

Gender Studies - 2022

Question No. 2

Discuss in detail the multidisciplinary nature of gender studies. (20)

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1. Introduction

Gender Studies is a multidisciplinary field and cover a broad range of topics dealing specifically with women and patriarchal society. It also deals with the feminist waves and theories experienced by women. Although it look like this subject totally devoted to women's rights and feminist studies, its multidisciplinary nature extends to other fields as well. Gender Studies talk about differences between individuals based on their social upbringing, genetic background as well as psychological inclinations, therefore, it is prominently interrelated to disciplines such as literature, law, political science, sociology, psychology etc.

2. Gender Studies as Multidisciplinary

Before exploring the

multidisciplinary nature of gender studies, it is imperative to understand the meaning of something which is multidisciplinary. Thus, it is defined as:

"The process in which researchers work independently yet at same time, from different disciplinary perspective to address a common problem."

Historically, the roots of gender studies can be seen attached to social sciences. Thus, gender studies is multi-disciplinary in nature as it is interlinked with the following disciplines and widens the scope of understanding gender studies.

Psychology and Gender Studies: Gender Psychology deals with psychology and social impacts of sex difference, role and development of gender identity on behavior.

Sociology and gender studies: Addresses women related issues faced in patriarchal society.

Anthropology and gender studies: Concerned with human behavior, biology, cultures, society both in past and present about masculinity and femininity.

Economic and gender studies: Talk about economic inequality of women.

Multidisciplinary nature of gender studies and its relation with other discipline

Political Science and gender studies: Talk about attainment of Political rights for women

Social work and gender studies: Addresses problem such as slavery, trafficking, violence from gender perspective

Literature and gender studies: Women writers highlight the women-related prevalent problems in society to address them

Law and gender studies: Demands making and strict implementation of women-related laws

3. Gender Studies and its relation to other disciplines

i) Sociology and Gender Studies

Sociology is the study of society and social interaction. It also deal with social culture, relationships and institution. Gender Studies, as parent subject, also deal with women-related culture and the role of society in shaping the choices and decisions of women.

For instance: women are considered intellectually and physically weak as compared to men. This socially constructed perception of gender, therefore, impedes the decision-making roles of women.

ii) Anthropology and Gender Studies

Anthropology is scientific study of humanity, concerned with human behaviour, biology, cultures, and societies in both past and present. Gender Studies is the branch of cultural anthropology that deals with the cultural norms that dictate the lives of people belonging to the masculine and feminine gender. The gender norms that are prevalent in society shape the culture of women.

For instance: divorce is considered nothing more than a taboo and a stain on womanhood.

This is a norm, or to be specific, a gendered norm that applies to women just because of a patriarchal mindset.

iii) Economics and Gender Studies

Economics is a social sciences subject that deals with the production, distribution and consumption of goods. It also involves individuals, government, businesses and other sectors in making decisions about resource relocation. Gender studies, on the other hand, are closely linked to economics as it also talk about economic equality for women. Participation of women in labour force, wage differences and an unequal opportunities in various sectors of state are all address by gender studies from an economic point of view. Similarly, Marxist feminism is a huge supporter of economic equality for women and blames patriarchy and power relations for gender inequality.

iv) Political Science and Gender Studies

Political Science is a social science field and a scientific study of politics. It deals with the structure of government, power and politics. It also involves political thoughts, behaviours, constitution, and laws. Gender studies intake political science as a discipline and talk about political rights of women. It says that certain legislations are discriminatory and tend to satisfy patriarchal norms only. After the French revolution, voting rights were given to privileged white men only. Susan in the Trial of Susan B. Anthony challenged it. As a result, women got right of vote in 1920 in the Second wave of feminism.

v) Social Work and Gender Studies

Social work deals with the basic needs of communities, vulnerable and oppressed people, especially those living in poverty. Social work also discussed the violence, slavery and other oppressive things done by men to women via the gendered lens.

Radical Feminists were of the view that it is men who are responsible for forcing women into stuff like prostitution, pornography and setting artificial beauty standards. Therefore, social work in a gender perspective deals with such oppressive acts done by men to women, thus relating gender studies and social work.

vi) Literature and Gender Studies

Gender and literature are closely related because literature promotes writings of famous

women authors depicting social problems of society. A few such examples include the famous writing of feminist Ismat Chughtai in 'Chothi Ka Jora' shedding light upon early women's marriages and the financial crunch that she faces being a widow in a male-dominant society. Similarly, Tehmina Durrani, a Pakistani writer in her book 'My Feudal Lord' discussed social problems such as alienation of women by the elite and feudal of the country. Such writings clearly show that gender is a social construction and not a biological one.

vii) Law and Gender Studies

Gender equality is achieved when both sexes are given equal rights and opportunities via a legal framework. Laws, which are made to facilitate people, are unable to protect women's rights. The laws against

rape, harassment, etc., are just on paper and lack affirmative implementation. Gender Studies persuade people and especially the legislators, to make gender-equal laws for men, women and transgender. Gender Studies itself discusses issues such as domestic abuse, marital rape etc., which are a serious problem. Despite having laws, all these issues are still unaddressed and just limited to paper. Work is being done to introduce women's protection laws. However, implementation is required in true spirits.

viii) Psychology and Gender Studies

Psychology is the study of human minds, and its functions especially by studying those human behaviours that are effecting their minds. Gender psychology, on the other hand, deals with the psychological and social impact of sex differences as well as the role

and development of gender identity on behavior. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory of feminism is an epic example of psychological behaviour linked with gender inequality, which is prevalent in society.

4. Conclusion

Gender Studies, although it seems like it is a subject dealing with a narrow scope of things, it is multidisciplinary in nature. Gender Studies are reflected in all above-mentioned disciplines irrespective of their nature. Gender Studies have become a part of almost every discipline focusing on women and addressing the issues faced by them in various fields. Gender Studies is, therefore, an evolving subject and create an understanding that the study of gender shall remain incomplete without probing the psychological, sociological and biological aspects of the life of human being.