



Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education

Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

Tirunelveli – 627 012, Tamil Nadu.

B.A. ECONOMICS

(Third Year)

Gender Economics

(JEEC52)

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Semester	Course	Title of the Course	Course Code	Credits
V	Elective – VI	Gender Economics	JEEC52	3

SYLLABUS

Unit I: Introduction to Gender Analysis and Economics

Definition – Gender – Gender Analysis: Purpose and Scope – Feminist Perspective in Economics – Classical and Neoclassical Economics – Post Keynesian Economics – Economic Measurements – Empirical Challenges.

Unit II: Development and Anti-Development

Development Versus Anti-Development – Women in Development (WID) – Women and Development (WAD) – Gender and Development – Women and Empowerment – Women and Environment – Ecofeminism.

Unit III: Women and Work - A Conceptual Clarification

Invisibility of Women – “Statistical Purdah” – A Critique of Methods, Concepts, Definitions Employed in Economic Theory – A Critique of the Data System in India (Application) – Measures to Rectify this Invisibility.

Unit IV: Marginalization of Women

Women Sidelined – Gender – Discrimination Theories – Women in the Labour Market – Sexual Division of Labour, Wage Differentials, Micro Credit – Women in the Organised and the Unorganised Sectors of the Indian Economy (Application) – Feminisation of Work and Feminisation of Poverty.

Unit V: Gender, The Economy and Related Issues

Population – Demographic Features – Health and Education – Policy Measures – Government and NGOs – Gender Budgeting.

TEXTBOOKS

1. Jaya Shrivatsava (2018), Gender Discrimination and Inequality in Contemporary India: Dimensions and Voices of Protests, Kalpaz Publications.
2. Caroline Criado Perez (2019) Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men, Harry N. Abrams.
3. Mukesh Eswaran (2020), Why Gender Matters in Economics, Princeton University Press.
4. K.R. Gupta, “Gender Problems and Policies”, Atlantic, 2009.

Unit I: Introduction to Gender Analysis and Economics

Definition – Gender – Gender Analysis: Purpose and Scope – Feminist Perspective in Economics – Classical and Neoclassical Economics – Post Keynesian Economics – Economic Measurements – Empirical Challenges.

Introduction

Gender Analysis in Economics refers to the study of how economic roles, opportunities, and outcomes differ between men and women (and across gender identities), and how these differences are shaped by social, cultural, and institutional factors.

In simple terms, **it examines how gender affects economic behaviour, access to resources, and decision-making power**, and how economic policies or programs impact men and women differently.

In other words, **Gender Analysis in Economics** is the process of understanding how gender differences influence economic life, and how economic systems, policies, and institutions can either promote or hinder gender equality.

1. Focus of Gender Analysis in Economics:

- ✓ It looks at the **division of labour** between men and women — for example, who does paid work (in offices/factories) and who does unpaid work (like childcare or household chores).
- ✓ It studies **income inequality** between genders and the reasons behind the gender wage gap.
- ✓ It examines how **access to education, credit, property, and technology** differs for men and women.
- ✓ It explores how **economic policies** (like taxation, welfare, or employment laws) impact genders differently.

2. Purpose

- ✓ To ensure that economic growth and development are **inclusive** and **equitable**.
- ✓ To identify and correct **gender-based barriers** in economic participation.
- ✓ To design **policies and programs** that promote **gender equality** and **women's empowerment**.

Example

- ✓ If a government introduces a subsidy for farmers, gender analysis checks whether **both male and female farmers** have equal access to that subsidy.
- ✓ If only men own land (and land ownership is required for the subsidy), women may be left out — gender analysis helps reveal and address such inequalities.

Definition

“Gender analysis in economics is the systematic examination of how gender differences affect economic outcomes and how economic policies, institutions, and practices impact men and women differently.”

— *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming,” 2014.*

Alternative Academic Definition

“Gender analysis identifies, assesses, and informs actions on inequalities that arise from the different roles of men and women, and the unequal power relations between them in the economy.”

— *World Bank, “Gender and Development: An Operational Guide,” 2012.*

Gender

In **Gender Economics**, the term **“Gender”** refers to the **socially constructed roles, responsibilities, and expectations** that societies assign to men and women — and how these influence their participation in and benefits from the economy.

“Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.”

— *World Health Organization (WHO, 2011)*

In Gender Economics, **“gender”** means the set of **socially defined roles and relations** between men and women that influence their **economic opportunities, choices, and outcomes**.

Explanation

In **Gender Economics**, *gender* is not just about biological differences between males and females (which is called **sex**).

Instead, it focuses on the **social and economic expectations** placed on men and women — for example:

- Who does paid work and who does unpaid care work,
- Who has access to education, jobs, and income,
- Who holds decision-making power in households or institutions.

“**Gender** in economics refers to the **social and cultural meanings** attached to being male or female, which determine how individuals are expected to behave, what kind of work they do, and what access they have to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power.”
— *Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “Gender and Development,” 2014.*

Explanation

- It is **not biological** (that’s *sex*), but rather **social and economic** in nature.
- Gender affects **who gets paid work, who controls income, who owns assets, and who makes economic decisions.**
- For example, in many societies, women are expected to handle unpaid household work, while men are expected to engage in paid employment. These expectations create **economic inequalities** that gender economics aims to study and address.

In other words, “**gender**” means the **socially defined roles and relations** between men and women that shape their **economic behaviour, access to resources, and outcomes** in the economy.

Purpose

The **main purpose** of gender analysis is to identify and understand how **gender-based differences**—in roles, responsibilities, access to resources, and power—affect people’s participation in, and benefits from, economic and social systems. It aims to make **policies, programs, and projects** more **equitable**, ensuring that both men and women can contribute to and benefit from development on equal terms.

1. To Identify Gender Inequalities

Gender analysis helps to **uncover hidden or visible disparities** between men and women in various spheres such as income, employment, education, property rights, access to credit, health care, and political representation.

- It investigates **why such inequalities exist** — for example, due to discriminatory laws, cultural beliefs, or unequal access to education.
- It highlights areas where women may be **economically disadvantaged** (such as unpaid domestic labour) or **socially restricted** (such as limited mobility or decision-making power).
- By identifying these gaps, gender analysis provides the evidence needed to design **corrective measures**, like equal pay policies or women's entrepreneurship programs.

Example:

In agriculture, gender analysis may show that even though women perform most farming tasks, they own very little land and rarely receive agricultural loans. This insight helps governments and NGOs frame policies to improve women's land rights and access to finance.

2. To Understand Gender Roles and Responsibilities

Gender analysis examines the **division of labour** within households, workplaces, and communities — distinguishing between **productive work** (income-generating activities), **reproductive work** (household and caregiving duties), and **community roles** (voluntary or unpaid social work).

- It reveals how these roles are **socially constructed**, not biologically determined.
- Recognizing these patterns helps policymakers understand why women's economic contributions often go **undervalued or unrecorded** in national statistics.
- It also helps in designing programs that support **work-life balance**, such as childcare facilities or flexible working hours.

Example:

Women often spend several hours daily on unpaid care work, which reduces the time available for paid employment. A gender-sensitive policy might introduce subsidized daycare centres to free up women's time for economic activities.

3. To Assess the Impact of Policies and Programs

Gender analysis helps evaluate whether **existing or proposed policies** affect men and women differently. It asks:

- Who benefits from this policy?
- Who controls the resources created by it?
- Who bears the cost or burden?

Without such analysis, even well-intentioned policies may **reinforce inequality**.

Example:

A rural development program offering loans to “landowners” may unintentionally exclude women if property laws or customs prevent them from owning land. Gender analysis identifies such loopholes and recommends more inclusive eligibility criteria.

4. To Promote Gender Equality and Empowerment

A central aim of gender analysis is to **promote fairness and justice** by ensuring that men and women have **equal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power**.

- It supports **women’s empowerment** — helping women gain confidence, economic independence, and a voice in public life.
- It also promotes **shared responsibility**, encouraging men to take part in caregiving and household duties.
- True empowerment involves not only economic inclusion but also **legal and social recognition** of women’s rights.

Example:

Microfinance programs designed after gender analysis often provide women with small loans and training, leading to higher family incomes and greater participation of women in community decision-making.

5. To Integrate Gender Concerns in Planning and Development

Gender analysis ensures that gender perspectives are **mainstreamed** into all stages of development — from **policy design to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation**.

- It ensures that projects are not gender-neutral but **gender-responsive** — meaning they actively address inequalities rather than ignore them.
- Policymakers use gender analysis tools such as **Gender Budgeting**, **Gender Impact Assessments**, and **Gender-Disaggregated Data** to plan effectively.
- Integrating gender concerns leads to **sustainable and inclusive development**, as it maximizes the potential of the entire population.

Example:

In education policy, gender analysis helps identify barriers such as safety concerns or lack of sanitation facilities that prevent girls from attending school — leading to more targeted and effective interventions.

Scope

The **scope of gender analysis is broad, multidimensional, and interdisciplinary**. It extends across **economic, social, political, institutional, and developmental** dimensions of life. Through these areas, gender analysis helps to identify where inequalities exist, why they persist, and how they can be reduced through appropriate policy and action.

A) Economic Scope

The **economic scope** of gender analysis focuses on understanding how gender influences economic participation, access to resources, and outcomes in the labour market and production system.

1. Access to Resources

Gender analysis examines how men and women differ in their access to and control over key economic resources such as **income, land, credit, property, information, and technology**. Often, men have legal ownership and control, while women's contributions remain unrecognized or undervalued.

Example: Women farmers may not have ownership rights to land, even though they contribute most of the labour.

2. Participation in Labor Markets and Entrepreneurship

It studies the **employment patterns** of men and women — who works where, in what sectors, and under what conditions. Gender analysis identifies barriers that limit women's participation, such as lower wages, lack of maternity benefits, or restricted mobility. It also examines

women's involvement in **entrepreneurship** and the challenges they face in accessing credit or networks for business expansion.

3. Division of Paid and Unpaid Work

Gender analysis recognizes that while men often dominate the **paid workforce**, women perform a large share of **unpaid work** — such as household chores, childcare, and elder care. This unpaid labour has significant economic value but is often **excluded from national income statistics** (like GDP). By highlighting this imbalance, gender analysis helps design policies like childcare support or flexible work hours.

4. Gender Wage Gap and Employment Opportunities

Gender analysis investigates the **wage differences** between men and women for similar work and identifies the structural causes — such as discrimination, occupational segregation, or unequal promotion opportunities. It also focuses on improving women's **economic empowerment** through skill development, equal pay laws, and inclusive hiring policies.

B) Social Scope

The **social scope** of gender analysis explores how gender roles and expectations influence social status, access to services, and quality of life.

1. Education, Health, and Social Status

Gender analysis examines gender disparities in **education enrolment, literacy, and skill training**, as well as **health access and outcomes** (like maternal health or nutrition). It highlights how traditional beliefs or poverty often limit girls' education and women's healthcare access, thereby affecting their economic potential.

2. Family Structure, Cultural Norms, and Expectations

It studies how cultural norms shape men's and women's responsibilities within families and communities. For instance, women are often expected to handle domestic duties while men are seen as breadwinners. These norms influence decision-making, division of labour, and overall social mobility.

3. Access to Social Protection and Welfare Schemes

Gender analysis assesses whether social protection programs (like pensions, health insurance, or food security schemes) **benefit men and women equally**. Women, especially those in

informal employment, may be excluded from such benefits due to lack of documentation or awareness. Hence, gender-sensitive welfare policies ensure **equal access to social safety nets**.

C) Political and Institutional Scope

The **political and institutional scope** of gender analysis examines the influence of governance systems, policies, and institutional structures on gender equality.

1. Representation in Decision-Making and Leadership

Gender analysis evaluates how many women hold positions in **politics, administration, and corporate leadership**. Representation matters because women leaders often prioritize policies related to health, education, and equality.

Example: Gender quotas in parliaments have been effective in increasing women's political participation.

2. Institutional Rules and Laws Affecting Gender Equality

It studies whether laws, policies, and institutional practices are **gender-neutral or gender-biased**. For instance, property inheritance laws, labour codes, and credit regulations may favour men if gender perspectives are ignored. Gender analysis pushes for **legal reforms** to ensure fairness and inclusion.

3. Gender Sensitivity in Public Administration and Budgeting

This involves analysing how **government budgets** and **public programs** address the needs of both genders. **Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)** ensures that financial allocations promote equality rather than reinforce discrimination.

Example: Allocating specific funds for women's education, rural enterprises, or maternal health services.

D) Developmental Scope

The **developmental scope** of gender analysis integrates gender perspectives into broader development planning, policy-making, and evaluation.

1. Integration of Gender Perspectives in Development Planning

Gender analysis ensures that development projects — whether in agriculture, industry, or education — are designed with a **gender lens**. This prevents unequal outcomes and ensures that both men and women benefit from economic progress.

Example: Including women in agricultural extension services to improve productivity and food security.

2. Gender Impact Assessment in Key Sectors

It studies how different development programs — poverty alleviation, trade, industrialization, or technology adoption — affect men and women differently. For instance, mechanization in agriculture might reduce women's employment if not planned carefully. Such assessments help in designing **inclusive and sustainable interventions**.

3. Measuring Gender Equality through Indicators

Gender analysis uses quantitative tools such as the **Gender Development Index (GDI)** and **Gender Inequality Index (GII)** to measure disparities. These indicators help policymakers track progress toward equality in health, education, income, and political empowerment.

Feminist Perspective in Economics

Definition

The **feminist perspective in economics** is an approach that examines how traditional economic theories, policies, and practices often overlook or undervalue women's roles, experiences, and contributions — and seeks to make economics more inclusive and gender-sensitive.

— Source: Ferber, M. A. & Nelson, J. A. (1993), *"Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics."*

Meaning and Overview

The **feminist perspective** challenges the **male-cantered bias** in mainstream (neoclassical) economics.

Traditional economics assumes that economic agents (like workers or consumers) are **rational, self-interested, and independent** — but feminist economists argue that this ignores the **social realities** of interdependence, care, and unpaid labour, especially those performed by women.

Feminist economics, therefore, studies how **gender roles, norms, and power relations** shape economic behaviour, and it emphasizes the **value of unpaid care work, equality, and human well-being**, not just profit or efficiency.

Key Features

The following are some of the key features:

1. Recognition of Unpaid Work

Traditional economics counts only **market-based (paid)** activities in GDP, ignoring **unpaid household and care work** done mostly by women. Feminist economists argue that this unpaid labour is **essential for the functioning of the economy**, as it supports the workforce (by caring for children, elderly, and home). They advocate for **including unpaid work in national accounts** and policymaking.

