

TYBA PAPER VI

UNIT I

BASIC CONCEPTS

SEX

- a) A biological concept.
- b) Determined by genes and chromosomes.
- c) Hereditary in nature.
- d) Inborn.
- e) Consists of male and female biological characteristics.
- f) Biological characteristics are developed through a biological process.
- g) It comes first, primary.
- h) It is a natural distinction.

GENDER

- 1) A Socio-cultural concept.
- 2) Determined by society and culture.
- 3) Social in nature.
- 4) Learnt.
- 5) Consists of male and female behavior patterns.
- 6) Behaviour patterns are developed through norms, values, customs and attitudes.
- 7) It is secondary.
- 8) It is a social distinction.

- An individual acquires gender identity through learning which begins during infancy itself. The parents, other family members, teachers etc., play an important role in teaching the child the proper role. This is known as gender socialization which takes place in three stages.
- Conditioning: - In this stage, parents make use of rewards and punishments in order to shape the behavior of their children according to the approved gender roles.
- Imitation: - In this stage, the child learns to imitate or copy the behavior patterns of the people of the same sex. Thus, for example, a boy will copy his father or elder brother and a girl will copy her mother or elder sister.
- Self definition: - In this stage, the child understands that there are two categories of people namely males and females. More importantly, the child understands that it belongs to one of these categories.

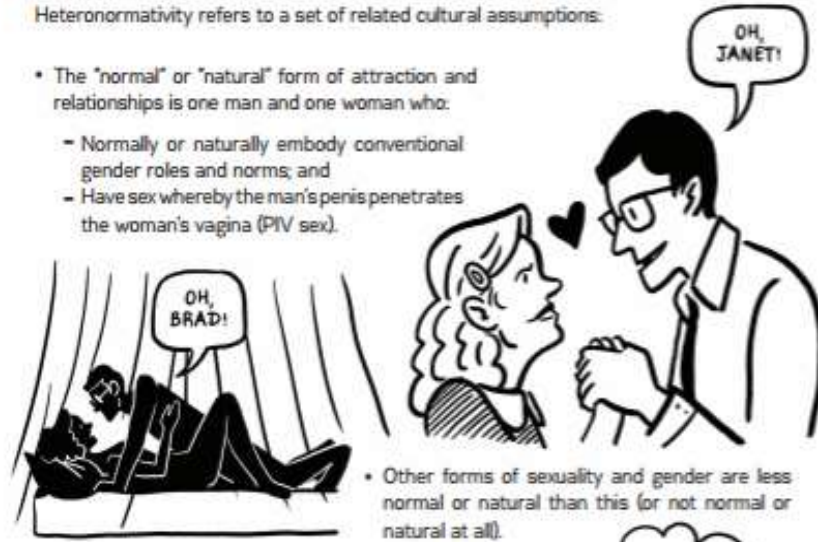
HETERONORMATIVITY

HETERONORMATIVITY

An extremely helpful concept in queer theory, which encapsulates a lot of what we've just covered is *heteronormativity*. Queer theorist Michael Warner popularized this term in 1991, drawing on Rubin's sex hierarchy and Rich's compulsory heterosexuality.

Heteronormativity refers to a set of related cultural assumptions:

- The "normal" or "natural" form of attraction and relationships is one man and one woman who:
 - Normally or naturally embody conventional gender roles and norms; and
 - Have sex whereby the man's penis penetrates the woman's vagina (PIV sex).



- Thus, people are assumed heterosexual unless proven otherwise.

- Heteronormativity is a system that works to normalize behaviors and societal expectations that are tied to the presumption of heterosexuality and an adherence to a strict gender binary.
- The gender binary is a term used to describe the practice of only recognizing two distinct genders.
- More simply, the gender binary is the acknowledgement of the existence of men and women (and boys and girls) – and nothing else.
- And the gender binary is *vital* to a system of heteronormativity.
- You deviate from this heteronormative standard by [being non-binary](#), or even simply [performing gender in a way](#) that doesn't subscribe to a strict separation of “man” or “woman” (and the assumption that “masculinity” should only be performed by the former and “femininity” by the latter).

What is wrong with heteronormativity?

