
UNIT 26 FEMINISM

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26.1 INTRODUCTION

The origins of the term feminism are not clear. There are several opinions, but the generally accepted version is that it was first used by the Utopian Socialist Charles Fourier in the 19th century, to refer to the question of equal rights for women. In the West, women emerged in the early 19th century as a distinct interest group, partly because by that time it was clear that the promise of equality made by the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries excluded women, and partly because the Industrial Revolution had led to the increasingly visible presence of women in public employment. The Woman Question emerged at about this time, articulating the questions arising from the exclusion of women from the fruits of Enlightenment Thought.

In other parts of the world, the emergence of this question in the public arena was in the context of anti-imperialist movements and struggles against feudal oppression. Thus, feminist

interventions in post-colonial societies had to engage with both the old oppression of tradition as well as the new oppression of colonialism.

Feminist theory and politics is marked by intense internal debates, and it is generally recognized by now that it would be more accurate to talk about "feminisms" in the plural, rather than one single feminism. Nevertheless, what all feminist positions share is a recognition that women are placed in an inferior position in society and that this hierarchy is based on gender. Further, although this hierarchy is justified on grounds of natural differences between men and women, feminists hold that it is in fact based on socio-cultural and economic power structures which have little to do with the biological difference between the sexes.

26.2 TYPES OF FEMINISM

Over a century of feminist thought and politics in different parts of the world has produced a rich body of work. The conventional analysis of feminist thought has tended to group it into three streams - liberal, socialist and radical feminism. *Liberal feminism* is understood to work within the framework of the liberal state, theorising equality, freedom and justice in the context of liberal philosophy, pointing out that these concepts are inadequate until the gender dimension is taken into account. *Socialist feminism* links women's oppression to class society, and their critique draws from the marxist categories of analysis, while simultaneously being critical of gender-blindness in marxist theory. *Radical feminism* theorises patriarchy as a system of male dominance independent of and prior to all other systems of domination - that is, in the radical feminist understanding, all other forms of exploitation and oppression are in a sense shaped by oppression based on sex, since that is historically the oldest form of oppression.

However, this outline does not capture the complexities of the debates within feminism, although it is a useful entry point into feminist theory, as long as these distinctions are not understood to be watertight compartments. In this chapter we will provide an introduction to some of the key issues in feminist thought, through an examination of three specific themes - a) patriarchy, b) the sex-gender distinction and c) critique of the public/private dichotomy - and different feminist positions on these issues,

26.3 PATRIARCHY

This term is central to feminist analysis, and refers to an overarching system of male dominance.

26.3.1 Views of Kate Millet

Kate Millet, one of the earliest radical feminists to use the term in the 1970s, developed on sociologist Max Weber's conception of domination to argue that throughout history the relationship between the sexes has been one of domination and subordination, in which men have exercised domination in two forms - through **social authority** and *economic force*. The emphasis is on patriarchy as a *system*, to establish that men's power over women is not an individual phenomenon, but is part of a structure.

26.3.2 Gerda Lerner's Views

The historian Gerda Lerner defines patriarchy thus: "the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance

over women in society in general.. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions 'in society and that women are deprived of access to such power.' This does not mean that every individual man is always in a dominant position and that every individual woman is always in a subordinate position. What it does mean is that under patriarchy there is an ideology that men are superior to women, that women are the property of men and that women should be under the control of men.

26.3.3 Control over Women's Sexuality and Labour Power

Apart from the control of women's sexuality under patriarchy through the strictly policed institution of monogamous marriage, women's labour power is also controlled by men. Women's productivity within the household and outside is controlled by men who will determine whether women will work outside the household or not. To maintain this *control over women's sexuality and labour*, they are deprived of access to and ownership of productive resources, which makes them entirely dependent on men. Further, their mobility is limited through rules and norms that confine women within strictly defined spaces.

26.3.4 Different Forms

Patriarchy takes different forms in different geographical regions and different historical periods. For instance, as the historian Uma Chakravarty has pointed out, the experience of patriarchy is not the same among tribal women as among women in highly stratified caste society. It is not the same today as it was in the 19th century, and it is not the same in India as it is in the industrialised countries of the West. The term "patriarchies" is therefore found useful by feminist scholars to refer to this fluidity. By using this approach, the linkages of patriarchal structures with other institutions are made visible - with, for instance, class, caste, race, nation, and religion. For example, the socialist feminist Zillah Eisenstein uses the term "capitalist patriarchy" to emphasise the mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship between capitalist class structure and hierarchical sexual structures. Another such term is "brahminical patriarchy", which Uma Chakravarty uses to draw attention to the intersection of caste and gender oppression.

