

'Production' and 'Reproduction' in Feminism: Ideas, Perspectives and Concepts

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Abstract

The article examines the concept of 'production' and 'reproduction' within the feminist discourse. It aims at examining some of the important issues which have emerged in the debates concerning sexual division of labour and the organization of gender relations prevailing within the family and in a larger social structure. The conceptual framework for analyzing 'production' and 'reproduction' is discussed. Then, an analysis of these concepts is carried out through an account of the major feminist schools of thought. Thereafter, the interlinkage between production and reproduction in the light of maintenance and perpetuation of women's subordination is examined by understanding the relationship between the market and family, between the production of things and the production of people and between patriarchy and capitalism. The article also attempts to arrive at a perspective in understanding the situation of women in contemporary India.

Keywords

Production, reproduction, patriarchy, capitalism, gender

Introduction

The study of women's role has been and continues to be of crucial importance to feminists, because they are concerned not only with the identification of the processes and structures, which generate gender inequalities and gender segregation, but also devising appropriate strategies in equalizing the position of women and men in the productive and reproductive spheres. The interest in this area also provides opportunities to understand better how gender divisions intersect with class and caste inequalities. However, women's oppression is inexplicable without an understanding of the connections between the division of labour at work and in the home. In assessing the factors which might account for the position of women as wage labourers, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that family structure and the ideology of domestic responsibility play an important part in this context. The traditional sociological definition of work has restricted its meaning to activity for

the acquisition of financial resources. But women's work is mainly concentrated in the unpaid household sphere. Problems in the concept of work are not as simple as raising a question of whether work is paid or unpaid, but are more fundamental to the question of what constitutes work (Beechey, 1977; Beneria & Sen, 1981).

The exact nature of women's work varies from culture to culture; however, women all over the world are engaged in work which contributes significantly to societal needs. It is evident in the writings of eminent feminist scholars that the actual extent of women's unwaged work and their real contribution to household income has been consistently underestimated (Beneria, 1982; Boserup, 1970; Desai & Krishanaraj, 1987; Sen, 1984). This is a consequence of the ambiguous definition of work itself. Work is a concept broader than knowing about what people do. However, work is conventionally understood as paid work outside the home, resulting in the undervaluation of women's subsistence and domestic labour. It is generally observed that

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women who are defined as housewives are actually involved in unorganized work, like in the field of agricultural and small-scale market production, in addition to their domestic responsibility and childcare (Papanek, 1973; Sharma, 1986). These women make a significant contribution to household income, both indirectly in terms of their unpaid agricultural and household labour and directly through the money they earn through market trading and petty commodity production (Mies, 1982a, 1982b; Sharma, 1980). In spite of tremendous economic contribution, there is a generalized notion that associates women with the domestic rather than the public domain of social life (Mitchell, 1974). The conceptual analysis of 'production' and 'reproduction' is essential in the context of understanding women's role in public and private spheres.

'Production' and 'Reproduction': A Conceptual Analysis

Prior to the examination of controversies pertaining to the conceptual analysis of 'production' and 'reproduction', it is essential to provide a general interpretation of these two concepts. Activities spanning the entire spectrum of reproduction and production create value and are, therefore, potentially 'income generating'. 'Domestic' tasks such as housework and childcare, carried out by women household members, are unwaged in all societies and therefore, it is being mistaken that they do not constitute a category of 'work'. All domestic activities, in fact, contribute income to the household unit in the form of saving, budgeting or the provision of unpaid services (Mies, 1980; Papanek, 1979). Thus, in most parts of the world, involvement in production is interpreted as 'recognizable income-generating activity' (the creation of exchange values), which is accorded greater importance than involvement in the subsistence or reproductive sphere (the creation of use values). The former is usually considered to be the domain of men and the latter to be the purview of women (Molyneux, 1979; Sen, 1983). The overall status of those engaged in wage earning, self-employment, cash cropping and so on is generally considered to be higher than those confined to the domestic sector.