- *It leaves people feeling alienated and alone.*
- *It is bad for LGBT people and other people who are outside of it.*
- *It sets up an 'us and them' which enables homophobia, biphobia and transphobia to exist.*
- *It is questionable whether the 'normative' form of heterosexuality actually is normal.*
- *Our treatment of others should not be based on how normal, or not, they are.*
- *It is bad for those who have some desires or feelings outside the 'norm'.*
- *It puts pressure on those who are inside it to stay inside it, and may prevent them from finding the kinds of sex and relationships that work for them.*

What can we do about it?

- . *Move to a model of sexual diversity rather than normality/abnormality.*

GENDER BEYOND THE BINARY



SO I KNOW I'M SUPPOSED
TO BE ANSWERING YOUR
QUESTIONS AND ALL, BUT
FIRST..I'VE GOTTA KNOW.
ARE YOU A BOY OR A GIRL?

I'M SORRY,
I DON'T FOLLOW..

INTERSECTIONALITY

Feminism is for everyone



Intersectional Feminism as a term, was first coined by American professor [Kimberle Crenshaw](#) in the year 1989. It is the study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. It means that women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Patterns of oppression are not just interrelated but are influenced by those interrelations.

For example, race, class, and gender influence each other and intersect both.

Caste and gender are interrelated and influence each other.

There are different axes of oppression like caste, class, race, gender, ethnicity, ability, among others that are important in this context.

- Crenshaw has spoken about [Intersectionality theory](#) by stating that it is the study of how different power structures interact in the lives of minorities, specifically black women.
- It began with the quest of understanding how and why people are getting disappeared from various articulations, from theories, from books, from pages of history, from the movement, and from various other intersections and junctures in feminist scholarship.
- Intersectionality draws attention to the different invisibilities that exist in feminism, in anti-racism, anti-caste, class politics, etc.
- it helps us draw attention to the various ways in which power is sustained and limited to only a certain caste/class/race/gender in society and how oppression thus operates and works.

Understanding Oppression and Privilege

Oppression cannot be seen or understood as something that exists in the same manner for everybody. There are layers to it which overlap and intersect, and this is precisely what intersectional feminism tries to explain.

- intersectional feminism challenges the dominant idea of feminism which is overtly white/upper-class/upper-caste/ableist/cis heterosexual and which fails to take into account the marginalized standpoints.
- An important aspect that one needs to remember while talking of intersectionality is 'privilege'. Privilege is important because it is much easier to point out how and why people are oppressed than to point out who is the oppressor and how their dominance is continuing in various ways because of their privileged position in the society.

To give you an **example**, an upper caste woman feeling oppressed because she does not have the freedom to work in the public domain cannot define feminism solely based on her own experiences, because it does not represent the issues faced by the marginalized women who are exposed to unregulated and unorganized work structures for their survival. The marginalized women's suffering is intersectional because of their identity as marginalized. This does not mean that the issues faced by the privileged are not issues per se, but that those issues alone do not define feminism, and not realizing this would basically mean glossing over the many layers of oppression and erasing many other experiences.

Understanding Internalized Dominance

- When members of the dominant group believe that their privilege is natural, and accept that their group is socially superior to others, they have internalized their dominant status in the society.
- Marginalised are thus coerced into believing that the problems they face are due to their personal shortcomings

It's Not About Who Suffers 'More'

Further, while we try and understand intersectional feminism, the mere inclusion of women from the marginalized communities is not going to address issues of 'all women'.

- 'difference' has to become a part of our feminist analyses. There has to be a clear rejection of a homogeneous platform to tackle discrimination. Intersectional feminism must be applied in a way that all different aspects of identity are taken into consideration, and all oppressions are seen as influencing and controlling other oppressions, none of them working singularly or separately.

Take for example the case of **Shah Bano**, who was a Muslim woman caught between her identity as a Muslim on one hand and as a woman on another. We cannot simply say that she is more oppressed because she is a Muslim and she is a woman, we need to acknowledge that her oppression is arising out of its context, which is not the same for any other case. Her case calls for intervention into how the women's movement was addressing issues for women at the margins, for women who were invisible at the intersection of **gender and religion** as well.