26.4 THE SEX/GENDER DISTINCTION

26.4.1 Sex is to Nature as Gender is to Culture

One of the key contributions of feminist theory is the making of a distinction between "sex" and "gender". *Sex* as referring to the *biological* differences between men and women and *gender* as indicating the vast range of *cultural* meanings attached to that basic difference. This distinction is important for feminism to make because the subordination of women has been fundamentally justified on the grounds of the biological differences between men and women. This kind of biological determinism has been one of the most important legitimising mechanisms of women's oppression over the centuries. The challenge to biological determinism is therefore, crucial for feminist politics.

26.4.2 Masculinity, Femininity and Cultural Differences

Feminist anthropologists, pre-eminent among whom is Margaret Mead, have demonstrated that what is understood as masculinity and femininity varies across cultures. In other words,

not only do different societies identify a certain set of characteristics as feminine and another set as masculine. but also, these characteristics are not the same across different cultures. Thus, feminists have argued that there is no necessary co-relation between the biology of men and women and the qualities that are thought to be masculine and feminine. Rather, it is child-rearing practices which try to establish and perpetuate certain differences between the sexes. That is, from childhood, boys and girls are trained in appropriate, gender-specific forms of behaviour, play, dress and so on. This training is continuous and most of the time subtle, but when necessary, can involve punishments to bring about conformity. So feminists argue that sex-specific qualities (for example, bravery and confidence as "masculine" and sensitivity and shyness as "feminine") and the value that society attributes to them, are produced by a range of institutions and beliefs that socialize boys and girls differently. As Simone de Beauvoir put it, "One is not born, but becomes, a woman."

In addition, societies generally value "masculine" characteristics more highly than "feminine" ones, while at the same time ensuring that men and women who do not conform to these characteristics are continuously disciplined into the "appropriate" behaviour.

So there is nothing "natural" about the sexual division of labour. The fact that men and women perform different kinds of work both within the family and outside has little to do with biology. Only the actual process of pregnancy is biological, all the other work within the home that women must do - cooking, cleaning, looking after children and so on (in other words, the whole range of work we may call "domestic labour") - can equally be done by men. But this work is considered to be "women's work."

26.4.3 Sexual Division of Labour and Work Place

This sexual division of labour is not limited to the home, it extends even to the "public" arena of paid work, and again, this has nothing to do with "sex" (biology) and everything to do with "gender" (culture). Certain kinds of work are considered to be "women's work", and other kinds. men's, but more important is the fact that whatever work that women do, gets lower wages and is less valued. For example, nursing and teaching (particularly at lower levels) are predominantly female professions and are also comparatively ill-paid in relation to other white-collar jobs which the middle classes take up. Feminists point out that this "feminization" of teaching and nursing is because such work is seen as an extension of the nurturing work that women do within the home.

26.4.4 Ideological Assumptions behind Sexual Division of Labour

The fact is that it is not a "natural" biological difference that lies behind the sexual division of labour, but certain ideological assumptions. So on the one hand, women are supposed to be physically weak and unfit for heavy manual labour. but both in the home and outside, they do the heaviest of work - carrying heavy loads of water and firewood, grinding corn, transplanting paddy, carrying head-loads in mining and construction work. But at the same time, when the manual work that women do is mechanized, making it both lighter and better-paid, then it is *men* who receive training to use the new machinery, and *women* are edged out. This happens not only in factories, but even with work that was traditionally done by women within the community; for example, when electrically operated flour mills replace hand-pounding of grain, or machine-made nylon fishing nets replace the nets traditionally hand-made by women, it is men who are trained to take over these jobs, and women are forced to move into even lower-paid and more arduous manual work.

In other words, the present subordination of women arises, not from unchangeable biological differences, but from social and cultural values, ideologies and institutions that ensure the material and ideological subordination of women. Thus feminists view questions of sex-differentiated work, the sexual division of labour, and more fundamentally, questions of sexuality and reproduction, as issues to be extricated from the realm of "biology", which is understood to be natural and unchangeable. The feminist agenda is to relocate these issues in the realm of the "political", which suggests that they can and must be transformed.

