender are forms of social stratification. Elaborate on this statement.

ILO/SEAPAT's OnLine Gender Learning & Information Module. Unit 1: A conceptual framework for gender analysis and planning. What is gender analysis? Gender roles. The following factors can shape and change gender roles: age. class. race. ethnicity. religion and other ideologies. According to Moser, it provides planners with the first key principle for a gender planning methodology that enables them to translate gender-awareness into a tool for planning practice. The following exercise in gender roles identification illustrates how the application of this concept can make visible previously invisible work. To quote Moser again, "the purpose of gender roles identification is not only to separate out the different tasks both men and women, and boys and girls do.