Thus, in conventional economics, the term production is used in reference to remunerated work in the market or subsistence agricultural production. Both are defined as economic activity in distinction to reproduction, which is understood to include the conversion of crops and wages into usable goods in the home. All such activities at home, much of it done by women, are included under consumption,

and a clear distinction is made between production which takes place in the market and reproduction in the home. National accounting systems, even in developing countries, have been modelled on market economics and therefore, households in these countries have been characterized as consumption or reproduction units. The applicability of concepts of economic activity to rural conditions has been questioned given the difficulties of separating production and reproduction in non-wage situations (Mies, 1982a, 1982b).

Thus, it is generally interpreted that housework is reproduction or consumption and not production. This view has been contradicted on the basis that even in an advanced capitalist economy like the United States (US), the household sector consumes roughly the same number of work hours as the market sector, which produces an income estimated somewhere between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) (Goldschmidt-Clermont, 1990). It is important to analyze the relations of production, and in what context it takes place, to find out who produces these use values and who receives them as income. The central relations of production in any mode of production are those between the class of direct producers and non-producers in that mode. Here, the emphasis is on the mechanisms of labour that channel the surplus labour products of the producers into the hands of the non-producers. In similar ways, in analyzing feudalism, Marx has focused on the relations of exploitation between lords and serfs, and in capitalism, between capitalists and workers. In domestic sphere, there is lack of clear and precise conceptualization for describing the working and leisure classes, though it is evident that in this sphere, the producers are women and the non-producers are men. Producers and non-producers in domestic sphere have been conceptualized as working and leisure classes by some Marxist feminists (Beechey, 1979; Beneria, 1979).

The domestic mode of production is basically patriarchal by nature. It includes that system of household labour in which the household members produce use values for direct consumption on accumulation within the household. It is an exploitative mode of production, because the labour is almost wholly produced by the female dependents within the household and because the male head of household is expropriating surplus labour when he consumes the use values produced by his dependents. He benefits from this relation of exploitation, both in the use values he appropriates and on the leisure time resulting from the necessary labour time he relinquishes. As for any other mode, the domestic mode of production should be understood to

include not only the direct relations of production and expropriation, but also other social and ideological activities necessary to sustain and reproduce the domestic mode of production (Hartmann, 1979; Molyneux, 1981).

Hence, those in the working class of the domestic mode of production are interpreted as 'dependents' and those in the leisure class as 'heads of households'. But it does not mean that household subordinates are really or normatively dependent on their household heads. In a sense, of course, the relations of dependency are actually the reverse, since leisure classes are always more dependent for their survival on the support of producing classes than vice versa.

Critical Analysis from Major Feminist Schools of Thought

Issues related to production and reproduction are complex and at the same time, an important area with relation to women's role and division of labour. This aspect has been dispensed with a variety of feminist approaches converged from different social science disciplines. But the common concerns, which often need more and more clarity, raised by different schools of thought include: the dimension and changing aspect of sexual division of labour; the relationship between such division of labour and the status of women in society; and the relationship between the organization of gender relations in the households and the entry of women into wage labour. This particular section of the article deals with this set of queries from major feminist perspectives.

From a liberal feminist perspective, value of individual autonomy and value of individual self-fulfilment have been given importance. According to this view, each individual is able to pursue his or her own self-interest as he or she defines it. Whether autonomy or self-fulfilment is the primary importance, they believe that the ultimate worth of the individual is expressed in political egalitarianism. According to this school of thought, no individual can be subordinated with the will or judgement of another. Law should not grant to women lesser rights than they allow to men. Unlike Marxism, liberalism views the state as a politically neutral instrument whose function is to guarantee to all individuals an equal opportunity for moral development and self-fulfilment. Many liberal feminists have campaigned consistently for educational opportunities for women, lack of which is a factor responsible for women's lower status in division of labour and low capacity for rationality. But this view has been criticized as it is too

simplistic an explanation for women's confinement to the domestic sphere. It is debatable whether there is indeed absolute equality in the rational potential of women as a group and of men as a group.

