

Gender Studies:-

Chap 1:- Introduction to Gender Studies:-

QUESTION

Q What is the difference between women studies and Gender Studies? (20)

Introduction:-

Women studies and Gender studies are often used as synonyms, however these are two distinct subjects. While women studies is a field which focuses on the roles, experiences and achievements of women in society, the gender studies analyses gender identity and gendered representation as central categories. Women studies addresses the need for a fuller understanding of women in the society and the new criteria and methods of assessing the status of women in various cultural contexts. Gender studies on the other hand is not only restricted to the study of women, but it encompasses all other genders including men and queer etc. It addresses the impact of gender on all levels of experience. It involves topics on gender equality, cross-cultural study of gender relations and 'androgyny' etc. The differences between the two fields mainly lie in the very nature of these subjects, their origin, scope, inclusivity etc. In the following paragraphs these differences are highlighted!

Defining Gender Studies & Women Studies:

Gender studies refers to the academic study of the phenomena of gender. As gender refers to those traits and characteristics that a person is expected to possess by virtue of being male or female, as well as the different roles that a person is expected to perform. It studies the features of norms and patterns associated with masculinity and femininity. In gender studies there is a recognition that men and women do not exist in isolation from their other social roles and positions. Another feature of gender studies is that it examines how the world is gendered, i.e. clothing is gendered. On the other hand women studies is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to topics concerning women, feminism, gender and politics. It often includes feminist theory, women's history (e.g. history of women's suffrage) and social history, women's fiction, women's health, feminist psychoanalysis and the feminist influenced practice of most of the humanities and social sciences. According to Klein (1980) the 'Subject Matter' of women's studies is (women). Every human issue is a women's issue at the core and it demands to be looked upon at from a women-centered perspective.

HISTORY and Origin:-

The first women's studies course is purported to have been created by historian Mary Ritter Beard, who constructed a 54-page syllabus for a course titled "A changing Political Economy as it Affects Women". Although never taught it prepared the foundation of women studies program in United States. The actual development of Women's Studies as an academic study, came into being during the emergence of feminism's second wave and a new dawn of political activism.

The first courses were developed in 1960s in the USA, and in 1980 the first MA in women's studies was offered at the University of Kent.

↳ Within the first 30-35 years it developed into a recognized discipline with undergraduate majors, master and doctorate programs. It is a much older discipline than gender studies and hence, can be called its predecessor. ↳ Whereas, gender studies was an offshoot of third wave of feminism.

It is a successor of women's studies. It emerged as a new scholarship in women's and men's studies.

It was an acknowledgement that disempowerment and gender were more fluid concepts than it was previously thought. 1990s brought a change to the old women's studies departments; during this

decade, gender studies developed. It developed as a discipline that underwent the 'partial transition' to 'gender studies', including feminist and women studies, queer studies, femininity and masculinity research, as well as the study of sex and reproduction.

The women's studies departments, such as the one at Indiana University, began changing their names to 'Gender Studies', indicating that the discipline was expanding to become more inclusive of all genders-related research.

FOCUS OF RESEARCH:-

Women's Studies, as the name implies is generally restricted or confined to addressing the women-centric issues and problems. It mainly discusses the challenges faced by women, such as patriarchy etc. Moreover, it demands rights for women only. Contrary to it, gender studies is more inclusive and wide in its scope.

It focuses on all the genders constructed by society. Furthermore, its primary focus is to address the challenges associated with gender identity. Women Studies originated as a challenge to the male centered and male defined knowledge. Hence, it included literary works on women's history,

Feminist theory, women's art and fiction etc.
Whereas, gender studies included research on
all the genders i.e. men, women, LGTBs.

Nature of Discipline:-

Women's studies is an interdisciplinary study or field of inquiry that is devoted to topics concerning women, feminism, gender and politics. Early on its courses drew especially on history, literature and sociology, but they quickly expanded to other humanities (philosophy, religious studies, comparative literature, art and music etc) and the social sciences (anthropology, psychology, political science, economy etc). It involves the intersection of questions and methods used in teaching and research are drawn from two or more of the traditional disciplines. While gender studies takes a multidisciplinary approach to understand problems faced by different genders. People from diverse academic backgrounds can study it as a minor. It involves multiple disciplines to redefine problems and reach solutions based on a new understanding of complex situations. Thus, it examines all scopes of life including

Family, media, culture, government etc and their effects on reshaping gender identities. Due to its multidisciplinary nature it offers to learn about various contemporary issues including sexual orientation, gender roles in society, the psychology of identity etc.

Goal of Studies:-

The development of women studies was triggered by the inherent gender inequality present in society. The second wave of feminism drew attention towards the exclusion of identities and experiences of women from the academic disciplines. The differences and inequalities between men and women were not recognized as an issue of sociological concern to be addressed. Thus, the initial studies were focused on 'filling in the gaps' in knowledge about women, that were left by prior male bias. Attention gradually moved to aspects such as paid work, motherhood, wage gap and male violence etc. However, gender studies seeks to address the concept of 'gender equity', instead. It discusses the inequalities and differences

not just between genders but within genders, based on class, sexuality, ethnicity, age, disability, nationality and citizenship status etc. In comparison of women & studies it is a complex, multi faceted and multi disciplinary area.

Theoretical Differences

Women studies involves feminist criticism, which is a literary analysis from a feminist viewpoint. Whereas, gender studies is a form of literary criticism that involves both feminist and masculinist approaches, as well as queer theories. It explores how gender influences the creation and reception of literary work. The masculinist approach deals with the advocacy of the rights or needs of men or boy. Queer theory, on the other hand, includes theoretical concepts that center gay and lesbian people. Moreover, Women studies involves the WID, Women in development and WAD : women and development approaches. Whereas, gender studies involves Postmodern theory, Queer theory and encompass the gender and development, GIAD approach.

Consciousness Raising

Consciousness raising is an important part of women studies, while it is not essentially a part of gender studies. Consciousness raising groups were a bedrock of second-wave feminism, waking women up to their struggles and sexism of the social structures. They were intended to 'enhance consciousness about the components of female identity' by exploring personal experiences with other women. It helped women tap into their emotions to drive social change. As a subject women studies consists of both teaching and research. As the teachers and students both contribute to the existing knowledge of the scholarship by bringing their rich experiences of their lives. Therefore, making consciousness raising in classrooms as an essential component of learning.

Conclusion:-

Gender studies and Women Studies are two distinct subjects and areas of concern. Women studies is a narrow approach and merely deals with the issues of women, while gender studies is more inclusive and encompasses all genders. Additionally, they have different focus and

goals i.e while gender studies addresses gender equity, women studies advocates the equality of women. It also involves a feminist criticism from a feminist viewpoint while gender studies is an amalgam of multiple gender perspectives & their critique. Hence, making these two fields contrasting from one another.