Example: Cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing contribute to human capital but are excluded from GDP.

2. Critique of Economic Models

Feminist economists question assumptions of **rational, self-interested behaviour** and **perfect competition**. They argue that real-life economic decisions are influenced by **social relations, emotions, and gender expectations**. The feminist approach includes values like **care, cooperation, and ethics**, rather than pure competition or profit maximization.

3. Focus on Power and Inequality

The feminist perspective highlights how **patriarchal power structures** influence access to resources, employment, wages, and decision-making. It studies **gender wage gaps, occupational segregation, and women's limited access** to property, credit, and technology. Feminist economics calls for **policy reforms** to ensure fair representation, pay equity, and resource distribution.

4. Broader Definition of Economic Well-being

Instead of focusing only on **growth and income**, feminist economics measures **human well-being** — including time use, health, security, and dignity. It supports **inclusive development**, where both men and women can participate and benefit equally.

5. Emphasis on Care Economy

Feminist economists promote the idea of a **“care economy”** — recognizing caregiving (both paid and unpaid) as an economic activity that sustains society. They call for **investment in childcare, healthcare, and eldercare services**, ensuring both men and women share caregiving responsibilities.

6. Gender-Responsive Policy Advocacy

Feminist economics influences public policy through tools like **gender budgeting**, **gender-disaggregated data**, and **social protection programs** for women. It advocates for **education, skill development, and employment policies** that address gender barriers.

Classical Economics

Classical Economics is the school of thought developed mainly in the **18th and 19th centuries** by economists such as **Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill**. It focuses on how **markets operate freely** through the forces of **demand and supply**, emphasizing **individual self-interest, competition, and economic growth**.

1. Definition

Classical economics is an economic theory that assumes individuals act rationally to maximize their self-interest, markets are self-regulating, and economic outcomes result from the free play of market forces without much government interference.

— Source: Adam Smith, *“The Wealth of Nations”* (1776)

2. Assumptions

i) Rational Economic Man (Homo Economicus)

Classical economics assumes that individuals act **rationally** and are **self-interested**, making decisions to **maximize their personal benefit**.

Every economic choice—whether it’s what to buy, sell, or produce—is made after weighing costs and benefits.

This assumption ignores social roles and unpaid labour, often underestimating women’s contributions in household work and caregiving, which are not purely “market decisions.”

ii) Market Efficiency

Classical economists believe that **free markets allocate resources efficiently**. Prices adjust based on **supply and demand**, ensuring that goods and services go to those who value them most. Hence, there is no necessity of central planning; the “invisible hand” of the market ensures optimal outcomes.

This assumption ignores structural inequalities, such as **gender-based wage gaps or limited access to resources**, which prevent markets from being truly efficient for everyone.

iii) Division of Labor

Economic progress is achieved through **specialization**, where individuals focus on specific tasks to increase productivity and efficiency. For example, one person grows wheat, another bakes bread; each becomes more skilled in their task.

Classical economics typically assumes men participate in market labour, while women's domestic labour is undervalued and excluded from productivity calculations.

iv) Minimal Government Role

Classical economics advocates that government should have a **limited role**, mainly like maintaining **law and order**, while leaving the economy to **self-regulate** through market forces. Policies like welfare, social security, or gender equality programs are not considered necessary.

Lack of government intervention **ignores systemic barriers** that women face, such as unequal access to education, employment, or credit.

v) Focus on Production and Profit

Economic success is measured primarily by **production output, income generation, and capital accumulation**. Wealth creation and growth are the main goals of economic activity. This focus **overlooks unpaid labour and caregiving** done mostly by women, which is essential for sustaining households and the workforce but is not counted in traditional measures of economic success.

3. Gender Blindness in Classical Economics

While classical economics laid the foundation for modern economic thought, it was “**gender-blind**” — meaning it ignored the economic roles, contributions, and constraints faced by women. Let us discuss how they are biased in gender neutrality:

a. Exclusion of Women from Economic Analysis

Classical economists focused mainly on **market activities** (production, trade, and wages) and ignored **non-market activities**, such as household and care work, typically done by women. Women were seen as *dependents* or *non-productive* members of society because their work was unpaid.

b. Public vs. Private Divide

Classical economics separated the economy into the **public (market) sphere** and the **private (household) sphere**. Men were associated with the public, productive economy; women with the private, reproductive economy — which was not counted in GDP or economic output.

c. The “Economic Man” Model

The assumption of the “rational, self-interested economic man” ignores the values of **care, empathy, cooperation, and social relationships**, which are central to many economic activities — especially those performed by women. This model reflects a **male-cantered bias**, as it treats independence and competition as the norm while undervaluing interdependence and caregiving.

d. Invisible Contribution of Women

By ignoring unpaid domestic labour, classical economics **undervalued women’s contribution** to the functioning of the market economy. For example, women’s care work sustains the labour force (raising children, caring for workers), yet it was not considered part of the “productive economy.”

4. Feminist Critique of Classical Economics

Classical economics, developed by thinkers like Adam Smith and David Ricardo, focused on **market production, rational decision-making, and individual self-interest**. While foundational, feminist economists argue that it **fails to capture the full scope of economic life**, particularly the contributions and constraints of women.

i) Ignores Gendered Divisions of Labor and Social Context

Classical economics assumes a “one-size-fits-all” economic agent (the rational male worker) and **does not account for social roles**.

Example: Women’s labour is often split between **paid market work and unpaid domestic work**, while men’s work is mainly market-focused.

By ignoring these divisions, classical theory **fails to capture the full economic contributions of women** and the constraints they face due to societal expectations.

ii) Fails to Include Unpaid Household and Care Work

GDP and other economic indicators measure only **market transactions**, excluding domestic labour like cooking, cleaning, childcare, and eldercare.

Example: A woman raising children full-time performs **essential economic work** that sustains the workforce, but this work is invisible in classical economic analysis.

This omission **undervalues women's contributions** and distorts policy priorities, making it appear as if men are the sole economic producers.

iii) Overemphasizes Rationality and Competition

Classical economics assumes that individuals act purely out of **self-interest** and **compete** to maximize profit or utility. It **neglects cooperation, care, empathy, and social responsibilities**, which are central to household work and community support. Economic theory becomes **male-centric**, emphasizing competition and ignoring the collaborative aspects of human activity often carried out by women.

iv) Reinforces Men as “Producers” and Women as “Dependents”

The theory implicitly positions men as the primary participants in market activities, while women are seen as **dependent, non-productive members** of the household. This **reinforces gender stereotypes** and fails to recognize women's economic agency, even when they contribute both inside and outside the home.

v) Implications of Feminist Critique

Feminist economists argue for a **broader, more inclusive economic framework** that:

- Recognizes both **paid and unpaid work**
- Incorporates **social and cultural contexts**
- Values **care, cooperation, and interdependence** alongside productivity and profit

The outcome is a more **accurate, equitable, and gender-aware economic analysis** that better reflects reality and guides effective policy.

5. Relationship Between Classical Economics and Gender Analysis

Aspect	Classical Economics View	Gender Analysis View
Economic Agent	“Economic Man” – rational, self-interested, independent	Economic actors are diverse; relationships, emotions, and care also drive decisions
Scope of Economy	Focused on paid, market-based activities	Includes unpaid work, social reproduction, and care economy

Measurement of Growth	GDP, income, output	Human well-being, equality, empowerment
Role of Women	Seen mainly as dependents or homemakers	Recognized as economic contributors both inside and outside the market
Policy Implication	Minimal government role	Active intervention to promote gender equality and inclusion

6. Modern Relevance

Modern gender analysis **extends classical economics** by recognizing and valuing women's work across all spheres, and by inspiring policies that **promote fairness, visibility, and inclusion** in the economy. It ensures that economic planning **reflects real contributions** and **addresses gender disparities** effectively.

i) Making Invisible Work Visible

Traditional classical economics focuses mainly on market-based, paid economic activities. This approach **ignores a large portion of work typically performed by women**, such as household chores, caregiving, and community support.

Gender analysis seeks to **bring this invisible labour into view**, recognizing it as **economically valuable**.

Example: Cooking, cleaning, and raising children are essential for sustaining the workforce and the economy, even though they do not generate direct monetary income.

ii) Recognizing and Valuing Women's Contributions

Gender analysis emphasizes that women contribute to both **market activities** (paid employment, entrepreneurship) and **non-market activities** (unpaid care, household work).

By accounting for both, economists and policymakers can

- Understand the **full scope of economic productivity**
- Design **policies that reflect actual contributions**

Example: A woman running a home-based business while also managing household responsibilities contributes to GDP indirectly and directly, but traditional measures often miss the latter.

iii) Policies to Correct Classical Economics' Blind Spots

Gender analysis has inspired several **policy interventions** to address the shortcomings of classical economics:

a) Equal Pay for Equal Work

- **Explanation:** Women often earn less than men for the same or similar work.
- **Policy impact:** Promotes wage equality, ensuring women are fairly compensated in the market.
- **Example:** Legislating minimum wage standards and gender pay audits in organizations.

b) Inclusion of Unpaid Labor in National Accounts

- **Explanation:** Traditional GDP calculations exclude unpaid work, undervaluing women's economic contributions.
- **Policy impact:** Accounting for unpaid labour provides a **more accurate measure of total economic activity**.
- **Example:** Time-use surveys can be used to estimate the monetary value of household labour and include it in national accounts.

c) Gender-Sensitive Budgeting and Planning

- **Explanation:** Budgets and economic plans often ignore gender-specific needs.
- **Policy impact:** Gender-sensitive planning ensures resources are **allocated equitably**, addressing the specific constraints women face.
- **Example:** Allocating funds for childcare facilities, maternal healthcare, or women-focused skill development programs.

7. Conclusion

Classical economics, though foundational, viewed the economy through a **male-cantered, market-focused lens**, largely excluding the **unpaid and social contributions of women**. Gender analysis challenges these limitations by emphasizing **equity, inclusiveness, and recognition of all forms of economic work** — both **paid and unpaid** — highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and realistic understanding of economic activity.

Neo-Classical Economics

A. Meaning of Neo-Classical Economics

Neo-classical economics is a school of thought that developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It focuses on how individuals make **rational choices** to maximize their **utility** (for consumers) or **profits** (for producers), under the assumption that **markets are efficient** and that **resources are allocated through demand and supply**.

Key concepts include:

1. Rational Behaviour

Rational behaviour assumes that individuals make **logical and informed choices** to **maximize their satisfaction or benefit** while minimizing costs. Every economic decision—whether consuming goods, working, or investing—is based on weighing **costs vs. benefits**.

Example: A consumer chooses to buy a cheaper product of the same quality to maximize utility. A producer may allocate resources to the most profitable production line.

Gender Perspective: Classical assumptions of rationality often ignore **social roles and unpaid labour**, like women's household or caregiving work, which are not market-driven but highly significant.

2. Marginal Analysis (Marginal Utility and Marginal Productivity)

Marginal analysis examines the **additional benefit or output** from consuming or producing **one more unit** of a good or service.

a) Marginal Utility (MU)

Marginal utility is the **extra satisfaction a consumer gains** from consuming one additional unit of a good. Consumers allocate resources where **marginal utility per unit of cost is maximized**.

Example: Eating one ice cream gives satisfaction, but the second one may give slightly less satisfaction (law of diminishing marginal utility).

b) Marginal Productivity (MP)

Marginal productivity is the **additional output produced** by employing **one more unit of a factor of production** (like labour or capital). Firms decide how many units of labour or capital to employ based on **marginal productivity and costs**.

Example: Hiring one more worker in a factory may increase production by 50 units, but eventually, additional workers may contribute less (diminishing returns).

3. Perfect Competition

A market structure where **many buyers and sellers** exist, **all products are homogeneous**, and **no individual can influence the market price**. Price is determined purely by **market forces of demand and supply**, ensuring **efficient allocation of resources**.

Characteristics:

- i. Large number of buyers and sellers
- ii. Free entry and exit of firms
- iii. Perfect knowledge of prices and products
- iv. Homogeneous products

Example: Agricultural markets where many farmers sell identical wheat or rice, and none can set the price individually.

4. Equilibrium between Demand and Supply

Market equilibrium occurs when **quantity demanded equals quantity supplied** at a particular price.

- If price is too high, supply exceeds demand where, surplus leads to a downward pressure on price.
- If price is too low, demand exceeds supply where, shortage leads to an upward pressure on price.
- **Equilibrium price** balances these forces, stabilizing the market.

Example: In a wheat market, equilibrium is reached where the amount of wheat farmers supply exactly matches what consumers want to buy.

Gender Perspective: Classical equilibrium assumes **perfect markets**, ignoring social constraints or inequalities (e.g., women may have limited access to markets, credit, or resources, affecting actual supply and demand).

B. Core Assumptions of Neo-Classical Economics

Neo-classical economics assumes rational individuals, efficient markets, and fair wages based on productivity, but fails to account for gender-based inequalities, social norms, and unpaid labour, making it limited from a gender perspective.

1. Individuals Act Rationally

Neo-classical economics assumes that every individual makes decisions **logically and strategically** to maximize personal satisfaction (utility) or income (profit). Consumers aim to get the **most benefit for the least cost**, and producers aim to **maximize profits**.

Example: A person choosing between two products will select the one that gives higher satisfaction per rupee spent.

Gender Perspective: This assumption **ignores social and cultural constraints**, such as gender roles that may limit women's choices or opportunities in employment and consumption.

2. Markets Are Neutral and Efficient

Markets are assumed to **allocate resources efficiently** and fairly, rewarding individuals **based on their productivity**, without discrimination or bias. Prices adjust naturally to balance supply and demand, and economic resources flow to their most productive use.

Example: If a worker produces more, they will earn more, and if a product is highly demanded, its price rises.

Gender Perspective: In reality, **markets are not neutral**—women often face discrimination, wage gaps, and barriers to resources, which means actual outcomes **deviate from theoretical efficiency**.

3. Labor Is Treated as a Homogeneous Factor of Production

Neo-classical theory assumes all labour is **identical in quality**, without accounting for **differences in skill, experience, or gender**.

Labor is valued purely on the basis of output contribution, with no attention to social context or inequalities.

Example: A male and female worker performing the same task are assumed to have the same productivity and value.

Gender Perspective: This ignores **gender-based disparities** in pay, access to training, and recognition, underestimating women's real contributions.

4. Wages Are Determined by Marginal Productivity

Neo-classical theory posits that individuals are paid according to the **additional output they produce** (marginal productivity).

Workers who produce more should earn more, and wages naturally reflect economic contribution.