The Marxist feminist perspective emphasizes that changes in the organization of production are essential for equality between the sexes. Gender division of labour is related in different degrees according to the specific economic activities pursued by the society and the associated variations in the family structures. Thus, materialism explains social progress as emerging from the social relations and activities through the process of production and reproduction. Production and reproduction are the central features of human society (Engels, 1940). In Engels' opinion, emergence of private property is the root cause of women's subordination. But Engels does not explain how men came to control property and when exactly patriarchy originated. The important dimension of Marxist feminism is that gender, as a category, has to be applied along with the class in order to analyze women's oppression. One should be able to identify the operation of gender relations, their connection or distinction with the process of production and reproduction. Dimensions of sexuality, structure and nature of household and the specificity of oppression have to be analyzed historically (Barrett, 1980). One will have to demarcate between the relations of production, where the gender ideology plays an important role, and the means and forces of production (Barrett, 1980). Sex inequality reinforces class inequality, while class divisions are accentuated by gender discrimination. Thus, from a Marxist feminist perspective, class and gender are central to women's oppression.

But Marx is unable to relate his analysis to the forms of labour process with an analysis of the sexual division of labour. It is an additional responsibility for Marxist feminists to integrate a feminist analysis of labour with a Marxist analysis of the labour process. In this context, it is difficult to comprehend the complexity of the differential relationships that men and women have with production.

According to the views of the radical feminists, patriarchy exists in society and is determined essentially by a male hierarchical order (Delphy, 1984; Firestone, 1970), which enjoys both economic and political power. It is the patriarchal structure, and not the class structure, which defines women's position in the power hierarchy (Delphy, 1977). Thus, patriarchal structure is manifested through male force and control which preserves itself through marriage and family. According to this school of thought, patriarchy is sexual system of power, rooted in biology, that is, women's reproductive role, rather than in economics or

history. This view has been criticized on various grounds. In trying to explain the domination of man over woman, it reduces women's position in society to that of a biological reproductive unit. Patriarchy, instead of being defined in a broader way, is being interpreted only in terms of sexual control of women by men. Thus, instead of visualizing the historical formulation of women's oppression, women are presented with biological determinism (Eisenstein, 1980).

Neither patriarchy nor capitalism can provide a clear picture of the interrelationship between the material conditions of the existing society and the ideological representations. The socialist feminist approach has tried to comprehend the problem with a synthesis of these two approaches. According to Eisenstein, in such an analysis, capitalism and patriarchy are neither autonomous system nor identical: they are mutually dependent. This is being interpreted by Eisenstein as capitalist patriarchy (Eisenstein, 1979).

The Interlinkage between Production and Reproduction

Reproduction is one of the central concepts of Marx's political economy. The major part of his analysis is devoted to understanding how it takes place in the capitalist mode of production specifically. In general, Marx means, by reproduction, an ongoing process of production by which a society each day, simultaneously: (a) replaces the material goods which it has consumed; (b) puts back into its stock of productive capital (that is, means of production) at least as much as has been depreciated; and (c) reinforces or recreates the institutional structure (relations of production) by once again perpetuating the work role experiences of the past into the present. For Marxist political economy, before it began to address the question of household work, all social production was at the same time social reproduction—the material necessities of life, of the means of production and the relations of production (Marx, 1968, cited in Barrett, 1980).

Every act of production is necessarily, at the same time, an act of social and economic reproduction. The relation of patriarchal household to capitalist firm is not that reproduction takes place in the former and production in the latter. Both are, at the same time, productive and reproductive organizations. The social and economic reproduction that takes place in the household could not have happened without the production that takes place at the same household. Likewise, capitalist production would be impossible without capitalist reproduction. Whatever the articulation

between these two modes of production, it is nothing so simple, as the idea persists that households do the reproduction for capitalism (Barrett, 1980; Beneria, 1979).

There is no physical, metaphysical or economic difference between the two kinds of work, that is, productive and reproductive work. It is generally interpreted that the former adds new use values by creating new things and the latter merely maintains the use value of already existing things. Things once separated from nature by human labour require constant, continuing inputs of human labour to keep them from returning to nature (Beneria, 1982; Sen, 1981).