26.5 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SEX/GENDER DISTINCTION IN FEMINIST THEORY

This particular manner of making the distinction between "sex" and "gender" has been made more complex by feminist scholars over the years. Although the distinction continues to be broadly accepted by all feminists, the initial understanding that "sex" is related to nature while "gender" is related to culture has been reworked considerably. Broadly, we can discern four main ways in which the sex/gender distinction has been further developed in feminist theory.

26.5.1 Views of Scholars like Alison Jaggar

Scholars like Alison Jaggar argue that "sex" and "gender" are dialectically and inseparably related, and that the conceptual distinction that the earlier feminists established between the two is not sustainable beyond a point. In this understanding, human biology is constituted by a complex interaction between the human body, the physical environment and the state of development of technology and society. Thus, as Jaggar puts it, "the hand is as much the product of labour as the tool of labour." What is meant here is that two processes are involved: human intervention changes the external environment and simultaneously, changes in the external environment shape and change the human body. This is trite in two senses. One, in a long-term evolutionary sense, over the millennia. That is, human bodies have evolved differently in different parts of the globe, due to differences in diet, climate and the nature of work performed.

Two, in a more short-term sense, in one lifetime that is, it is now recognised that neurophysiology and hormonal balances are affected by social factors like anxiety, physical labour, and the level and kind of social interaction, just as much as social interaction is affected by people's neurophysiology and hormonal balances. For instance, certain chemical changes in the body may produce certain symptoms of stress that can be treated by drugs. But equally, high stress levels can, in fact, be the reason for higher chemical imbalances, and it may be possible to restore the body's balance only by changing the conditions in which it lives,

When we apply this understanding, that biology and culture are interrelated, to the sex/gender distinction, the relevant implication is that women's bodies have been shaped by social restrictions and by norms of beauty. That is, the "body" has been formed as much by "culture" as by "nature". For instance, the rapid improvements in women's athletic records over the past two decades is an indication that social norms had shaped biology and restricted women's physical development. Feminist anthropologists have also pointed out that in some ethnic groups there is little physical differentiation between men and women. In short, we must consider that there are two equally powerful factors at work - one, there is a range of interrelated ways in which society produces sex differences and two, sex differences structure society in particular ways.

26.5.2 Radical Feminists

A second kind of rethinking of sex/gender has come from radical feminism which argues that feminists must not underplay the biological difference between the sexes and attribute all difference to "culture" alone. To do so is to accept the male civilization's devaluing of the female reproductive role. This is a criticism of the liberal feminist understanding that in an ideal world, men and women would be more or less alike. Radical feminists claim that on the contrary, patriarchal social values have denigrated "feminine" qualities and that it is the task of feminism to recover these qualities, and this difference between men and women, as valuable. The radical feminist position on the sex/gender distinction is that there are certain differences between men and women that arise from their different biological reproductive roles, and that therefore, women are more sensitive, instinctive and closer to nature. Radical feminists such as Susan Griffin and Andrea Dworkin, for example, believe that women's reproductive biology, the process of gestation and the experience of mothering, fundamentally affects their relationship to the external world. Women are, therefore, in this understanding, closer to nature and share in the nature's qualities of fecundity, nurturing and instinct. These qualities have been rejected by patriarchal society but feminists should accept and revalue these qualities. Ecofeminists like Vandana Shiva draw upon this understanding, arguing that the feminine world-view is more respectful of nature, and that women are better attuned towards ecologically sustainable development practices.

Carol Gilligan's book, *In a Different Voice* is a significant example of this viewpoint. Using a psychoanalytical point of view, she argues that because the primary care-giver in childhood - given the sexual division of labour - is invariably a woman (the mother), the process by which men and women come to adulthood is different. Boys come into adulthood learning to differentiate from the mother, while girls do so by identifying with the mother. That is, in a sex-differentiated society, while all infants identify with the mother, gradually boys learn that they are "different" while girls learn that they are the "same" as their mother. This results, Gilligan argues, in women having a more subjective, relational way of engaging with the world, while men have a more objective mode. Women relate to others, while men learn to separate themselves. This explains, for example, the difference in the nature of male and female friendships.

Gilligan's focus in this work is the difference in the ways men and women take moral decisions, and she comes to the conclusion that women are less influenced by nonnative notions of what is right and wrong, and more by other factors like empathy, concern and sensitivity to another's predicament. Men, on the other hand, tend to take moral decisions based on well-accepted notions of what society thinks is right and wrong. Thus, Gilligan concludes that the basic categories of western moral philosophy - rationality, autonomy and justice - are drawn from and reflect the male experience of the world. The female experience is invisible here. To deny difference is, therefore, to agree with the patriarchal negation of femininity as worthless.