Example: If a worker adds 10 extra units of production per day, their wage reflects that extra output.

Gender Perspective: In practice, women may produce the same output but earn less due to **discrimination, undervaluation of work, or societal norms**, which contradicts the theory.

3. Gender Analysis of Neo-Classical Economics

From a **gender perspective**, neo-classical economics has been **criticized** for **ignoring gender differences** and **overlooking unpaid and informal work** done mostly by women.

a) Ignoring Unpaid Work

Neo-classical economics focuses only on **market-based (paid)** activities. It excludes **unpaid care work**, household labour, and subsistence activities — which are essential for the economy but largely performed by women. As a result, women's contributions remain **invisible** in GDP and productivity measures.

b) Assumption of Equal Opportunity

It assumes that all individuals (men and women) have **equal access** to resources, education, and labour markets. In reality, **social norms, discrimination, and structural barriers** limit women's economic participation. Hence, the neo-classical model **fails to explain gender-based wage gaps** and occupational segregation.

c) Market Neutrality Myth

Neo-classical theory suggests that markets are **gender-neutral**. However, in practice, markets reflect **existing gender biases** — for example, women are often concentrated in low-paid or informal jobs. Gender economists argue that these biases must be addressed through **policy intervention**.

d) Wage Determination and Gender Gap

According to the **marginal productivity theory**, wages depend on productivity. But in reality, women are often **paid less than men** for the same or similar work, not because of lower productivity, but due to **gender discrimination and undervaluation of women's work**.

4. Feminist Critique of Neo-Classical Economics

Feminist economists argue that **neo-classical economics is androcentric**, meaning it is **male-cantered**. It assumes that economic agents, markets, and productivity are gender-neutral, but in reality, women's contributions and social dynamics are often ignored.

a) Inclusion of Unpaid Labor and Care Work

Neo-classical models focus almost entirely on **market-based, paid work**, ignoring the **unpaid labour** performed predominantly by women at home. This labour is **essential for sustaining households and the workforce**, yet it is **excluded from GDP and economic analysis**.

Examples of unpaid work: Cooking, cleaning, childcare, eldercare, and community support.

Feminist perspective: Economic models should **count unpaid labour as part of economic activity**, giving women's contributions **real economic recognition**.

b) Addressing Power Relations, Not Just Efficiency

Neo-classical economics emphasizes efficiency, assuming markets are fair and resources are allocated optimally.

Feminist critique: This focus **ignores power imbalances** in society, such as:

- ✓ Gender wage gaps
- ✓ Limited access to education, credit, or employment for women
- ✓ Unequal decision-making power in households and organizations

Policies based only on efficiency may **reinforce existing inequalities**. Feminist economists argue that **policy must explicitly address these power dynamics** to achieve equitable outcomes.

c) Prioritizing Human Well-Being over Profit Maximization

Neo-classical economics prioritizes **profit, income, and utility maximization** as the main goal of economic activity.

Feminist critique: This narrow focus **ignores quality of life, social care, and overall human well-being**.

Examples: Policies that only promote economic growth may neglect:

- ✓ Access to healthcare
- ✓ Education

- ✓ Work-life balance
- ✓ Community and family well-being

Feminist economists advocate for models and policies that **value well-being and social welfare**, not just profit or market efficiency.

C. Conclusion

Neo-classical economics, while foundational to modern economic thought, **fails to capture the gendered dimensions of economic behaviour**.

Gender analysis exposes these limitations by highlighting how **social roles, unpaid work, and discrimination** shape economic outcomes differently for men and women.

Therefore, gender economists call for **a more inclusive framework** that integrates both **efficiency** and **equity** in economic analysis.

Post-Keynesian Economics

Post-Keynesian economics, by emphasizing **institutions, distribution, and government intervention**, provides a framework that **better accommodates gender analysis**. It allows economists to recognize **unpaid labour, social constraints, and gendered power relations** while designing policies that **promote equality, well-being, and inclusive growth**.

A. Meaning of Post-Keynesian Economics

Post-Keynesian Economics is a school of thought that builds on **John Maynard Keynes' ideas**, emphasizing that **economies are not always self-regulating** and that **government intervention** is necessary to ensure full employment and economic stability.

Key features include:

- ✓ Focus on **demand-driven growth** (aggregate demand drives output and employment).
- ✓ Recognition that **markets are imperfect** and **uncertainty dominates** economic decisions.
- ✓ Emphasis on **institutional, social, and historical factors** in economic analysis.

Post-Keynesian economics challenges the neo-classical assumption that markets are always efficient and self-correcting, arguing instead that **power relations, institutions, and social norms** influence economic outcomes.

B. Core Features of Post-Keynesian Economics

1. Demand-Led Growth

Post-Keynesian economics emphasizes that **economic growth is driven primarily by aggregate demand**, i.e., the total spending by households, businesses, and government in the economy.

Unlike classical or neo-classical theories, which assume supply automatically creates its own demand, Post-Keynesians argue that **insufficient demand can cause unemployment and underutilization of resources**.

Gender perspective: Women's participation in the workforce, consumption patterns, and unpaid labour all affect aggregate demand. Policies that increase women's income or support services like childcare can **boost demand and stimulate economic growth**.

2. Role of Uncertainty

Economic decisions are rarely made under perfect knowledge. Post-Keynesians highlight that **future economic conditions are uncertain**, and people make decisions based on **expectations, not certainty**.

Businesses may delay investment due to uncertainty, and households may adjust consumption depending on income stability.

Gender perspective: Women often face **greater economic vulnerability** (e.g., informal employment, wage gaps), which increases uncertainty in their spending, saving, and labour decisions. Gender-aware policies can help **reduce economic insecurity** for women.

3. Importance of Institutions

Post-Keynesians assert that **markets are shaped by institutions, social norms, and laws**, rather than functioning independently.

Institutions such as banks, labour unions, legal systems, and government agencies play a key role in regulating economic outcomes.

Gender perspective: Social and cultural norms influence **who can access jobs, credit, and property**, often limiting women's participation in the economy. Gender analysis helps design **institutional reforms** for equality.

4. Distribution Matters

Income and wealth distribution is **not only a social issue but an economic one**. Unequal distribution affects **consumption patterns, investment levels, and overall economic stability**.

Post-Keynesians argue that higher inequality can reduce aggregate demand, as lower-income groups (often women) have less spending power.

Gender perspective: Women generally earn less and control fewer resources than men. Addressing **gender-based income inequality** can enhance consumption and improve macroeconomic stability.

5. Government Intervention

Post-Keynesians advocate for **active government policies** (fiscal and monetary) to stabilize the economy, reduce unemployment, and correct market failures.

Examples include **public spending, social welfare programs, and progressive taxation**.

Gender perspective: Government intervention can **promote gender equality** by providing social services, supporting employment opportunities for women, and recognizing unpaid work through policies like childcare support and paid parental leave.

C. Gender Analysis in Post-Keynesian Economics

Post-Keynesian economics is **more compatible with gender analysis** than classical or neo-classical economics because it:

a) Recognizes Social and Institutional Context

Unlike neo-classical models, post-Keynesian economics considers **historical, social, and institutional constraints**. Gender analysis fits naturally because women's economic participation is shaped by **social norms, laws, and institutional biases**.

b) Focus on Distribution and Inequality

Post-Keynesian economists study **income and wealth distribution**, which is closely linked to **gender inequality**. They acknowledge that unequal access to resources affects **consumption, employment, and empowerment** of women.

c) Emphasis on Unpaid Work and Care Economy

Post-Keynesian economics recognizes that **household production and care work** are crucial for sustaining the economy. Gender analysis highlights that **women perform most unpaid labour**, which supports market activities indirectly.

d) Support for Government Intervention

Since markets are imperfect, **policy intervention is necessary** to reduce inequality. Gender-sensitive policies, such as **childcare support, maternity benefits, gender budgeting, and equal pay laws**, align with Post-Keynesian principles.

D. Feminist Alignment with Post-Keynesian Economics

Feminist economists favour Post-Keynesian economics because it **broadens the definition of economic activity, highlights inequalities, supports redistributive policies, and reflects real human behaviour**, making it **more inclusive of women's roles and experiences** than classical or neo-classical approaches.

1. Values Social Reproduction

Post-Keynesian economics recognizes that **care work and household labour**—often performed by women—are **essential for sustaining the workforce and the economy**, even though they are unpaid.

Unlike classical or neo-classical models, which focus only on market transactions, this approach **acknowledges the economic value of women's domestic and caregiving work**.

Example: Raising children, caring for the elderly, and managing households support society's productivity but are traditionally invisible in GDP. Post-Keynesian analysis gives these contributions **real economic significance**.

2. Acknowledges that Markets Alone Do Not Ensure Equality

Post-Keynesian theory understands that **free markets may not automatically produce fair outcomes**, particularly regarding gender equality.

It recognizes **structural inequalities**—like wage gaps, limited access to resources, and discriminatory practices—that prevent women from fully participating in the economy.

Example: Women may work the same hours and produce the same output as men but still earn less because of social norms or labour market discrimination.

3. Supports Policy Measures to Redistribute Income and Resources

Post-Keynesian economics advocates **active government intervention** to redistribute wealth, reduce inequality, and maintain economic stability.

Redistribution policies—like progressive taxation, welfare programs, or gender-sensitive budgeting—can **directly reduce gender disparities in income, access to education, and social resources**.

Example: Providing childcare subsidies allows women to enter the workforce more easily, enhancing both economic participation and gender equity.

4. Focuses on Real-World Economic Behaviour

Post-Keynesian economics emphasizes **actual human behaviour**, including uncertainty, imperfect information, and social context, rather than assuming perfectly rational economic agents.

This approach aligns with **women's lived economic experiences**, such as balancing paid work with unpaid care responsibilities, coping with uncertain job markets, or facing institutional barriers.

Example: Women's decisions to work, invest, or consume are influenced not just by abstract rationality but by household obligations, social norms, and financial security considerations.

E. Conclusion

Post-Keynesian economics, with its focus on **demand-led growth, uncertainty, institutions, income distribution, and government intervention**, provides a **more inclusive framework for understanding real-world economies**. From a gender perspective, it is particularly relevant because it **recognizes women's unpaid and care work, addresses structural inequalities, and supports policies that promote gender equity**. By emphasizing social reproduction, redistribution, and the importance of institutions, Post-Keynesian theory helps create **economic analyses and policies that are more equitable and reflective of women's contributions**.

Economic Measurement

Traditional economic measurement focuses on market activities, ignoring unpaid work and gender disparities.

Gender-sensitive economic measurement expands the scope to **include unpaid labour, social reproduction, and well-being indicators**, providing a more **accurate and equitable picture of the economy**.

A. Meaning of Economic Measurement

Economic measurement refers to the **quantitative assessment of economic activities, performance, and well-being** in an economy.

It includes indicators such as:

- ◆ **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** is the total market value of goods and services produced.
- ◆ **Income and Consumption Levels** includes wages, household income, expenditure patterns.
- ◆ **Employment and Labor Force Participation** is the number of people employed/unemployed.
- ◆ **Productivity and Output** includes output per worker or per hour.

These indicators are traditionally used to **evaluate economic growth, efficiency, and prosperity**.

B. Gender Perspective on Economic Measurement

Traditional economic measurement is often **gender-blind**, because it primarily considers **market-based, paid economic activities**, ignoring **unpaid labour** and social reproduction performed largely by women.

Key Issues includes the following:

i. Exclusion of Unpaid Work

Household chores, childcare, eldercare, and volunteer work are not counted in GDP. Women's contributions to the economy are **invisible in official statistics**.

Example: Cooking, cleaning, and caring for children are economically valuable but ignored in economic measurement.

ii. Underestimation of Women's Economic Contribution

Women may work in informal sectors (home-based work, small-scale trading) that are **not captured in official employment data**.

This leads to **misleading perceptions of women's productivity and labour force participation.**

iii. Income and Wage Disparities

Aggregate measures like GDP or average wages often **mask gender disparities** in earnings, employment quality, and access to resources.

Women may earn less, have lower job security, and face barriers to formal employment, which standard economic measures do not highlight.

iv. Social and Human Development

Traditional economic indicators focus on output, growth, and profit, ignoring **human well-being, equity, and quality of life.**

Gender analysis argues for incorporating **social and care work** into economic measurement to reflect **true societal welfare.**

C. Alternative Gender-Sensitive Measures – Detailed Explanation

Traditional economic measures, like GDP and employment statistics, often **ignore women's unpaid work** and gender inequalities. To address this, economists and policymakers use **gender-sensitive measures** that capture the full scope of economic contributions and gender disparities.

1. Time Use Surveys

Surveys that measure how people allocate their time to **paid work, unpaid household work, caregiving, education, and leisure.** These surveys make women's contributions **visible and quantifiable**, helping policymakers understand the burden of unpaid work and design support systems like childcare or eldercare programs.

Gender relevance: Women spend a large portion of their day on **unpaid domestic and care work**, which is critical for family and societal functioning but often excluded from GDP.

2. Gender Development Index (GDI)

A UN measure that **compares male and female achievements** in key areas: **health, education, and income.** Helps identify areas where women are lagging (e.g., literacy rates, life expectancy), guiding targeted interventions for equality and empowerment.

Gender relevance: Highlights **gaps in development outcomes** between men and women.

3. Gender Inequality Index (GII)

Measures gender-based disparities in three dimensions:

- ✓ **Reproductive health** (maternal mortality, adolescent birth rates)
- ✓ **Empowerment** (parliamentary representation, education)
- ✓ **Labor market participation**

Gender relevance: Captures **structural barriers** that prevent women from fully participating in economic, social, and political life. Highlights where policy reforms are needed to **reduce inequality and enhance women's opportunities**.

4. Adjusted GDP / Social Accounting

Attempts to **adjust traditional GDP** by including **unpaid household labour and care work**. Provides a **more accurate picture of total economic activity**, ensuring that women's contributions are not overlooked in national accounts.

Gender relevance: Recognizes that unpaid work, mostly done by women, is **economically valuable**.

5. Human Development Index (HDI)

A composite index that measures **education, life expectancy, and income** to assess human development. Encourages policies that improve **overall well-being**, not just income, ensuring equitable development for men and women.

Gender relevance: When combined with gender-specific data, HDI highlights **gender disparities in health, education, and economic opportunities**.

D. Importance of Gender-Sensitive Economic Measurement

Gender-sensitive economic measurement is essential because it **makes women's contributions visible, guides equitable policymaking, improves economic planning, and ensures inclusive growth**, addressing the limitations of traditional, male-cantered economic metrics.