The complications of this aspect can be clearer through a simple example. Workers who make new bottles from sand and workers who clean and recycle old bottles are both productive workers. Similarly, factory workers who make new chairs and household workers who clean, refinish and repair old chairs are both productive workers. The distinctions between productive and reproductive work are basically false. This type of classification leads to a biased assumption that assigns much of women's work to a secondary role of 'reproductive' activities. The close relationship between production and reproduction is reflected in Meillassoux's thought. He has given importance on the reproductive activities in the context of domestic society that includes the physical and social reproduction as well as the reproduction of the 'producers'. Women play the key role in the range of activities carried out within the household, which remain largely unrecognized (Meillassoux, 1972).

For the clear understanding of the 'relations of reproduction', it is essential to understand the 'relations of production'. It is impossible to have a notion of production which does not involve reproduction. It is important to understand the interrelationship between the two as part of a single process and consider the ways in which these have been historically transformed.

Marxist economists thus define labour as the ultimate resource, and labour is seen to create either use value or exchange value. For them, production refers to labour used to create exchange value in the market and reproduction refers to labour used to create use value in the home. Here, the term reproduction refers to biological reproduction as well as the reproduction of maintenance of the labour force and includes household 'production' of use value, that is, goods and services for immediate consumption in the home. So, home is considered as both a unit of consumption and reproduction (Hartmann, 1976; Mackintosh, 1977).

Neo-classical economists have tried to resolve the controversies pertaining to production and reproduction by introducing two important dimensions into this debate: first, that the ultimate resource is time; and second, that household investments of time, money and other resources on nutrition, sanitation, health care, education, etc., of its members are investment in human capital and should not be characterized as consumption (Becker, 1964). Marxist's view on reproduction becomes human capital production. This approach makes it possible, to some extent, to calculate the economic value of household activities. If it can be used to analyze households in market economics where much of the women's work remain unrecognized, then it can be argued that women are not merely consumers as characterized by earlier economic models.

Relationship between Market and the Family

The gradual penetration of the market into economic life generates a shift of production from the domestic to market sphere. In industrialized societies where subsistence depends predominantly on the wage, the function of domestic work is to transform family income into consumable goods and services, only a small part of which is produced within the household. The burden of subsistence therefore falls on the wage, whereas parts of production are gradually removed from the household and domestic labour tends to concentrate on the transformation of market goods for household consumption. But, in reality, domestic labour, especially in agricultural societies, contains a higher degree of production. It is a fact that all stages of food transformation are often carried out in the household. Even if it is not agricultural societies, women's work around the household consists of a great variety of subsistence activities. In many cases, the burden of subsistence falls on women's domestic activities together with agricultural work. In both these cases, women's participation is high. In fact, agricultural and household-related tasks are highly integrated; also, productive and reproductive activities are highly interlinked, time and again (Beneria, 1979, 1982).

Thus, there seems to be a universal tendency to dismiss the unpaid household labour of women and to devalue their role as household managers and producers and to ascribe greater worth to exchange values compared to use values. A woman who specializes in the creation of use values through household production, rather than exchange values through paid employment, is counted as 'not working' or 'unemployed' even though her household work includes

production of subsistence crops. Her activities provide the basic foundation for labour needed in the so-called 'productive' sectors of the economy. The most obvious outcome of the invisibility of household production is that neither the value of labour input nor the value of output is taken into account in the national accounting system.

Relationship between Patriarchy and Capitalism

Marxist theorists are more concerned with analyzing production, but are unable to explain the specific situation of women within capitalist structure of labour process. Industrial capitalist societies consist of not one structure, that is, capitalism, but of two: patriarchy and capitalism (Delphy, 1984; Hartmann, 1979). Patriarchy was established before the development of capitalism and was carried over into capitalist forms of labour process because men wanted to secure a privileged position for themselves. As a consequence, sexual hierarchy was established within the wage labour system. It is not just capitalists who are held responsible for women's positioning in the labour market but also men. Capitalism and patriarchy interact with each other, creating a subordinate position (Hartmann, 1976).