In this context, it is interesting to note that some scholars are of the opinion that the strictly bipolar model of masculinity/femininity and the devaluing of the feminine are characteristic of only the modern western civilization. Pre-modern Indian cultures had greater space for a variety of sexual identities - eunuchs, for example, had a socially acknowledged status in Indian society that they have lost in contemporary times. Again, the Sufi and Bhakti traditions drew upon notions of androgyny and often rejected the two-sex model. Take, for instance, this poem by a 12th century Shaivite poet, Basavanna, who wrote in Kannada:

Look here, dear fellow,

I wear these men's clothes only for yōu.

Sometimes I am man,

Sometimes I am woman..

Another Shivabhakta, Devara Dasimayya, writing two centuries earlier, wrote:

If they see breasts and long hair coming,

They call it woman,

If beard and whiskers

They call it man.

But look, the self that hovers in between

Is neither man nor woman...?

A thought provoking argument is made by Ashis Nandy, that precolonial Indian cultures accorded greater value to femininity. It was with the coming of colonialism that the western valorization of masculinity became the norm. Nationalists too, then played into this understanding, and tried to resist the deriding of Indian culture as “effeminate” by claiming to be as “masculine” as the colonial masters - the ideology of revolutionaries for example, was very masculinist. According to Nandy, Gandhi was unique in attempting to focus on “feminine” rather than “masculine” qualities as having the power to resist colonialism - that is, he emphasized spiritual and moral courage over aggression and violence.

26.5.3 Post-Modernist View

A more recent feminist position takes the opposite view from that of radical feminists. While radical feminists argue that the sex/gender distinction underplays sex differences, a school of postmodern feminist thought holds that it over-emphasizes the biological body. Judith Butler, for instance, argues that if “gender” is the cultural meanings that the sexed body takes on, then gender cannot be said to follow from “sex” in any one way. What she says is that “gender” is not the cultural inscription of meaning on to a pre-given “sex”; rather, gender as a way of thinking and as a concept, produces the category of biological sex. In this understanding, “sex” does not precede “gender” but “gender” precedes “sex.” Butler thus suggests a “radical discontinuity” between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders.

What is characteristic of this position is that it holds that the category of “woman” does not exist prior to the thinking about it. Gender is something that is constructed through relations of power, and through a series of norms and constraints that regulate what will be recognised as a “male” body and a “female” body. Through such norms, a wide range of bodies are rendered invisible and/or illegitimate. For instance, infants born with no clear determining sexual characteristics, or eunuchs, or men and women who choose not to follow the dress norms prescribed for their gender. All these are either marginalised, criminalised or forced to fit into the existing two-sex model in some way or the other. Most modern languages have no way of speaking of a human who does not fit into either sex. What this means is that language forces “reality” into certain pre-given patterns and prevents certain possibilities from being realised.

Alison Jaggar discusses a study in the USA of children whose sex had been incorrectly assigned at birth due to such ambiguity - when the "real" sex of the child emerged at a later stage, both parents and medical practitioners generally decided on surgery to confirm the sex attributed at birth. This was invariably preferred to simply accepting that the child's sex was different from that attributed at birth. In other words, surgical intervention to change "sex" was thought to be easier than eradicating years of cultural "gender" conditioning. Think about it - if you had a three-year old son whom you took to the doctor for some problems, and discovered that the child was more female than male. Would you prefer to now come to terms with the fact that you have a daughter, inform everybody, change the way you dress and think of your child, or would you prefer surgical intervention to retain your "son" as a son? The fact is that the latter option is what any of us would prefer. What does this tell us about the supposedly unchangeable "natural" category of biology and conversely, about the supposedly changeable category of "culture"? Does it not seem that culture is more concrete sometimes than biology?

Feminist scientists such as Ruth Bleier and Evelyn Fox Keller have argued that a rigid sex/gender distinction restricts "biological sex" - that is, sex defined as anatomical, hormonal or chromosomal - as something to be studied by the bio-medical sciences, "gender" being studied by the social sciences. Such an understanding, they argue, mistakenly assumes that while cultural notions of gender may change, the body remains as an unchanging biological reality that needs no further explanation. These feminist scientists argue that on the contrary, our perceptions and interpretations of the body are mediated through language, and the bio-medical sciences function as a major provider of this language.