1. Recognizes Women's Contributions

Traditional economic metrics like GDP or labour statistics often **ignore unpaid work**, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare, which is mostly performed by women.

Gender-sensitive measurement ensures that these contributions are **acknowledged as economically valuable**, highlighting women's role in sustaining families, communities, and the workforce.

It makes women's economic role visible, helping society understand that they contribute not only at home but indirectly to the market economy.

2. Guides Policymaking

By providing data on **gender disparities in work, income, and access to resources**, gender-sensitive measurement informs policymakers.

Policies can then be designed to **increase women's labour participation**, reduce wage gaps, and provide **social protection schemes** like maternity benefits, childcare services, or pension schemes for women in informal employment.

It leads to **equitable policies** that target the real barriers women face in the economy.

3. Improves Economic Planning

Including both **paid and unpaid work**, as well as gender differences in income and opportunities, gives a **more complete picture of economic activity**.

Governments and institutions can **plan programs and allocate resources more effectively**, addressing inequalities and promoting human development.

This ensures that **economic strategies reflect actual productivity and social needs**, not just market transactions.

4. Promotes Inclusive Growth

Gender-sensitive measurement helps ensure that **both men and women benefit from economic growth**, rather than growth favouring only one group.

By highlighting inequalities and providing actionable data, it encourages **inclusive policies** that improve access to education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making for women.

Creates a **fairer, more sustainable economy** where all members of society contribute to and benefit from development.

Empirical Challenges

Empirical challenges refer to the **difficulties faced in collecting, analysing, and interpreting data** on gender differences in economic activities, contributions, and outcomes. These

challenges make it hard to **measure women's economic roles accurately** and to design **gender-sensitive policies**.

1. Lack of Gender-Disaggregated Data

Many economic datasets combine men's and women's data, making it impossible to see how economic outcomes differ between genders. For example, employment surveys often report only total employment figures, without showing how many women are in formal or informal jobs.

Example: Labor force surveys may record only formal jobs, ignoring women in part-time, unpaid, or informal work.

Because women's work is **not separately counted**, their contribution to the economy remains **invisible** in official statistics. This leads to **underestimation of their role** in GDP, productivity, and policy planning.

2. Difficulty in Measuring Unpaid Work

Women often perform household production (cooking, cleaning), childcare, and eldercare. These activities are **essential for sustaining the economy**, but they are not sold in markets, so they are excluded from GDP and other economic measures.

Challenges in measurement:

- i. **Not traded in markets** hence no price assigned, so GDP ignores it.
- ii. **Variable time use** means household work varies daily, seasonally, and by family needs.
- iii. **Cultural norms**, in some societies do not even consider household work as "economic activity."

The **economic value of women's unpaid labour** is largely ignored, resulting in **misrepresentation of actual productivity and economic contribution**.

3. Informal and Subsistence Work

Many women work in informal sectors such as home-based production, subsistence farming, or small trading. These sectors are often **unrecorded or underreported**.

Challenges in measurement:

- i. **No formal records** hence the work is not officially registered.
- ii. **Irregular or non-monetary wages** means their income may be in kind or inconsistent.
- iii. **Overlap with household duties** means women combine economic work with domestic chores, complicating measurement.

Standard indicators like labour force participation or GDP **understate women's actual contribution** to the economy.

4. Social and Cultural Constraints

Social norms, cultural barriers, and household power dynamics affect women's work. Surveys often fail to capture these qualitative factors.

Example: Women may work in family businesses or informal jobs but **have limited control over the income**, or their labour may be undervalued socially and economically.

Quantitative data alone cannot reveal the full extent of gender inequality, such as who controls resources, who makes decisions, and how work is valued within households.

5. Limited Time Use Data

Time use surveys record how people spend their day on various activities, including **paid work, unpaid household work, caregiving, and leisure**. These surveys are essential to capture women's unpaid labour, which traditional economic measures often ignore.

Challenges:

- i. Expensive and infrequent** – Conducting detailed time use surveys requires significant resources, so they are done only occasionally.
- ii. Difficult to standardize** – Different countries or regions may classify activities differently, making comparisons hard.
- iii. Incomplete coverage** – Surveys may not account for:
 - ✓ Seasonal variations in work (e.g., agricultural or domestic tasks vary by season)
 - ✓ Differences across regions, income levels, or cultural contexts

Policymakers lack **accurate and comprehensive data** on women's workloads, making it harder to design interventions like childcare support, work-time regulations, or social protection policies.

6. Measurement Bias in Indicators

Traditional economic indicators like GDP, employment rates, and productivity are **market-focused and male-centric**, often ignoring unpaid and informal work dominated by women.

Challenges:

Even when women's work is counted, **valuation methods may underestimate it**.

Example: In agriculture, women's labour (weeding, harvesting, processing) may be undervalued compared to men's tasks, even if the output contribution is equal.

Measurement bias **skews policy priorities**, directing resources toward male-dominated sectors or activities while neglecting women's contributions. This leads to **inequitable economic planning and development outcomes**.

7. Data Availability and Reliability Issues

In many countries, official statistics are **outdated, incomplete, or inconsistent**, making it difficult to accurately capture gendered economic activity.

Challenges:

- i. Women in **rural or marginalized communities** may be underrepresented in surveys.
- ii. Differences in definitions (e.g., what counts as "employment" or "income") make **cross-country or longitudinal comparisons difficult**.

Without reliable and up-to-date data, policymakers cannot fully understand **women's economic participation or needs**, limiting the effectiveness of gender-sensitive policies and interventions.

8. Conclusion

Empirical challenges in gender economics **limit the visibility and valuation of women's economic contributions**. Addressing these challenges requires:

- ✓ **Better data collection** (time use surveys, gender-disaggregated statistics)
- ✓ **Inclusion of unpaid and informal work** in economic accounts
- ✓ **Qualitative research** to understand social and cultural contexts

This ensures **policy interventions are based on accurate and comprehensive information**, promoting **gender equity in economic planning**.

Unit II: Development and Anti-Development

Development Versus Anti-Development – Women in Development (WID) – Women and Development (WAD) – Gender and Development – Women and Empowerment – Women and Environment – Ecofeminism.

Development Versus Anti-Development

In **gender economics**, the concept of “**Development versus Anti-Development**” explores how economic growth and modernization processes can **either empower or marginalize women** — depending on how development policies and practices are designed and implemented. Let’s break this down clearly:

A. Meaning of “Development” in Gender Context

In general, *development* refers to economic progress — rising income levels, industrialization, improved infrastructure, and social welfare.

But from a **gender perspective**, true development goes beyond GDP growth. It means:

- Equal access to education, healthcare, and employment for men and women.
- Equal participation in decision-making.
- Freedom from discrimination and gender-based violence.
- Recognition of unpaid care work and women’s contributions to the economy.

B. Meaning of “Anti-Development”

“Anti-development” refers to processes or policies that **undermine women’s status, increase inequality, or ignore their contributions**.

Even when economies grow, if women remain excluded or exploited, that growth is considered *anti-development* from a gender standpoint.

Examples:

- Modernization that displaces women from traditional livelihoods.
- Technological change that benefits men’s work sectors but ignores women’s.
- Economic reforms that cut public services, increasing women’s unpaid care burden.
- Cultural or institutional resistance to women’s economic participation.

C. Development vs. Anti-Development

In essence, “**Development**” in gender economics means growth that uplifts everyone — recognizing and empowering women as equal partners in the economy. “**Anti-Development**” represents the opposite — when economic progress disregards gender justice, it deepens inequality and cannot be called true development.

i. Goal

Development (Gender-sensitive):

The goal of gender-sensitive development is to create a society where both men and women have equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources. It promotes *economic and social equality* — not just by increasing income but also by ensuring dignity, respect, and empowerment for women. The aim is to integrate gender equality into all stages of development planning and implementation.

Example: Promoting girls’ education, equal pay for equal work, and women’s leadership in decision-making bodies.

Anti-Development (Gender-blind):

In contrast, anti-development focuses only on economic growth indicators like GDP, industrial output, or investment, without caring about *who benefits* from that growth. It often sacrifices gender justice for profit or productivity. Women may be excluded from economic benefits or burdened with unpaid responsibilities, making the process unequal and unjust.

Example: Building industries that provide jobs mainly for men while displacing women from agricultural work.

ii. Focus

Development (Gender-sensitive):

True development focuses on *empowerment, inclusion, and participation*. It seeks to involve women actively in economic, political, and social processes. This approach values both men’s and women’s contributions, ensures their voices are heard in policymaking, and builds systems where gender equality is a foundation of progress.

Anti-Development (Gender-blind):

The focus here is narrow — mainly on *profit, industrialization, and efficiency*. Such a system measures success by output rather than well-being. When growth becomes the only target, women’s participation, safety, and welfare are often ignored. The result is an economy that grows on paper but deepens social inequality in practice.

iii. Policy Approach

Development (Gender-sensitive)

These policies are *women-centric and gender-responsive*. They acknowledge that men and women have different starting points, needs, and challenges. Hence, policies are designed to correct historical disadvantages through special measures like maternity benefits, childcare support, equal inheritance rights, or gender budgeting.

Example: Microfinance programs aimed specifically at rural women or government schemes encouraging female entrepreneurship.

Anti-Development (Gender-blind)

Here, policies are made without considering gender differences — assuming that what works for men will automatically benefit women. This “one-size-fits-all” approach often leaves women behind. For example, if land titles or credit facilities are given only to the “head of the household” (usually male), women remain excluded from ownership and financial independence.

iv. Impact on Women

Development (Gender-sensitive)

When development is inclusive, women gain *opportunities, confidence, and decision-making power*. They can participate equally in education, employment, and politics. Economic independence improves their social status, reduces gender-based violence, and fosters intergenerational benefits (educated mothers raise healthier, educated children).

Anti-Development (Gender-blind)

Anti-development reinforces *subordination and dependency*. Women remain confined to unpaid domestic roles, excluded from financial and political decision-making. In some cases, modernization even worsens their conditions — for example, when mechanization in farming reduces women’s employment or when public service cuts increase their unpaid care work.

v. Work Recognition

Development (Gender-sensitive)

This approach *recognizes unpaid and care work* as an essential part of the economy. Women’s household labour — cooking, cleaning, caring for children and the elderly — contributes significantly to national well-being, though it isn’t counted in GDP. Feminist economists argue that recognizing and valuing this labour is crucial for true development. Some countries now measure it through “time-use surveys” and introduce “care economy” policies.

Anti-Development (Gender-blind):

In contrast, gender-blind approaches *ignore unpaid labour*. They treat women's contributions at home as non-productive and invisible. This exclusion undervalues half the population's economic role and makes women appear "dependent," even when they are sustaining families and communities through unpaid work.

vi. Outcome

Development (Gender-sensitive)

The outcome of gender-inclusive development is *sustainable and equitable growth*. It ensures that both men and women share the benefits of progress, resulting in social harmony, better human capital, and long-term stability. Development here is not just material but also human — improving health, education, and quality of life.

Anti-Development (Gender-blind)

The outcome is *unequal, exploitative, and short-term growth*. While the economy may expand, the benefits concentrate in the hands of a few (mostly men). Women's continued marginalization leads to poverty, social unrest, and slower overall progress. This form of growth is unsustainable because it relies on the exploitation or exclusion of half the population.

Development vs. Anti-Development – Comparison Table

Aspect	Development (Gender-sensitive)	Anti-Development (Gender-blind)
Goal	Economic and social equality for all genders	Growth at the cost of gender justice
Focus	Empowerment, inclusion, participation	Profit, industrialization, and efficiency only
Policy Approach	Women-centric and gender-responsive	Ignores gender differences
Impact on Women	Enhances opportunities and agency	Reinforces subordination and dependency
Work Recognition	Recognizes unpaid and care work	Treats women's work as invisible
Outcome	Sustainable and equitable growth	Unequal, exploitative, and short-term growth

4. Illustrative Example

In some developing countries, modernization of agriculture (use of machines, commercial crops) increased male control over land and income, while women lost their traditional roles in subsistence farming. **This is anti-development** because women became economically dependent despite “growth” in output.

On the other hand, programs that provide microcredit, skill training, and education for women increase their income, confidence, and social standing. **This is true gender-based development.**

D. Feminist Economic View

“Feminist economists argue that mainstream development has often been male-cantered — focusing on production and ignoring reproduction (household and care work). Hence, they call for gender-aware development models that redefine ‘work’ to include unpaid labour, reorient policies toward social justice, and measure development using gender indicators (like the Gender Development Index).”

i. Mainstream Development is Male-Cantered

Traditional or mainstream economic development models — such as those based on **GDP growth, industrial output, and employment in the formal sector** — have historically been **male-oriented**.

They focus on **production activities** — like industries, agriculture, and trade — which are **dominated by men** and **monetized** (i.e., activities that earn income and are recorded in national accounts).

However, **women’s roles in the economy**, especially in *household maintenance, childcare, elder care, and community work*, are not recognized because they don’t generate direct monetary value.

As a result, women’s significant contribution to the **reproductive economy** — which sustains the productive economy — remains invisible.

Feminist economists argue that by ignoring these unpaid contributions, mainstream models give a *distorted picture* of real economic development.

ii. Ignoring Reproduction and Care Work

The term “**reproduction**” here does not only mean biological reproduction (childbearing), but also **social reproduction** — all the unpaid activities that ensure the daily and generational survival of people.

This includes cooking, cleaning, raising children, caring for the sick and elderly, and maintaining the household.

These activities are essential for the economy because they **support the labour force** — workers who are then able to engage in paid production.

When economic policies ignore this sector, they overlook a crucial foundation of development. For instance:

- ✓ If the government cuts public healthcare or childcare services, **women bear the increased unpaid workload.**
- ✓ This limits women’s ability to work in paid sectors, keeping them economically dependent and underrepresented.

iii. Redefining “Work” to Include Unpaid Labor

Feminist economists argue that the **definition of “work” must be expanded** to include unpaid and care activities.

Although this labour doesn’t produce goods for sale, it produces **well-being, social stability, and human capital** — all necessary for economic progress.

Methods like **Time Use Surveys** have been developed to measure how much time men and women spend on paid and unpaid work.

Recognizing this unpaid labour would help governments design **policies that redistribute care responsibilities** — for example, through parental leave, childcare support, or flexible working hours.

Thus, economic value should not only come from market-based production but also from *the invisible labour that sustains society*.

iv. Reorienting Policies Toward Social Justice

Feminist economists emphasize that *true development* must aim for **social justice**, not just income growth.