Unlike radical feminist writers, Marxist feminists have attempted to analyze the relationship between the subordination of women and the organization of various modes of production. In fact, the concept of patriarchy has been adopted by Marxist and socialist feminists in an attempt to transform Marxist theory to more adequately account for the subordination of women as well as for the forms of class exploitation. They have attempted to analyze not only patriarchy, but the relationship between patriarchy and capitalist mode of production. This is because they do not believe that the subordination of women can be absolutely separated from other forms of capitalist exploitation and oppression, for example, class exploitation and racism. They reject the ways in which the orthodox Marxists and socialist organizations have marginalized women theoretically and within their practice and have regarded the oppression of women as simply a side effect of class exploitation. It has become clear that socialism does not, in any simple way, guarantee the liberation of women, as the experience of women in socialist societies reveals (Hartmann, 1979; Mitchell, 1974). The oppression of women is inextricably linked with the capitalist order and therefore, to understand women's oppression, it is essential to understand capitalism too.

The radical feminist analysis claims that gender differences can be explained in terms of the biological

differences between men and women. Radical feminism, in fact, develops a theory of patriarchy and sex class, which is rooted in women's reproductive capacities (Firestone, 1970). But this interpretation raises many problems. First of all, it is biologically reductionist. Its analysis leaves unexplained the specific forms of male domination and female subordination; nor does it explain the relationship between patriarchal social relations and the social relations of production, that is, between sex classes and social classes. Again, radical feminism assumes the existence of the two autonomous systems of social classes, economic classes and sex classes. It does not express much about the relationship between these two. The analysis of production, upon which economic classes are based, therefore remains untouched by this kind of analysis (Molyneux, 1981).

Relationship between 'Production of Things' and 'Production of People'

Production of people can be interpreted as biological reproduction which includes both physical and social processes, that is, the social and cultural mechanisms by which gender relations, women's sexuality and procreation are structured and controlled. Although the only compelling connection between female sex and reproductive activity is in the sphere of biological reproduction, it is a fact that women are also quite uniformly allocated to many other tasks. These are directly connected to the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force, such as cooking, cleaning, childcare and care of the sick and the aged. Especially in the case of rural women, the distinction between productive and reproductive work often seems to be somewhat artificial in terms of women's concrete burden. It is easy to recognize, for instance, that the process of reproduction includes a large number of productive tasks geared to the household's own consumption, such as animal care, agricultural work, weaving and petty trade, along with food preparation, carrying water, collecting firewood and so on. It is undesirable that, especially in agrarian societies, women are primarily valued for their procreative ability and that fertility is central component of female status. It is also true that those who control their reproductive capacity are generally able to have command over their labour (Caldwell, 1978).

It is now widely recognized that women's position within families needs to be explained in terms of wider social processes and structures. There is direct and intimate link between the mechanisms through which female sexu-

ality is controlled and the system of production. Women's child-bearing capacity and labour are manipulated and used through social structures which are patriarchal by nature. The health and mortality of women are severely affected as they do not have control over child bearing. Population control and women's access to contraception and abortion have complex interaction, which may not have any positive linkage with the status. Women have very little role to play in the social and private control over fertility. The number and spacing of children is also determined by the husband or male head of the family, as a consequence men have control over children for purposes of inheritance of labour and property (Sen, 1984). Ideologies are strengthened in such a way which devalues the status of women who do not have children or sons. Absence of son in a family is considered inauspicious as certain rituals, religious functions cannot be performed. This also can have effect on attaining moksha. Women's mobility from the family is also conditioned by various factors as there is fear that sexuality may be affected. This has an adverse consequence, which hinders women's ability to participate in the paid employment or industrial sector. Thus, the process of subordination takes place through the social structures, specifically family/kinship structures, and this interconnects with the system of production. In the words of Meillassoux, 'the domestic community is indeed the only economic and social system which manages the physical reproduction of human beings, the reproduction of the producers and social reproduction at large through a comprehensive set of institutions, by the ordered manipulation of the living means of reproduction, that is: Women' (Meillassoux, 1972, p. 12). Meillassoux has given ultimate importance to 'domestic community', which has occupied a dominant role over all modes of production. Capitalism as a mode of production is dependent upon the domestic sphere for the reproduction of labour power, which again helps in the process of ongoing survival of labour force over generations. The Marxist feminists have tried to criticize the relationship between the domestic sphere/family and capitalism. Women's capacity to bear children provides human energy, though they are alienated from production system in economic sphere.

