

## Part - II

Q-3. Detailed note on colonial and capitalist perspectives of gender.

### ANSWER

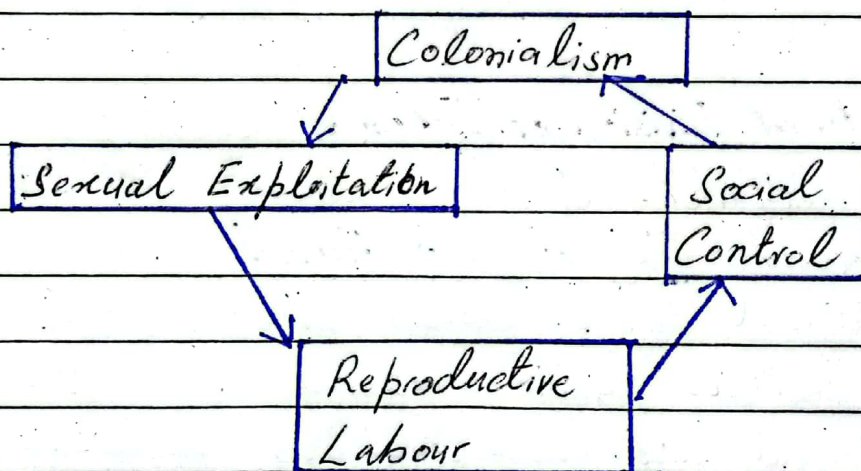
The world has transitioned from colonial period to capitalist period over past two centuries. During this transition the attitude towards gender especially women or female gender changed. However, the underlying pinning remained the same. Both perspectives view women as a product. Colonial perspective saw women primarily reduced to reproductive sale. This era heavily discriminated between white women and women of colour as latter were mostly enslaved and made conduits for slave renting especially when chattel slavery replaced slave trade. Capitalist mode of economy, on the other hand, is an extension and <sup>new</sup> rendition of patriarchy, where the capitalist class replaces role of patriarch and proletarian masses become the new women i.e. subjugated class. This framework double marginalises women as while they remain workers, they are also expected and prompted to remain home makers.

## Colonial Perspective

1. Female Sex as Symbol: White male colonisers depicted white women as corner stone of their cultures that deemed superior. White women became synonymous with abstract notions such as fragility and purity. This saw white women heavily scrutinised. Women had to behave, speak, and dress according to a strict norm. For example, during Victoria era while men studied natural sciences, philosophy, logic etc., women had to enroll in etiquette classes. This was done primarily for purpose of setting them up with perfect suitors. Thus, women did not exist as autonomous adults rather as symbols of their culture. In contrast, indigenous women in colonies were deemed inferior and their ways of living and physical traits were regarded inferior and made a metric to assess white women against. In doing so, colonialism made indigenous women just an extension of their culture's barbarism.

2. Sexual Exploitation: Colonial empires commodified bodies of colonised indigenous women. Once an occupation and subsequent colonisation were set into

motion colonisers used racism in tandem with sexism as justification for sexual exploitation. Women were abused and exploited for sexual gratification of colonial male workforce. Reducing women to their sexual organs served two purposes. One, women of colonies were dehumanised to justify inferiority of colonial subjects. Second, for purpose of terrorising the colonised populace.



Role of sexual exploitation in cyclical colonial violence

3. Gendered Modernity: Colonial age also saw an effort at modernising colonies. Indigenous practices were regarded archaic or heretic. When modernising, Christian beliefs were used to demoralise women from adopting leadership roles or being outspoken. These modernisation

efforts kept women away from economic and political positions and relegate them to home making.

## Capitalist Perspective

"What made women's labour particularly attractive to the capitalists was not only its lower price but also the greater submissiveness of women."

- Clara Zetkin

1. Gendered Division of Labour: According to feminist activist Germaine Greer in her seminal work The Female Eunuch, women are outsourced unpaid labour. While men work in factories and companies and their work is paid and regarded as productive, women are left to do chores, run errands, raise children and all this home making is not compensated. This is done for sustenance of male workforce. Capitalism is only concerned with maximum capital generation for which it requires a healthy workforce. The duty of taking care of and tending to needs of workforce falls upon women as mothers and wives. The justification being that women

are naturally nurturing.

2. Commodification of Women: Capitalism has exoticised and commercialised women's bodies. Capitalist industries such as cosmetics industry and entertainment industries ~~are~~ push for global imposition of Eurocentric beauty standards. This leads to women being pressurised to cave in and become both the product and consumer of their exploitation. Thus, capitalism sees women as products and fancies gender as a tool for profit maximisation.

3. Feminisation of Poverty and Intersectional Feminist Analysis: Capitalism disproportionately affects women as they face twice the exploitation. First as women then as workers. According to intersectional feminist Patricia Hill Collins, race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality are interlinked and intersecting constructs that correspond during subjugation. For instance, women are over-represented in sweat-shops in Bangladesh and Vietnam. Such countries are periphery in global supply chains. Thus, the workforce in these countries do the bulk of production for Global North through informal sector. While economic ideologies like Socialism and World System Theories criticise capitalism,

they end up being class reductionist. As per Collins, women of colour have to fit properly in already constructed discourse to be taken seriously. Thus, neoliberalism capitalises on racial and gender-based structures left by colonialism.

### Conclusion

Colonialism and capitalism intersect to exploit women. Both have defined their roles through systems of labour, culture, and commerce. Colonialism relied on cultural subjugation. Capitalism reinforces gender-based exploitation through economic chauvinism.

In the colonial perspective, women were seen as symbols of cultural parity. They got objectified to serve interests of colonial ambitions. In colonies, modernisation was employed for erasure.

In the capitalist perspective women are reduced to commodities. They are rendered as passive consumers in developed. Meanwhile, in developing world they are exploited to keep up global supply chains.