Policies should address **gender inequality, discrimination, and unequal access** to resources such as education, property, credit, and employment.

Gender-aware policies may include:

- ✓ Gender budgeting (allocating funds specifically for women's empowerment programs),
- ✓ Laws for equal pay and inheritance rights,
- ✓ Support for women entrepreneurs and self-help groups,
- ✓ Public investments in health, sanitation, and childcare to reduce women's unpaid burden.

The goal is to **create a fair distribution of opportunities and responsibilities** between men and women — leading to a balanced and inclusive society.

v. Measuring Development Using Gender Indicators

Traditional indicators like **GDP per capita** or **economic growth rate** fail to capture *who benefits* from growth.

Therefore, feminist economists propose **gender-sensitive measures** of development such as:

- ✓ **Gender Development Index (GDI)** – adjusts the Human Development Index (HDI) to account for gender inequalities in health, education, and income.
- ✓ **Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)** – assesses women's participation in political and economic decision-making.
- ✓ **Gender Inequality Index (GII)** – evaluates inequality in reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation.

These indicators give a clearer and fairer picture of how development impacts men and women differently and help governments track progress toward *gender equality*.

E. Conclusion

“Development versus Anti-Development” in gender economics highlights that **economic growth alone does not ensure gender equality**.

A society may appear “developed” economically but still be **anti-developmental** if women remain marginalized, overburdened, or voiceless.

True development occurs **only when both men and women benefit equally and have equal power in shaping their economic and social futures**.

Women in Development (WID)

A. Meaning of “Women in Development (WID)”

The **Women in Development (WID)** approach emerged in the **early 1970s** as a response to the realization that women were being **excluded or neglected** in the development process. It aimed to **integrate women into mainstream economic and social development** by recognizing their roles and contributions.

In short, WID believes that **development will be more effective if women participate equally with men** in all sectors — education, employment, agriculture, politics, and decision-making.

B. Historical Background

Before the 1970s, women were largely invisible in development thinking. Ester Boserup’s 1970 work revealed how modernization often **widened gender inequality**, sparking a new awareness among global agencies.

Her insights transformed women from being seen as **dependents** to **key participants** in economic growth.

Thus, the **Women in Development (WID)** approach emerged as a global **policy movement** to ensure that **women’s roles, needs, and contributions** became an integral part of development planning and practice.

i. Before the 1970s: Gender-Blind Development

Prior to the 1970s, most **development programs and economic policies** were **gender-blind**, meaning they did not consider the specific needs, roles, or challenges of women.

Governments and international organizations assumed that **economic progress would automatically benefit everyone equally**, regardless of gender.

As a result, **men became the main focus** of development strategies. For instance:

- ◆ Agricultural programs provided land ownership, training, and technology mainly to men.
- ◆ Industrial and employment schemes prioritized male workers.
- ◆ Education and vocational training often excluded girls or limited them to traditional “female” subjects like home science or nursing.

Women were mostly viewed as **dependents** — wives, mothers, or helpers — rather than as **productive economic agents** in their own right.

This approach made women's contributions **invisible** and **limited their access to resources**, even though they played vital roles in farming, trade, and family welfare.

ii. Ester Boserup's Landmark Contribution (1970)

The turning point came with the publication of **Ester Boserup's influential book**, "*Women's Role in Economic Development*" in **1970**.

Boserup, a Danish economist, was the **first scholar to systematically study** how development policies and modernization differently affected men and women.

Her research revealed that as societies modernized and industrialized:

- ◆ **Women's traditional roles in agriculture and production were being eroded.**
- ◆ In many African and Asian countries, when **new technologies and mechanized farming methods** were introduced, men took over the new tools and cash crops.
- ◆ Women, who earlier cultivated food crops and managed household farms, **lost their control over land, income, and decision-making.**
- ◆ This created a **"gender gap"** in access to resources, education, and employment opportunities.

Boserup's analysis challenged the existing assumption that development was *gender-neutral*. She demonstrated that unless **women were deliberately included** in economic policies, **development could actually worsen gender inequality.**

iii. Policy Impact of Boserup's Work

Boserup's findings had a profound influence on **international development thinking and policy.**

Her research inspired major global organizations — such as the **United Nations (UN)**, the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**, and the **World Bank** — to start examining the **role of women in development** more seriously.

These organizations began to:

- ◆ **Collect gender-disaggregated data** (separate statistics for men and women) to identify inequalities.
- ◆ **Launch programs specifically targeting women**, including education, health, employment, and microcredit initiatives.

- ♦ **Encourage women's participation** in rural development projects, cooperatives, and leadership roles.

The **UN Decade for Women (1975–1985)**, which focused on equality, development, and peace, was a **direct outcome** of this growing awareness that women needed to be central to the development process.

iv. Emergence of the WID Policy Movement

The ideas emerging from Boserup's research laid the foundation for what became known as the **Women in Development (WID)** movement. WID argued that **women are not passive beneficiaries** of development but **active contributors** whose potential must be fully utilized.

The movement's main aim was to **integrate women into the existing development framework** — through education, employment, credit access, and policy inclusion. Development planners started to include a **“women's component”** in their projects — for example, rural extension services for female farmers or skill training for women entrepreneurs.

This marked the beginning of a **policy-level shift** where women's participation was recognized as essential for achieving national and global development goals.

C. Objectives of WID

The main goals of the Women in Development approach are:

1. To **integrate women** fully into all stages of development — planning, policy-making, and implementation.
2. To **improve women's access** to education, health, credit, technology, and employment.
3. To **reduce gender gaps** in income, literacy, and political participation.
4. To **recognize women as active contributors** to economic growth, not merely dependents or beneficiaries.
5. To ensure that **development projects benefit women directly**, not just indirectly through men.

D. Key Strategies of WID

The WID strategies evolved from seeing women as **beneficiaries** of development (Welfare and Anti-Poverty) to viewing them as **equal partners and decision-makers** (Equity and Empowerment).

Among all, the **Empowerment Approach** is considered the most progressive — as it not only

integrates women into development but also **challenges the social and economic structures** that cause inequality.

i. Equity Approach

The **Equity Approach** is one of the earliest strategies of the WID framework. It emphasizes **equality of opportunity** between men and women in all aspects of development — including education, employment, health, and political participation.

The main idea is that **women should have the same access** to resources, benefits, and decision-making power as men. This approach assumes that **development will be more just and efficient** when both genders participate equally.

It pushes for:

- ✓ Equal wages for equal work
- ✓ Equal access to education and skill development
- ✓ Equal representation in policy-making bodies
- ✓ Legal reforms to remove discriminatory practices (e.g., in inheritance, property, and employment laws)

Example: Introducing quotas for women in parliament or ensuring that women have equal rights to own land and access credit.

Criticism: While it promotes equality, it often focuses on *formal equality* (treating men and women the same) and overlooks *substantive equality* — the fact that women start from unequal positions due to historical and social disadvantages.

ii. Anti-Poverty Approach

The **Anti-Poverty Approach** views women's participation in development as a **means to reduce household and national poverty**. It recognizes that women form a large portion of the world's poor, especially in developing countries, and thus must be included in income-generating activities.

The focus here is **practical rather than structural** — it aims to improve women's economic status without necessarily challenging social norms or power structures.

Common measures include:

- ✓ Providing **microcredit** and small loans to women
- ✓ Encouraging **self-employment** and cottage industries
- ✓ Conducting **skill-development training** (such as tailoring, food processing, or handicrafts)

- ✓ Promoting **women's cooperatives** to support production and marketing

Example: The *Grameen Bank* in Bangladesh, which provides microloans to poor women to start small businesses.

Criticism: Although this approach helps reduce poverty, it often keeps women in **low-paying, informal sectors** and fails to address deeper gender inequalities such as lack of land ownership or unpaid domestic work.

iii. Efficiency Approach

The **Efficiency Approach** developed in the 1980s when international agencies began emphasizing **economic efficiency and productivity** in development planning. It argues that including women in economic activities makes development programs **more effective and efficient**.

The logic is that when women participate in the workforce or have access to resources, the **overall output of the economy increases**. This approach treats women as **economic assets** whose potential must be used for achieving growth targets.

Programs under this strategy often focus on:

- ✓ Integrating women into agriculture, trade, or industrial sectors
- ✓ Providing job training to enhance productivity
- ✓ Encouraging family planning and health programs to reduce dependency ratios

Example: Involving rural women in agricultural extension programs to boost crop yields and food security.

Criticism: This approach views women's participation mainly in **instrumental terms** — as a tool for efficiency — rather than promoting their rights or empowerment. It may exploit women's labour without ensuring fair rewards or better working conditions.

4. Welfare Approach

The **Welfare Approach** was one of the earliest forms of WID strategy (dominant in the 1950s–1960s). It sees women primarily as **wives and mothers**, responsible for family health, nutrition, and childcare.

The main focus is on **women's reproductive roles**, not their productive or decision-making roles. Development programs under this approach aim to improve the *welfare of the family* by improving the *well-being of women*.

Common interventions include:

- ✓ Maternal and child health programs
- ✓ Nutrition and food distribution
- ✓ Family planning and population control
- ✓ Home economics and domestic skill training

Example: Government programs offering free maternity care, immunization for children, and nutrition supplements for mothers.

Criticism: This approach reinforces **traditional gender roles** by defining women mainly in terms of their biological and caregiving functions. It does not promote their autonomy, education, or economic participation.

5. Empowerment Approach

The **Empowerment Approach** emerged later (in the late 1980s and 1990s) as a **response to the limitations** of the earlier WID strategies. It focuses on giving women **control over their own lives, decision-making power**, and the **ability to challenge existing gender inequalities**.

Empowerment is both an **individual and collective process** — it helps women gain self-confidence, economic independence, and political voice. The approach recognizes that real development requires **transforming power relations** in households, communities, and institutions.

Common measures include:

- ✓ Education and awareness programs on legal and reproductive rights
- ✓ Encouraging women's participation in local governance (Panchayati Raj, cooperatives, etc.)
- ✓ Supporting women's movements and NGOs
- ✓ Access to resources like land, credit, and technology

Example: The *Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)* in India, which organizes poor women workers to improve their income, social status, and bargaining power.

Criticism: Empowerment takes time and requires structural change; it is harder to measure compared to income or productivity-based goals.

E. Features of WID

i. Women are seen as a distinct development group

In the **Women in Development (WID)** approach, women are recognized as a **separate and important group** in the development process. Before this, most economic development

models were **male-centred** — they assumed that whatever benefited men would automatically benefit women too.

However, WID argued that women have **different roles, responsibilities, and challenges**, such as limited access to education, land, credit, and decision-making. Hence, development plans must **target women directly** instead of treating them as invisible participants in the economy.

Example: Creating separate agricultural training programs for rural women or giving them direct access to farming tools rather than assuming benefits would “trickle down” from men.

ii. Focus on inclusion rather than transformation

The main idea of WID was to **include women** in the ongoing development process, not to **change the structure** of that process. It believed that women’s exclusion was the problem — and inclusion was the solution.

Thus, instead of questioning why the development system ignored women, it worked to make sure women got **equal participation** and **equal access** to economic resources and opportunities.

This is why later scholars criticized WID for being **reformist** and not **transformative** — it didn’t challenge the deeper gender inequalities within social and economic institutions.

iii. Practical interventions

WID led to **specific, hands-on initiatives** aimed at improving women’s skills and economic status.

Some of the common programs included:

- ◆ **Vocational training** for women to enter formal and informal labor markets.
- ◆ **Microcredit schemes** and small loans to help women start small businesses.
- ◆ **Employment generation programs** in industries like handicrafts, textiles, or food processing.
- ◆ **Educational and health programs** focusing on literacy, maternal care, and nutrition.

These practical steps were intended to **empower women economically** and make them visible contributors to the development process.

iv. Policy-driven approach

WID had a significant impact on **government and NGO policies**, especially from the 1970s onwards. International organizations like the **World Bank, UNDP, and USAID** adopted WID

principles and required that every development project include a **“women’s component.”** This meant that all new programs — whether in agriculture, education, or industry — had to show how they would **benefit women** or **involve them in planning and execution.** This institutionalized women’s participation at the policy level, ensuring that women were no longer ignored in official development planning.

v. Top-down approach

Despite its achievements, WID faced criticism for being **top-down** — meaning decisions were made by international agencies, governments, or male policymakers **without consulting women themselves.**

Many of the programs failed to understand women’s **local needs, cultural roles, and social realities.**

Example: A sewing or tailoring program might be introduced in a rural area where there was no real market for such goods, making it ineffective.

Thus, although WID brought attention to women’s roles, it often **spoke for women instead of listening to them.**

F. Criticisms of WID

Although WID was a turning point, feminist economists later found several limitations:

i. Integration without transformation

The WID approach focused on **integrating women into existing development programs**, but it did **not question or transform** the **patriarchal and male-centred structure** of society. It assumed that if women were simply given access to jobs, education, and credit, gender equality would follow naturally.

However, the problem was much deeper — the **social, economic, and institutional systems** themselves were biased against women.

Example: Giving women jobs in agriculture or factories without changing unequal wages, working conditions, or ownership rights only adds women to a system that continues to exploit them.

So, while women were “added” into development, **the system itself remained unchanged** — still controlled by men and favouring male interests.

This is why critics said WID achieved **“integration without transformation.”**

ii. Ignored power relations

WID failed to recognize that inequality between men and women is not just about lack of access to resources, but also about **unequal power relationships** in families, workplaces, and societies.

It didn't challenge male dominance in politics, property ownership, or decision-making.

Example: Even if women were given microcredit to start small businesses, they often had to **hand over their earnings** to male family members or take permission from them to work.

Thus, without addressing these **structural power imbalances**, WID's efforts could not bring real empowerment — women might gain economic roles but still remain **socially dependent and politically powerless**.

iii. Focused on practical needs, not strategic needs

Another major limitation of WID was that it focused mainly on **practical gender needs** — things that help women in their existing roles, like providing food, water, jobs, or credit. But it ignored **strategic gender needs**, which involve changing **women's position and power in society**, such as fighting for equal rights, legal reforms, political participation, or control over property.

Example: WID would teach women sewing to earn income (a practical need), but not question why women are confined to low-paid home-based work while men dominate higher-paying sectors (a strategic need).

Therefore, WID improved women's **conditions**, but not their **position** — it helped them survive better but didn't challenge the root of gender inequality.

iv. Limited participation

In many WID projects, women were treated as **beneficiaries** rather than **decision-makers**. Policies and programs were often designed **by governments or international agencies** without consulting the women who were affected by them.

This “top-down” approach meant that women's real voices, experiences, and priorities were ignored.