Edholm, Harris and Young (1977) have given a broad conceptualization to understand 'reproduction', which includes three major classifications, that is, social reproduction, reproduction of the labour force and biological reproduction. It is important to understand the dynamics of social reproduction because the criticality of women's position and male-female relation, and to what extent it is crucial for

the reproduction of social totality, can be grasped in a better way. Understanding the concept of reproduction of the labour force helps in determining the women's involvement and their real contribution in this sphere, as well as position in the society. Through biological reproduction, one can understand how women's sexuality is controlled (Edholm et al., 1977). Finally, social reproduction refers to the perpetuation and recreation of the main production system with relation to society taken on the whole. They argue convincingly that Meillassoux's insistence on control over and reproduction of the labour force, as the basis of women's subordination, confuses the issue. Similarly, social reproduction is not reducible either to human reproduction or to the reproduction of the labour force, although they are intimately linked. Thus, they make an attempt to distinguish between three different usages of the term reproduction. Biological reproduction essentially differs from child bearing. The reproduction of the labour force, while subsuming biological reproduction, also involves the daily maintenance of the labour force and the allocation of individuals to positions within the labour process.

The Indian Scenario

Understanding the situation of women in India is more complex because of its unique features of stratification. The agrarian structure, the caste system and the private control of property and adoption within households of women's labour facilitate the process of gender inequality. Time and again, caste system has played a considerable role in defining the social division of labour as well as the mechanisms of its reproduction via caste endogamy and prescriptions and prohibitions with regard to other forms of social interaction. The interlinkages between the mechanisms of caste reproduction and the subordination of women play significant role in this context. The continued resistance to inter-caste marriage even today is coupled with the emergence of political domination of certain groups (Das, 1975; Desai & Krishanaraj, 1987).

In the Indian context, the issue of dowry is important in reproducing women's subordination. Srinivas' (1984) view is that dowry cannot be understood properly without referring to the caste system, especially the higher castes, which is integral to it. There is ample evidence to trace the historic origins of dowry to high-caste social order, through the prevalence of hypergamous marriages by which a girl from a lower status marries into a family of higher status. The philosophy behind *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages

was to perpetuate male dominance, which propagates the idea that woman as bearer of purity should not lower herself, but it does not operate in the reverse way. This is evident from various studies on caste, and from folk literature, which show that the women of lower castes are accessible to men of higher castes (Srinivas, 1978, 1984). One of the advantages of marrying a woman of lower caste is to make use of her labour, and since she is from lower caste, it is easy to subordinate her. Surprisingly, dowry is often interpreted to indicate a women's right to inherit a share of the paternal property and to provide her greater economic security, status, independence within the marriage (Goody, 1976; Goody & Tambiah, 1973). But this view has been questioned among the recent feminists. In spite of the fact that the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 allows daughters, widows and mothers to inherit land, equally with sons, very few women exercise this right. This aspect has been strengthened through the evidence cited by Ursula Sharma. She has given the examples of the customary practices prevailing in the states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab, which prevent women from inheriting land as daughters, except in the absence of sons. The logic behind this practice is that the daughters inherit their shares in the patrimony at the time of their marriage in the form of dowry (Sharma, 1980, 1984). Dowry is not actually the share non-divisible in a parental household, because the kind of movable goods which daughters inherit cannot be considered as comparable to the immovable or landed property, which sons receive (Sharma, 1980). That is one of the important reasons as to why women's loss of rights to land effectively marginalizes them from society's main productive resource. More than half of the Indian women do not have independent land to cultivate, even though they actively participate in the family production units (Sen, 1985). The ideological bias underlying statistical categories tends to undervalue women's work and the subsistence activities usually are not included in the statistics of production.