Such a feminist position rejects the idea that scientific facts about the body simply exist to be discovered. Rather, scientific "facts" are deeply embedded in society and culture. Thus "sex" is constructed by human practices.,

26.5.4 Gender Identity Interface

A fourth kind of rethinking of the sex/gender distinction comes from locating "gender" in a grid of identities - caste, class, race, religion. This would mean that the biological category of "women" does not necessarily have shared interests, life-situations, or goals. This kind of understanding has arisen from the political practice of women's movements all over the world, which has increasingly shown up the fact that "women" do not exist as a pre-existing subject which can simply be mobilized by the women's movement. That is, women identify themselves not only, and not even necessarily primarily, in terms of their gender, but as black, or muslim, or dalit, or peasant. So in many cases, women may be easier mobilized in terms of their religion, for example, than by the women's movement.

In the case of India, a good example of this is the debate over the Uniform Civil Code. All religious communities have their own personal laws which discriminate against women on matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance and guardianship of children. The demand for a uniform civil code which would give all women equal rights as citizens has therefore been a demand of the women's movement since 1937. However, in the growing atmosphere of communalism since the 80's, and the insecurity felt by religious minorities, most sections of the women's movement have gradually shifted to the opinion that the position of women should be improved by reforms within personal laws, rather than by forcing communities to obey legislation passed by the state. The state no longer has the legitimacy it had in the immediate post-independence years, its role in communal violence is increasingly suspect,

and it cannot be seen simply as an agent of progressive social change. Thus what was a simple feminist demand that all *women* should have equal rights has been considerably transformed by the politics of *religious* identity.

Further, all politically active women do not necessarily act as feminists - they may well be representing interests and structures of power which feminist politics in India has sought to struggle against. Thus, we find women active in Hindu right-wing politics and in anti-lower caste movements like the agitation against the Mandal Commission report. In other words, in this understanding, the feminist sex/gender distinction must take into account other modes of constituting identity. Depending on the context, even as feminists, we may have to privilege caste or class identity over gender in some cases, just as we expect marxists or dalit activists to privilege gender over class and caste in some contexts.

26.5.5 Naturalness of Heterosexuality Questioned

A further significant implication of the sex/gender distinction suggested by feminist theory is that the supposed naturalness of heterosexuality is called into question. Adrienne Rich uses the term "compulsory heterosexuality" to refer to the way in which heterosexual marriage is set up as the unquestionable norm. If "male" and "female" as natural categories are challenged by feminist theory, then it offers simultaneously, a challenge to the whole range of institutionalised practices (marriage and family) through which patriarchal property and power relations are maintained. Thus, sexual identity and sexual orientation are important issues for contemporary feminist theory.

26.6 FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DICHOTOMY

In liberal theory the distinction between "public" and "private" answers the question of the legitimate extent of the authority of the law. The public realm is understood in this context to be open to government regulation while the private realm is to be protected from such action - sexuality and the family being understood to be private. In Marxist theory too, this distinction is central, although from a different point of view. Engels argued that women's oppression begins with the transformation of housework from a public to a private service. The "private" in this sense, is the arena of oppression and only when women emerge into the "public" sphere of production will they become truly emancipated. Since for Engels the motor force of history is provided by changes in the relations of production (defined, in the context of capitalism, as the relations between capital and labour), housework is not "work", Women participate in history only to the extent that they emerge from the "private" and enter the industrial workforce.

26.6.1 Feminist Criticism

Feminist scholarship emerging from both liberal and Marxist traditions have contested this distinction as being conceptually flawed and politically oppressive. From within the liberal tradition comes the argument that the dichotomy assumed between "public" (non-domestic) and "private" (domestic) has enabled the family to be excluded from the values of "justice" and "equality" which have animated liberal thought since the seventeenth century-beginnings of liberalism. The "individual" was the adult male head of the household, and thus his right to be free from interference by the state or church included his rights over those in his control in the private realm - women, children, servants. Thus, oppression within the family was rendered invisible to political theory.