Example: An organization might design a training program for women assuming they are free during the day — but in reality, most women are busy with household chores, childcare, or farm work.

Because women were **not included in decision-making**, many WID programs were **ineffective or irrelevant** to their actual needs.

v. Ignored unpaid work

One of the biggest blind spots of WID was its focus on **paid labour** — jobs, income, and productivity — while **ignoring unpaid domestic and care work** done mostly by women. Activities like cooking, cleaning, childcare, collecting water or fuel, and caring for the elderly were considered “non-economic,” even though they are **essential for society’s survival**. *Example:* A woman who spends hours taking care of her family and home contributes to the economy indirectly by supporting the labour force — but because she doesn’t earn wages, her work remains **unrecognized and undervalued**.

By excluding unpaid work from economic analysis, WID **underestimated women’s true contribution** to development and reinforced the idea that their work is less important.

G. Outcome and Significance

Although the WID approach had several limitations — such as being reformist, top-down, and not addressing structural inequalities — it was still **a revolutionary starting point** in the history of development thought.

Before WID emerged in the 1970s, **women were almost invisible** in development planning, policies, and economic theories.

Economic growth was measured mainly through men’s participation in production and income, while women’s contributions were either **ignored or undervalued**.

WID **changed this narrative** by declaring that *women are active agents of development*, not passive dependents.

It opened up discussions on how gender affects economic participation and outcomes, thus laying the **foundation for gender economics** as a field of study and policy concern.

i. It made women visible in development discussions

Before WID, development planners assumed that what benefited men would automatically benefit women — a belief often called the “trickle-down assumption.” WID challenged this by showing that women’s experiences, needs, and roles were **different and unique**.

For the first time, **women’s labour, skills, and contributions** — both in paid and unpaid sectors — became a subject of discussion and research.

It highlighted that women are not just *recipients of welfare*, but **contributors to economic growth** through:

- Agricultural production,
- Informal trade,
- Family care work, and
- Community-based development.

Example: Studies during the 1970s showed that women contributed up to **70% of agricultural labour** in parts of Africa and Asia, yet were excluded from training, credit, and technology access.

Because of WID, such gender disparities began to be measured and analysed — making women **visible in national statistics, economic reports, and policy documents**.

ii. It led to the establishment of Women's Bureaus, Ministries, and NGOs focusing on gender issues

The WID movement inspired the creation of **institutional mechanisms** to promote women's development.

Governments and international organizations began setting up **special departments and agencies** to ensure women were included in policy and planning.

Some examples include:

- **Women's Bureaus and Ministries for Women's Affairs** in national governments.
- **Women's Development Cells** in universities, NGOs, and international aid organizations.
- **Special projects and funding programs** dedicated to women's education, employment, and entrepreneurship.

These organizations became platforms for **advocacy, research, and implementation** of gender-based policies.

They also helped in conducting surveys, collecting gender-disaggregated data, and pushing for **women's representation** in governance and decision-making.

Example: The United Nations declared **1975 as the International Women's Year** and 1976–1985 as the **UN Decade for Women**, during which many countries set up national women's commissions and adopted action plans for women's advancement.

Thus, WID created **permanent institutional visibility** for women in the development process.

iii. It laid the foundation for later frameworks — WAD and GAD

While WID was the first step, it also **paved the way** for the evolution of more advanced and critical approaches — namely **Women and Development (WAD)** and **Gender and Development (GAD)**.

(a) Women and Development (WAD) – Late 1970s

The WAD approach emerged as a **critique of WID**. It argued that women were already active participants in development, but their **contributions were systematically exploited** by capitalist and patriarchal systems. WAD emphasized **collective action, solidarity, and structural reform**, rather than merely adding women into existing frameworks.

It focused on how global economic systems create and maintain inequalities between men and women.

(b) Gender and Development (GAD) – 1980s onwards

The GAD approach went even further. It shifted attention from “*women*” to “*gender relations*” — recognizing that development outcomes are shaped by **the power dynamics between men and women**.

GAD's goal was to **transform social structures** that produce inequality, not just to increase women's participation. It introduced the idea of **gender mainstreaming**, which means that *every policy, at every level, must consider its impact on both men and women*.

H. Example

In rural development programs, earlier policies focused only on training male farmers. Under WID, training was extended to **women farmers**, and they received **microcredit and skill development** opportunities to increase their income and independence.

I. Conclusion

The **Women in Development (WID)** approach marked the beginning of a global shift in understanding women's roles in economic progress.

It recognized women as **active participants in development**, not passive recipients. However, its focus on simply integrating women into existing systems was limited — leading to the rise of later approaches like **GAD**, which emphasized transforming gender relations and achieving **true equality**.

Women and Development (WAD)

A. Meaning of Women and Development (WAD)

The **Women and Development (WAD)** approach emerged in the **late 1970s** as a **response and critique** to the earlier **Women in Development (WID)** approach.

While WID focused on **including women in existing development processes**, WAD argued that women were **already active participants** in development — but the **structures of development (especially capitalism and patriarchy)** exploited and marginalized them.

B. Background

i. Influence of Marxist and Dependency Theories

The WAD approach was heavily influenced by **Marxist economics** and **Dependency theory**, which analyse development in terms of **class, exploitation, and global inequality**.

a) Marxist perspective: Focuses on the **class struggle** between capitalists (owners) and workers. WAD applied this to women, arguing that women's labour — both paid and unpaid — is **exploited by capitalist systems**.

- Women's work in agriculture, domestic labour, and informal sectors often produces economic value but is **undervalued or unpaid**.
- Their contribution supports the profits of men and corporations without benefiting them proportionally.

b) Dependency theory: Argues that **poor countries remain underdeveloped because they are exploited by richer nations**.

WAD extended this idea to women, suggesting that **women in developing countries** are doubly exploited:

1. By **global economic structures** (trade, foreign investment, multinational corporations).
2. By **local patriarchal structures** (family, society, and cultural norms).

The combination of Marxist and Dependency thought helped WAD see women's oppression as **systemic**, not accidental.

ii. Capitalism and Colonialism as Systems of Exploitation

WAD views **capitalism and colonialism** as frameworks that **benefit men and developed nations**, while **marginalizing women and poor countries**:

a) Capitalism:

- Exploits women's labour by paying less or not recognizing unpaid domestic work.
- Uses women as cheap labour in factories, export-processing zones, or informal sectors, maximizing profit for corporations and men.

b) Colonialism:

- Historically imposed economic systems that marginalized indigenous women.
- Introduced cash crops, industrial production, or property laws that **displaced women from traditional roles**, weakening their economic independence. *Example:* Women farmers losing land rights under colonial land tenure systems, then being employed for low wages on the same land.

iii. Emphasis on Women's Collective Strength

WAD emphasizes that **individual solutions are insufficient**; instead, women must act **collectively** to challenge systemic oppression.

- a) **Solidarity:** Women's organizations, unions, and cooperatives are essential to **negotiate better wages, land rights, and social recognition**.
- b) **Structural change:** WAD argues that true empowerment comes from **changing economic, social, and political structures** — not just providing education or jobs.

Example: Formation of women's cooperatives to collectively own land, control resources, or influence local governance, rather than relying on individual entrepreneurship alone.

4. Equation

WAD = Women + Capitalism + Exploitation + Structural Change

- ✓ **Women:** Already active participants in development.
- ✓ **Capitalism:** The system that exploits them.
- ✓ **Exploitation:** Both paid and unpaid work undervalued; global and local inequities.

- ✓ **Structural Change:** Achieved through collective action and systemic reform to ensure equality and justice.

C. Main Features of WAD

i. Women are already part of the development process

Unlike WID, which tried to “add” women to development, WAD recognized that women **already contribute** significantly through both **paid and unpaid work**. However, this contribution is often **undervalued or exploited**. *Example:* Women in agriculture or informal sectors often work long hours, but their labour is not recorded in national income data, nor are they given equal pay or ownership rights

2. Focus on structures, not just individuals

WAD argued that **underdevelopment** is not caused by women’s exclusion, but by the **unequal global economic structure** — a combination of capitalism, patriarchy, and imperialism. Therefore, women’s problems cannot be solved merely by giving them education or jobs. Instead, the **entire economic and social system** that keeps them subordinate must be **changed**.

Example: Giving microcredit may help a few women, but unless land ownership laws, property rights, and wage structures are reformed, deep inequality will continue

3. Emphasis on women’s solidarity and collective action

WAD emphasized that women’s empowerment should come through **collective organization**, not through individual success.

It supported **women’s movements, cooperatives, and unions** that fight for structural changes in society.

It also called for **political mobilization** — encouraging women to demand rights rather than wait for help from government or international agencies.

Example: Women’s self-help groups and cooperative societies that negotiate fair prices, demand land rights, or protest against workplace discrimination embody the WAD spirit

4. Critical of Western, top-down development models

WAD criticized the **Western notion of development**, which measured progress mainly in economic terms (like GDP or industrial growth).

It argued that these models often **ignored cultural and social realities** in developing countries and **perpetuated dependency** on richer nations.

WAD called for **indigenous, community-based development** that values women's knowledge, traditions, and cooperation.

Example: Projects that replace local, women-led cottage industries with large-scale industrial production often harm women's livelihoods — something WAD opposed.

5. Link between gender, class, and global inequality

WAD saw **women's oppression as part of a larger web** of inequalities involving **class, race, and global power**.

It argued that poor women in developing countries face a *double burden* — being exploited both by local patriarchy and by the global capitalist economy.

Example: Women working in export-processing zones (EPZs) in Asia or Latin America are often paid less, have poor working conditions, and lack job security. Their cheap labour supports global corporate profits — showing how capitalism and patriarchy intersect.

D. Criticisms of WAD

While WAD was more critical and political than WID, it also faced some limitations:

1. Focused too much on structure, not on gender relations

WAD emphasized capitalism and global structures but did **not deeply analyse gender relations** (the everyday power dynamics between men and women). It often treated “women” as a **homogeneous group**, ignoring differences of caste, race, ethnicity, or sexuality.

2. Lacked practical solutions

WAD's critique of global capitalism was strong, but it **did not offer clear policy measures** or practical strategies for improving women's lives at the grassroots level.

3. Underestimated individual empowerment

By emphasizing collective struggle, WAD sometimes **neglected the importance of individual education, training, and employment opportunities** that could help women personally improve their condition.

E. Significance of WAD

i. Shift in focus: From women's exclusion (WID) to systemic exploitation (WAD)

While the **WID approach** focused mainly on **integrating women into development programs** that were previously male-dominated, WAD recognized that **women were already active participants in development**, but the system itself **exploited and marginalized them**.

WAD shifted attention from asking "*How do we include women?*" to asking "*Why does the development process exploit women?*"

This shift was crucial because it **highlighted the systemic nature of inequality** — not just women's absence.

WAD argued that women's **labour, skills, and contributions** are systematically undervalued in both **national economies** and the **global capitalist system**.

Example: Women's work in agriculture or informal sectors often produces significant economic output, but it is frequently unpaid or underpaid, highlighting systemic exploitation rather than simple exclusion.

ii. Collective empowerment: Promoted women's organizations and solidarity movements

WAD emphasized **collective action** over individual inclusion. It encouraged the formation of **women's organizations, cooperatives, unions, and advocacy groups** as tools for empowerment.

Collective empowerment aimed to give women the **strength to challenge structural inequalities** in both economic and social spheres.

By working together, women could **negotiate for better wages, land rights, education, and political representation**, instead of relying solely on top-down development programs.

Example: Women's self-help groups in rural areas or urban informal sectors that organize to demand fair pay or access to resources embody WAD's collective approach.

iii. Structural critique: Exposed the gendered and exploitative nature of capitalism

WAD provided a **critical analysis of development systems**, particularly capitalism and global economic structures, showing how they **exploit women's labour and maintain inequality**. It highlighted that women face a **double burden**:

- ✓ **Locally**, through patriarchal family and community structures.
- ✓ **Globally**, through exploitative economic policies and labour systems.

By focusing on structural issues rather than just women's inclusion, WAD **challenged conventional development theories** that ignored gendered power relations and global inequality.

Example: Export-processing zones (EPZs) often employ large numbers of women at low wages, maximizing corporate profit while keeping women economically dependent and socially marginalized.

iv. Foundation for GAD: Prepared the ground for the Gender and Development approach

WAD set the stage for the **Gender and Development (GAD) approach**, which emerged in the 1980s. While WAD analysed **structural exploitation**, GAD further explored **gender relations and power dynamics** between men and women.

WAD's focus on collective action, structural critique, and systemic inequality made it clear that **true gender equality requires more than inclusion** — it requires **transforming power structures** in households, communities, and economies.

Example: GAD builds on WAD by promoting gender mainstreaming, ensuring that **all development policies** consider their effects on men and women, not just women alone.

F. Conclusion

The **Women and Development (WAD)** approach represented a major shift in gender economics. It moved beyond the idea of simply "including" women to **questioning how the development process itself exploits them**.

By linking women's inequality to the broader systems of capitalism and patriarchy, WAD highlighted that **true equality requires transforming social and economic structures**, not just integrating women into them.

However, because it focused mainly on structural analysis and collective struggle, WAD was later succeeded by the **Gender and Development (GAD)** approach, which explored **power relations** between men and women and aimed for **gender transformation** at both the individual and institutional levels.

Gender and Development (GAD)

A. Meaning of Gender and Development (GAD)

The **Gender and Development (GAD)** approach emerged in the **1980s** as an evolution of **Women in Development (WID)** and **Women and Development (WAD)** approaches.

Unlike WID, which focused on **adding women to development**, and WAD, which analysed **structural exploitation**, GAD focuses on **gender relations** — the social, economic, and political relationships between men and women.

It recognizes that **inequalities are not just about women being excluded**, but about **how power, roles, and responsibilities are distributed between men and women**. GAD aims to **transform these relationships**, not just improve women's access to resources.

B. Background

1. Developed as a critique of WID and WAD

The **Gender and Development (GAD)** approach was born out of **dissatisfaction with earlier frameworks** — namely, **Women in Development (WID)** and **Women and Development (WAD)** — which were influential during the 1970s and 1980s. Scholars, feminists, and policymakers realized that although these approaches helped draw attention to women's issues, they were **limited and incomplete** in addressing the **root causes of gender inequality**.

a. Limitation of WID (Women in Development)

- ◆ The **WID approach** aimed to integrate women into the development process. It was based on the assumption that women were **excluded** from mainstream economic and social development, and that including them would automatically lead to equality.
- ◆ WID's primary goal was to **increase women's participation** in education, employment, and decision-making by providing **equal access** to opportunities.
- ◆ However, it **failed to question the structures of power and patriarchy** that caused women's marginalization in the first place.
- ◆ It treated women as **isolated individuals** who simply needed to be added to the existing system — without realizing that the **system itself was unequal**.