In reality, women make a larger contribution to family income (Boserup, 1970). Instead of dowry system, bride price is often interpreted as a positive custom which enhances the status of women. The purpose behind this custom of transfer of goods acts as a mechanism for compensating the bride's kin for the loss of her labour and the women's reproductive potential from a kin group to her husband's house (Goody, 1976). The custom of bride price is more prominent among the poorer and lower castes, and receiving dowry is generally a common practice among the high-caste people throughout India (Karve, 1965). The transference of women on the basis of bride price also

implies a parallel transfer of women's labour and sexuality. In this situation, children are the inheritors and transmitters of property over generations. The subordination of women through lack of control over land, property and sexuality has been strengthened through various mechanisms in Indian society, such as caste endogamy, dowry and so on. Though sociologists and social anthropologists have tried to highlight the system of dowry and bride price, they have not contributed to an analysis of the status of women. The feminist perspective in this context contributes on critical analysis of women's subordination.

Apart from caste and dowry, the sexual division of labour in the Indian situation does not imply mere complementarities, but perpetuates occupational segregation, labour market segmentation and unequal wage structure. In agriculture, for instance, women engage in water regulation, transplanting, weeding and harvesting, but not ploughing. Studies indicate that the sex-wise allocation of tasks also exist in the industrial set-up and in the informal sector (Banerjee, 1984). More than half of the Indian women's activities are unrecorded in census data, as they do not have independent land to cultivate, even though they actively assist in family production units (Sen, 1985). Women's work participation rates fluctuate with changes in the census definition of work and worker.

Task-specific work of women is, therefore, one of the important indicators of her lower status. Apart from that, she has unequal agricultural wages, which is taken away by men (Agarwal, 1986). In subsistence farming with high female participation, women work on a complementary basis with men, but their control over resources is not necessarily assured. In the unorganized non-agricultural sector, the position of women is equally miserable. Their entering into traditional unorganized units, which are not covered by the factory laws, and their entry into new type of occupations in organized sectors where role specification takes place hinders the choice of work. This happens because of the special problems that women face, such as lack of education, low technical skill, lack of choice because of family pressure and so on.

Conclusion

Sexual division of labour is connected to power hierarchy and domestic labour. Its significance and connection to undervaluation of women and control of women's labour is, in turn, related to the interplay between production systems that generate the means of subsistence for human beings

and reproduction systems—that govern the reproduction of human beings and the reproduction of systems of production. In doing these analysis, feminist scholars have drawn heavily from Marxian framework, from anthropology and from radical feminist analysis of power relations. This facilitates the grasp of the complex interplay between systems of stratification in society and gender relations. Theories of social reproduction can be based on two major classifications. In the first instance, in terms of control over the women's labour and fertility, that is, in materialist terms; and in second instance, as ideological relations, which are centrally involved in the transformation of sex into gender. In each case, of course, priority is given to the social relations of reproduction in defining women's oppression. These may be seen to have consequences for the organizations of production, or as functionally related to it, but the specificity of the position of women is primarily perceived in terms of reproduction relations.

Question arises, why should all activities be included within the sphere of productive activities and why has production become the central theme of discussion? The question can be linked with developmental issues. If development is measured in economic terms and the development goals focus on increased production, then national resources are directed to producers, in an effort to increase their productivity. Women have weak claims over these resources, since they are not characterized as producers. Gender-based differentiation of the labour market has led to inflexibility in integrating women in the development process. Social realities determine that the majority of women in economically developing societies engage in arduous occupations for family survival. Despite this reality, women are perceived as passive beneficiaries of welfare programmes, rather than as active participants in development which includes access to assets, knowledge, skills and a social climate that will enable them to develop their potential for individual and national development. The entire development process needs to be restructured in this context. Their claims can be improved by either making women do what is defined as productive work or changing the definition of productive work to include what women do. The linkage between prevailing paradigm in the context of socio-economic production and the structural presence of women needs serious examination.

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