In addition to sharing this view, socialist-feminists critique the public/private distinction in Marxist theory produced by the model of political economy based on "production", defined as economic production for the capitalist market. This model, they argue, ignores the "private" sphere of "reproduction", where women are responsible for reproducing both humans (through child-bearing) and labour power (through housework.) For traditional marxists, this work is seen to be part of the non-economic or superstructural realm, and is not even defined as "work". Socialist feminists therefore, contest the public/private distinction by showing that sexuality, procreation, and housework, understood to be "private", in fact hold up the "public" sphere of production. Their argument is that housework is a commodity - it is unpaid labour that helps to reproduce labour power. This is so in two senses - a) when male labour comes home, it is the housework done by women that ensures that they can go back to work the next day b) the bearing of children reproduces actual people who will work in factories etc.

However, this work is not paid for, and this unpaid labour in the "private" sphere underlies and ensures capitalist production in the "public" sphere.

Thus, feminists across the political spectrum are agreed that the public and the private are not two distinct and separate spheres and that the assumption that they are, is uniformly detrimental to women's interests.

26.6.2 Lack of Consensus Among Feminists

However, there is no consensus on the consequences of this understanding for feminist practice. From one kind of feminist position, characteristic of US feminism, it is possible then to argue that many claims important to feminists, from reproductive rights to protection against sexual harassment, are most effectively grounded on the claims to privacy. In fact, the rhetoric of the individual's right to privacy has been used in the USA to secure some rights for women against the patriarchal family. For example, the landmark judgement on abortion in *Roe v. Wade* (1972) is based on the belief in the individual woman's right to privacy. So was the judgement in 1965 that the right of married couples to use contraceptives is part of "a right to privacy older than the Bill of Rights." Feminists who support privacy as a ground for securing rights for women, while challenging the traditional public/private dichotomy, make the argument that the virtues of privacy have not been available to women since they did not have the status of individuals in the public sphere. In this view therefore, the task of feminist practice is to transform the institutions and practices of gender so that a genuine sphere of privacy, free of governmental and legal intrusion, can be ensured for both men and women. This is not a position taken within the Indian women's movement.

More common here is the diametrically opposite stand arising from the radical feminist slogan "the personal is political" which has brought into the public arena issues such as domestic violence against women, child abuse and rape. Feminist pressure for legislation on these issues has meant the recognition that violence of various kinds against women in the "private" realm of the family and sexuality is in principle as actionable as violence in the "public" arena. The logical extension of this line of thinking is that privacy and the family are areas of "judicial void" or "judicial weakness" to the extent that they are outside the application of the law. Thus issues arising from sexuality and family take on legal significance. Although adherents of this position do hold that the state is paternalistic and masculine, they are confident that if a law is designed by feminists from the standpoint of women, it can be of advantage to women. They denounce the right to privacy, therefore, as a means to protect the existing

structures of power and access to resources in the private sphere. For example, it is argued that by sanctioning abortion as a right of privacy, the state has ensured that the control women won out of this legislation has gone to men within the family - husbands and fathers. Further, when abortion is framed as a right of privacy, the state has no obligation to provide public funding for abortion.

Thus, the feminist reconceptualisation of the public/private dichotomy and the critique of the family as an oppressive institution opens up several new areas of debate.

26.7 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the basic meaning of feminism. The origin of the term has been traced and the three broad strands of feminism – liberal, socialist and radical have been explained. Feminism and patriarchy are inextricably linked and thus, the latter has been analysed in detail. You also now know that 'one of the key contributions of feminist theory is the making of a distinction between "sex" and "gender"'. The unit also tells us in detail about the developments in the sex/gender distinction in feminist theory. It should be realised that the sex/gender distinction is not as simple and straight as it may first appear.

Through this overview, we have seen how feminist theory has developed over a century of political practice, generating new debates within itself, and offering new challenges to key concepts of mainstream political theory.

26.8 EXERCISES

- 1) Trace the origin of the term feminism.
- 2) Enumerate the different types of feminism. What is common to different feminist positions?
- 3) Explain the meaning of patriarchy with reference to the views of some feminist scholars.
- 4) Describe some forms of patriarchy.
- 5) What distinction do feminists make between sex and gender?
- 6) What do you understand by sexual division of labour? What are the ideological assumptions behind it?
- 7) What are the views of scholars like Alison Jaggar on the sex-gender interface?
- 8) Briefly examine the radical feminist perspective on sex-gender inter-relationship or the post-modernist perspective.
- 9) Discuss the gender-identity framework with a suitable example from India.
- 10) What is the public-private dichotomy in political discourse?
- 11) Briefly discuss the feminist critique of the public-private dichotomy.