Example:

Under WID programs, women were encouraged to join agricultural training or credit schemes,

but these projects often assumed men still held control over land and income. As a result, women's participation increased **without improving their control or power**.

So, WID improved access, but it **ignored power relations** — the unequal decision-making authority and control over resources between men and women.

b. Limitation of WAD (Women and Development)

The **WAD approach** emerged as a reaction to WID. It argued that women were **already part of the development process**, especially through their unpaid labour in households, agriculture, and informal sectors.

WAD focused on the **structural exploitation of women**, highlighting how global capitalism and patriarchy benefit from women's labour.

However, WAD often treated women as a **homogeneous group** — assuming that all women face the same kind of oppression, regardless of their class, race, caste, or location.

It emphasized collective struggle and solidarity but **did not provide clear strategies for individual empowerment or policy action**.

While it offered a **critical theoretical framework**, it was **less practical** in designing solutions that could be implemented on the ground.

Example:

WAD might highlight that women factory workers are exploited by multinational corporations, but it did not focus on *how* to change that situation — such as through legal rights, wage equality, or workplace representation.

Thus, WAD focused on structural issues but **lacked practical mechanisms** to empower individual women within their social and economic contexts.

2. GAD: Combining the strengths of WID and WAD

Learning from these limitations, the **GAD approach** was developed to **combine the best features** of both WID and WAD:

- ✓ From **WID**, it took the idea of **improving women's access to resources and opportunities**.
- ✓ From **WAD**, it adopted the recognition of **structural inequalities** and the need to challenge exploitation.

- ✓ But GAD went a step further by **examining the relationships between men and women**, instead of focusing on women alone.

GAD emphasizes that:

- ✓ Development is shaped by **power relations between genders**.
- ✓ Both men and women must be part of the process of **social transformation**.
- ✓ True equality comes not from including women in existing systems but from **changing the systems** that create inequality.

Example:

In a rural development program, GAD would not only give women access to land but also ensure that **household decision-making, inheritance laws, and community institutions** support equal rights for both men and women.

3. Focus on Power, Social Norms, and Participation

GAD pays close attention to **who has power** — in families, communities, workplaces, and governments.

It analyses **social norms**, such as traditional gender roles, cultural beliefs, and expectations that determine what men and women “should” do.

It promotes **participation**, encouraging women (and men) to take part equally in planning, implementing, and evaluating development programs.

Example:

In a water resource project, GAD would ensure women’s participation in water committees, recognizing their traditional role in collecting water, but also giving them **decision-making power** in how resources are managed.

4. Influenced by Feminist Theory

GAD was heavily influenced by **feminist economic and sociological theories**, which emphasize that **gender is a social construct** — not a biological destiny.

Feminist theory argues that inequality arises from **social, cultural, and economic systems** that assign different values to men’s and women’s work and roles.

GAD therefore sees development as a **political process** that must challenge **patriarchy, discriminatory laws, and unequal power structures**.

Example:

Feminist perspectives help GAD identify why women's unpaid domestic work is not counted in GDP, even though it is essential for economic and social reproduction. GAD thus pushes for recognizing and valuing unpaid care work as part of the economy.

C. Main Features of GAD**1. Focus on gender relations**

GAD examines **interactions between men and women**, rather than treating women in isolation. It studies **who does what, who controls resources, who makes decisions, and how societal norms shape opportunities and responsibilities**. The goal is to **restructure power relations** to achieve equality.

Example: In rural households, men may control land and finances while women do unpaid labour; GAD seeks to redistribute decision-making power.

2. Transformative approach

GAD aims to **transform social, economic, and political structures** that create gender inequality, not just integrate women into existing frameworks. Unlike WID (integration) or WAD (structural critique), GAD **proactively changes gender norms**.

Example: Legal reforms granting equal inheritance rights for men and women, combined with awareness campaigns to change social attitudes.

3. Recognizes diversity among women

Women are not a **homogeneous group**; inequalities are influenced by **class, caste, ethnicity, age, disability, and location**. GAD tailors' development policies to address **intersectional inequalities**.

Example: Rural, poor women may need access to land, while urban women may need labour protections or childcare support.

4. Emphasis on participation and empowerment

GAD promotes **active participation of both women and men** in development programs. It encourages women to **voice their needs, make decisions, and share control** over resources. Empowerment is both **individual** (skills, education, confidence) and **collective** (community organization, advocacy).

Example: Gender-sensitive local governance programs that include women in decision-making committees.

5. Gender mainstreaming

One of the key concepts of GAD is **gender mainstreaming** — integrating a **gender perspective in all policies, programs, and institutions**. Development projects must consider **how men and women will be affected differently** and ensure that both benefit equally.

Example: Infrastructure projects like irrigation systems or roads designed to reduce women's labour burden (e.g., easier access to water sources or markets).

D. Criticisms of GAD

Although **GAD** is widely recognized as the most comprehensive and transformative approach to understanding gender relations in development, it faces **significant practical challenges** when applied in real-world contexts. These challenges arise due to its **complexity, resource requirements, and dependence on political and institutional support**.

1. Complexity and Resource Intensity

The **GAD approach** is **conceptually complex** because it requires a deep analysis of **power relations, social structures, and cultural norms** that shape gender inequality.

Unlike earlier approaches (such as WID), which simply added women to existing development programs, GAD demands **systemic change** — transforming **how society views men and women, how institutions function, and how resources are distributed**.

This kind of change requires:

- ✓ **Extensive research** on gender relations within specific communities.
- ✓ **Continuous training** of policymakers, project officers, and staff in gender-sensitive planning.
- ✓ **Consultations** with both men and women to understand their roles, challenges, and needs.

All these processes make GAD **time-consuming and resource-intensive**.

Many developing countries, especially those with **limited budgets, low administrative capacity, or cultural resistance**, find it difficult to implement GAD effectively.

Example:

A government designing a rural development project must study how men and women divide agricultural work, who owns the land, who controls income, and how household decisions are made. This requires **surveys, data analysis, gender training, and long-term monitoring** — all of which need **money, time, and expertise**. Without sufficient funding or trained staff, GAD programs often remain **theoretical** rather than practical.

2. Dependence on Political Will and Institutional Capacity

The success of the GAD approach depends heavily on **strong political commitment** from governments and **effective institutional mechanisms**.

GAD is not just a social project — it's a **policy-level transformation**. It requires leaders to:

- ✓ Reform laws and policies that discriminate based on gender.
- ✓ Allocate sufficient funds for gender-sensitive programs.
- ✓ Establish gender cells or departments in ministries and local governments.

However, in many countries, **political leaders and policymakers** may give **low priority to gender issues**, treating them as secondary compared to economic growth or security concerns.

Moreover, **institutional weaknesses** — such as lack of trained personnel, corruption, bureaucratic delays, or poor coordination — further reduce the effectiveness of GAD implementation.

Example:

A national gender policy might be passed by parliament, but if there are no trained officers in ministries to implement it, or if no funds are allocated, the policy **remains on paper**. Similarly, when political leaders change frequently, gender commitments can be **abandoned or diluted** due to shifting priorities.

3. Symbolic Gender Mainstreaming (Lack of Accountability)

One of the central goals of GAD is **gender mainstreaming** — integrating a gender perspective into **all stages of development planning**, from design to evaluation. However, in practice, **gender mainstreaming often becomes symbolic** rather than substantive.

Many institutions adopt **gender-sensitive language** (e.g., “empowerment,” “inclusivity”) in their documents or speeches, but **do not make real structural changes**. This is often called

“**tokenism**” — where gender issues are mentioned superficially to satisfy donor requirements or political correctness.

Without proper **monitoring and accountability**, gender mainstreaming efforts lose their transformative potential.

Example:

A government or NGO may include a clause in its development plan stating “women’s participation will be ensured,” but if no indicators are developed to **measure actual participation**, or no budget is set aside to **support women’s involvement**, the clause has no practical impact.

Real mainstreaming would require collecting **sex-disaggregated data**, conducting **impact assessments**, and ensuring **women’s voices influence decision-making** — not just mentioning them in reports.

E. Significance of GAD

The **GAD approach** is significant because it goes beyond the earlier models (WID and WAD) and provides a **comprehensive, transformative, and inclusive framework** for achieving gender equality in all aspects of development.

It focuses not only on women’s inclusion but on **changing the social structures, cultural beliefs, and institutional systems** that create and sustain inequality between men and women.

1. Holistic Approach: Focuses on Gender Relations, Not Just Women’s Inclusion

Earlier approaches like **Women in Development (WID)** mainly concentrated on bringing women into the development process — for example, giving them jobs, loans, or training.

However, GAD recognized that **development is not just about including women**, but about **understanding and transforming the relationships between men and women**.

It studies how power, responsibilities, and opportunities are distributed between genders, and how these relations shape economic and social outcomes.

This makes GAD **holistic**, because it connects the **economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions** of gender inequality.

It focuses on both **men and women**, analysing how their interactions within families, workplaces, and communities affect development outcomes.

Example:

In rural areas, giving women access to credit is not enough if men still control family decisions about spending or saving that income. GAD would address both sides — empowering women economically and promoting shared decision-making within the household.

2. Structural and Cultural Change: Transforms Social Norms and Power Relations

GAD recognizes that **gender inequality is deeply rooted in social and cultural systems**.

These systems define what men and women “should” do — men as breadwinners, women as caregivers — and these stereotypes restrict women’s opportunities and reinforce male dominance.

Therefore, GAD seeks to **change the very structures and norms** that create these inequalities.

This includes transforming:

- ✓ **Patriarchal institutions** (family, religion, education, workplace)
- ✓ **Legal systems** (laws on property, inheritance, and employment)
- ✓ **Cultural attitudes** (beliefs about gender roles and women’s capabilities)

The ultimate aim is to achieve **power redistribution** — where men and women have equal say in decisions, equal access to resources, and equal respect in society.

Example:

In some societies, cultural norms prevent women from owning land. GAD-based reforms would not only change the laws to allow women’s ownership but also promote social acceptance of women as landowners and leaders in agriculture.

3. Intersectionality: Addresses Inequalities Based on Class, Caste, Ethnicity, etc.

GAD understands that **not all women face the same kind of discrimination**. A woman’s experience is shaped by her **social position** — including class, caste, ethnicity, religion, disability, and age.

This idea is known as **intersectionality**, meaning different forms of oppression overlap and intensify each other. GAD takes these intersections into account, ensuring that development programs are **context-specific** and reach the most marginalized groups.

Example:

In India, poor women from lower castes may face triple discrimination — as women, as poor

individuals, and as members of a lower caste. A GAD-based approach would design programs that address all these overlapping disadvantages, not just gender alone.

4. Participation and Empowerment: Encourages Both Individual and Collective Empowerment

One of GAD's strongest contributions is its emphasis on **participation** and **empowerment**.

GAD believes that women should not just be **beneficiaries** of development, but **active participants and decision-makers** in shaping it.

Empowerment happens at two levels:

- ✓ **Individual empowerment** — improving confidence, education, skills, and self-esteem so that women can make informed choices.
- ✓ **Collective empowerment** — strengthening women's groups, cooperatives, and movements so they can influence institutions and policies.

Through participation, GAD ensures that **women's voices are heard** and that they can shape decisions that affect their lives.

Example:

In a community irrigation project, GAD would ensure women's representation in the water management committee so they can participate equally in decisions about water distribution, timing, and maintenance — instead of leaving it entirely to men.

5. Policy Integration: Promotes Gender Mainstreaming in All Development Policies

Gender mainstreaming is one of the most practical and powerful tools that emerged from the GAD approach. It means integrating a **gender perspective at every stage** of policy design, implementation, and evaluation.

Rather than having separate "women's projects," GAD insists that **every program, law, and policy** — whether it deals with health, education, employment, or infrastructure — should consider its **impact on both men and women**.

This ensures that gender equality becomes a **core part of all development agendas**, not an afterthought.

Governments and international agencies like the UN, World Bank, and OECD have adopted **gender mainstreaming** as a guiding principle for all their development work.

Example:

In transportation planning, gender mainstreaming might mean designing public transport routes that ensure safety and accessibility for women who travel early morning or late evening — considering their unique mobility patterns and safety needs.

F. Conclusion

The **Gender and Development (GAD)** approach is the most **comprehensive and transformative framework** in gender economics.

It goes beyond **simply including women (WID)** or **analysing structural exploitation (WAD)** to **address power relations, social norms, and intersectional inequalities**. By emphasizing **empowerment, participation, and gender mainstreaming**, GAD seeks **sustainable and equitable development** for both women and men.

Women and Empowerment

A. Meaning

“Women and Empowerment” refers to the process of enabling women to gain power, control, and confidence over their own lives. It means giving women equal access to education, employment, decision-making, and rights, so that they can fully participate in social, economic, and political life.

B. Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment means giving individuals the ability to make choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes. For women, empowerment involves overcoming barriers such as gender discrimination, social restrictions, and unequal opportunities.

In simple terms, *women’s empowerment* means helping women to stand on their own feet, voice their opinions, and influence decisions that affect their lives and society.

C. Dimensions of Women’s Empowerment

Empowerment is not only about external opportunities but also about internal transformation, enabling women to live with freedom, dignity, and equality. The different dimensions of women’s empowerment are as follows:

i. Social Empowerment

Social empowerment focuses on changing social structures and cultural norms that restrict women’s freedom.

It aims to give women equal status in society, ensuring that they are not discriminated against based on gender.

- ✓ Promoting **equal participation** of women in social, cultural, and community activities.
- ✓ Ensuring access to **healthcare, sanitation, and nutrition**.
- ✓ Raising **awareness against social evils** like dowry, child marriage, female infanticide, and gender-based violence.
- ✓ Creating a supportive environment where women can express themselves without fear or suppression.

Example: Women's participation in community groups, local governance (Panchayati Raj), and NGOs improves their visibility and decision-making power in society.

2. Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment gives women the means to be financially independent and capable of making economic decisions for themselves and their families.

- ✓ Equal access to **employment opportunities, fair wages, and safe working environments**.
- ✓ Ownership and control over **resources**, such as land, property, and finance.
- ✓ Encouraging **entrepreneurship** through microfinance schemes, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and start-up support.
- ✓ Ensuring women's involvement in the **formal economy**, not just unpaid household labour.

Example: Initiatives like *Stand-Up India* and *Mudra Yojana* help women start small businesses and gain financial independence.

3. Political Empowerment

Political empowerment ensures women's active participation in the political process and Giving women **equal representation** in legislative bodies, political parties, and government posts.

- ✓ Encouraging women to **vote, contest elections, and influence policy decisions**.
- ✓ Training and mentoring women leaders to strengthen governance and democracy.
- ✓ Implementing **reservation policies**, such as the 33% reservation for women in Panchayats and the Women's Reservation Bill for Parliament and State Assemblies.

Example: Leaders like **Indira Gandhi, Pratibha Patil, and Droupadi Murmu** demonstrate how women's political participation transforms national leadership.

4. Educational Empowerment

Education is the foundation of empowerment. Educational empowerment means ensuring that women and girls have equal access to quality education at all levels.

- ✓ **Eliminating gender disparities** in enrolment, retention, and completion of schooling.
- ✓ Providing **vocational and higher education** to improve employment opportunities.
- ✓ Promoting **digital literacy** and skill-based education for modern careers.
- ✓ Raising awareness about **reproductive health, rights, and social responsibilities** through education.

Example: Programs like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* and *National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education* have helped improve girls' literacy and empowerment.

5. Legal Empowerment

Legal empowerment focuses on ensuring women's rights are protected and enforced through law. It enables women to know, use, and shape the law for their benefit.

- ✓ **Laws against discrimination**, such as the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, and Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
- ✓ **Right to property**, inheritance, and equal pay.
- ✓ **Protection from workplace harassment**, under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013.
- ✓ Providing **legal literacy programs** to make women aware of their rights and how to claim them.

Example: Legal reforms in India have allowed women to claim equal property rights and seek protection from domestic and workplace violence.

6. Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment focuses on strengthening women's internal confidence, self-worth, and awareness of their potential.

- ✓ Building **self-esteem** and helping women overcome fear, inferiority, and dependence.
- ✓ Encouraging women to **believe in their abilities** and take leadership roles.

- ✓ Creating **support networks** and counselling services to help women face emotional and mental challenges.
- ✓ Promoting positive media representation and role models to inspire confidence.

Example: Campaigns like *#SelfieWithDaughter* and women-led community initiatives encourage women to feel proud, capable, and confident about their identity.

D. Importance of Women's Empowerment

1. Promotes Gender Equality

Women's empowerment is the foundation of achieving **gender equality** — one of the key Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) set by the United Nations. When women are empowered, they gain equal access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making processes. This helps to **bridge the gap between men and women** in education, employment, politics, and social participation.

- ✓ Empowerment breaks traditional gender roles that limit women to household duties.
- ✓ It promotes equal treatment in workplaces, schools, and communities.
- ✓ Women begin to be recognized for their **skills, knowledge, and leadership** rather than being judged by gender.
- ✓ Gender equality leads to a more balanced and fair society where both men and women contribute equally to progress.

Example: Equal pay policies, co-education, and women's representation in leadership positions are steps that reduce gender disparities.

2. Economic Growth

Empowering women directly contributes to **economic development** at both micro and macro levels. When women are educated and given access to employment, credit, and entrepreneurship opportunities, they become **active participants in the economy**.

- ✓ Women's participation in the labour force increases overall productivity and innovation.
- ✓ Studies show that when women earn, they tend to invest more in family welfare, health, and education, leading to sustainable growth.
- ✓ Women entrepreneurs create new businesses, generate employment, and drive local economies forward.

- ✓ Economically empowered women help diversify the economy and improve household income levels.

Example: Countries like Bangladesh have shown strong growth through women's involvement in the garment industry and microfinance programs like **Grameen Bank**, founded by Muhammad Yunus.

3. Social Development

Women's empowerment plays a vital role in **social progress** because women influence family, community, and societal values. Educated and empowered women tend to raise **healthier, better-educated, and more responsible children**.

- ✓ Empowered women make informed decisions about healthcare, nutrition, and education.
- ✓ They help reduce issues like child marriage, malnutrition, and illiteracy.
- ✓ Women's awareness of rights and social issues brings positive change to their communities.
- ✓ Empowered mothers promote equality, tolerance, and empathy in the next generation.

Example: In villages where women are part of Self-Help Groups or local governance, there is visible improvement in sanitation, literacy, and child welfare indicators.

4. Political Stability

When women participate actively in politics, policymaking becomes more **inclusive, just, and people-oriented**. Women leaders often focus on issues like education, healthcare, and social justice that are sometimes neglected by male-dominated governance systems.

- ✓ Women's presence in political institutions ensures diverse perspectives in decision-making.
- ✓ Their leadership encourages transparency, accountability, and peace-building.
- ✓ Political empowerment of women leads to stronger democracies and stable governance.
- ✓ Policies framed by women often prioritize community welfare, family security, and equitable growth.

Example: Countries with higher women's representation in parliament, like **Rwanda**, show better governance and lower levels of corruption.

5. Reduction in Poverty

Empowered women are key agents in **poverty reduction**. When women have access to jobs, credit, and property rights, they can lift their families and communities out of poverty.

- ✓ Women tend to spend their income on their family's health, food, and education, improving overall living standards.
- ✓ Financial independence reduces their vulnerability to exploitation and dependence.
- ✓ Income-generating activities by women in rural areas (like small businesses, handicrafts, or farming) increase family savings and community wealth.
- ✓ Empowerment programs like **microcredit and SHGs (Self-Help Groups)** create networks of support that improve resilience against poverty.

Example: The **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)** in India has empowered thousands of poor women to earn livelihoods and gain financial security.

E. Measures to Promote Women's Empowerment

1. Education and Skill Training Programs

Education is the most powerful tool for empowering women. It helps them gain knowledge, confidence, and the ability to make independent choices in life.

a) Access to Quality Education: Ensures that girls and women receive equal opportunities for schooling and higher education. This helps bridge the literacy gap between men and women.

b) Vocational and Skill Development: Training programs in areas like tailoring, computer literacy, handicrafts, food processing, and digital skills make women employable and self-reliant.

c) Adult and Non-formal Education: Helps uneducated women, especially in rural areas, to learn basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills.

d) Digital Education: Encourages women to participate in the modern economy by learning to use technology and online platforms.

Example:

Schemes like *National Skill Development Mission (NSDM)* and *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)* provide training to women to enhance their employment and entrepreneurship skills.

2. Legal Reforms

Legal reforms are crucial for protecting women's rights and ensuring equality under the law. They help women access justice and safeguard them from discrimination and violence.

a) Equal Rights in Property and Inheritance: Laws such as the *Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005* give daughters equal rights in ancestral property.

b) Equal Pay and Employment Laws: The *Equal Remuneration Act, 1976* ensures that women receive the same pay as men for the same work.

c) Protection from Violence: The *Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005* and the *Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013* protect women from abuse and harassment.

d) Marriage and Dowry Laws: The *Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961* and *Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006* safeguard women's dignity and rights.

e) Maternity Benefits: The *Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017* extends paid maternity leave and ensures job security for working mothers.

Example:

Legal literacy campaigns and helplines like *181 – Women Helpline* make women aware of their rights and available legal support.

3. Government Initiatives

The government plays a key role in empowering women by implementing special programs and policies that promote their welfare and participation.

a) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP): A national campaign to address declining child sex ratio and promote the education and welfare of girls.

b) Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Encourage collective savings and micro-enterprises among women, especially in rural areas, making them financially independent.

c) Women's Reservation Bill (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023): Reserves 33% of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, promoting political participation.

d) Mahila E-Haat: An online marketing platform for women entrepreneurs to sell products and services directly to buyers.

e) National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW): Integrates various government programs to ensure holistic development of women.

Example:

The success of *Self-Help Groups (SHGs)* under the *National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)* has empowered millions of women to earn livelihoods and participate in local governance.

4. Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion means providing women access to financial services such as banking, credit, insurance, and investment opportunities. It enables them to manage resources, start businesses, and become economically independent.

a) Microfinance and Credit Facilities: Provide small loans to women without requiring collateral, helping them start or expand small businesses.

b) Entrepreneurship Development: Programs encourage women to become business owners through mentorship, training, and access to markets.

c) Banking Access: Schemes like *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)* have opened millions of bank accounts for women, promoting savings and financial security.

d) Insurance and Pension Schemes: Initiatives like *Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana* and *Atal Pension Yojana* help women plan for future financial stability.

Example:

The *Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)* provides microfinance and cooperative banking services to women, enabling them to invest in productive activities.

5. Awareness Campaigns

Awareness campaigns aim to change the social mindset and cultural barriers that restrict women's empowerment. They educate society about equality, respect, and the importance of women's participation.

a) Gender Sensitization Programs: Conducted in schools, colleges, and workplaces to promote respect for women and challenge stereotypes.

b) Media and Social Campaigns: Use television, radio, and social media to spread messages about women's rights and achievements.

c) Community-based Awareness: NGOs and social organizations organize workshops and street plays to discuss topics like domestic violence, health, and education.

d) Celebrating Women's Achievements: Days like *International Women's Day* and *National Girl Child Day* honour women's contributions and spread awareness about equality.

Example:

Campaigns such as *#HeForShe* by the UN and *Men for Women* movements in India encourage men to support gender equality and women's empowerment.

Examples of Empowerment:

- ◆ Women leaders like **Indira Gandhi, Kiran Bedi, Kalpana Chawla, and Malala Yousafzai** symbolize empowerment in various fields.
- ◆ Rural women's participation in **Self Help Groups (SHGs)** has improved livelihoods and decision-making power.

Conclusion

Women's empowerment is essential for a just and progressive society. When women are empowered, families prosper, communities progress, and nations develop. True empowerment means not just giving opportunities but creating an environment where women can exercise their rights freely, make their own choices, and live with dignity and respect.

Women and Environment

The relationship between **women and the environment** is an important topic in gender studies, development economics, and environmental science. It explores how women interact with the natural environment, how environmental changes affect them, and how their roles and knowledge contribute to sustainable development.

A. Meaning

The concept of “**Women and Environment**” refers to the **interconnection between women's lives and the environment** they depend on. Women, especially in rural and developing areas, rely directly on natural resources such as **water, forests, and land** for their daily needs — like collecting fuel, fetching water, and farming. Because of this close relationship, women are often **the first to feel the impact of environmental degradation** but are also **key agents in environmental conservation and sustainable practices**.

B. Historical Background

The link between **women and the environment** emerged as a major global issue in the **1970s and 1980s**, a period when both **environmental awareness** and **women's rights movements** were gaining strength worldwide. During this time, several **international conferences and reports** played a crucial role in highlighting the importance of women's participation in environmental protection and sustainable development.

i. United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972)

- This was the **first global conference** to address environmental issues at an international level.
- It recognized that **environmental problems such as pollution, deforestation, and resource depletion** were global challenges that needed cooperative action among nations.
- Although the conference did not focus exclusively on women, it **laid the foundation** for later discussions about how environmental degradation affects human life — especially the lives of poor and rural women.
- It made policymakers realize that **environmental protection and human welfare are interconnected** and that women, being primary users and managers of natural resources, must be involved in conservation efforts.

ii. World Conference on Women (Nairobi, 1985)

- The **Nairobi Conference** was the **Third World Conference on Women**, organized by the United Nations to review and evaluate the progress of women's rights since the first two conferences (Mexico City 1975 and Copenhagen 1980).
- This conference **specifically acknowledged the close relationship between women and the environment**.
- It emphasized that women are both **victims and protectors** of the environment — victims because they suffer the most from resource scarcity, and protectors because they have indigenous knowledge and skills that can be used for conservation.
- The **Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985)** included a detailed section on **Women and the Environment**, calling for policies that empower women to participate in decision-making about environmental management and development planning.

iii. The Brundtland Report (1987)

Officially titled “*Our Common Future*”, this report was prepared by the **World Commission on Environment and Development**, chaired by **Gro Harlem Brundtland**, the then Prime Minister of Norway.

The report introduced the concept of **Sustainable Development**, defined as:

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

- ✓ It highlighted that environmental sustainability could not be achieved without **social equity and gender equality**.
- ✓ The report argued that **women’s participation** in environmental policy and planning was essential because they have a unique understanding of ecological systems through their daily interaction with natural resources.

iv. The Rio Earth Summit (1992)

The **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)**, held in **Rio de Janeiro**, is one of the most significant global environmental conferences. It produced important policy documents like **Agenda 21**, which had a specific chapter (Chapter 24) on **Women in Sustainable Development**.

Agenda 21 recognized that women’s **knowledge, skills, and leadership** are vital for achieving sustainable and equitable development. It urged governments to ensure **women’s full participation** in environmental decision-making, from local community projects to national and international environmental policies.

The Rio Summit reinforced the message that **gender equality and environmental sustainability are inseparable** — one cannot exist without the other.

v. Core Message of These Conferences and Reports

All these international efforts — from Stockholm to Rio — share a **common theme**

Environmental sustainability cannot be achieved without gender equality and the active participation of women.

This means:

- Women's traditional knowledge, daily practices, and community leadership are crucial for effective environmental management.
- Empowering women with education, resources, and decision-making power leads to more **sustainable, inclusive, and resilient societies**.
- Policies that ignore gender differences risk failing because they overlook how environmental degradation specifically affects women's lives.

C. Women's Role in Environmental Management

Women play a central role in environmental management and resource use

i. Women in Agriculture

a) Major Contributors to Food Production

Women make up a large portion of the agricultural workforce, particularly in developing countries. They perform crucial tasks such as sowing, weeding, harvesting, seed selection, and post-harvest processing. Their contribution ensures **household food security** and **community nutrition**.

b) Traditional Knowledge and Sustainable Practices

Women possess traditional ecological knowledge passed down through generations. They often use **sustainable agricultural methods** like mixed cropping, crop rotation, composting, and organic manure application to maintain soil fertility and prevent erosion.

c) Challenges Faced

Despite their immense contribution, women farmers often **lack ownership of land, access to credit, and agricultural technology**. This inequality limits their potential in achieving sustainable agricultural development.

d) Why It Matters for the Environment

Since women manage small plots and focus on family consumption rather than commercial gain, their farming practices are usually more **eco-friendly**, conserving biodiversity and maintaining the natural balance.

ii. Women in Water Management

a) Primary Responsibility for Water Collection

In many rural and semi-urban areas, women are responsible for **fetching, storing, and managing household water** for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and irrigation. This daily

interaction gives them deep insight into **local water sources, seasonal patterns, and water quality.**

b) Awareness of Scarcity and Conservation

Because women experience the burden of water scarcity directly, they tend to be more **sensitive to water conservation.** Many community-based water projects have succeeded due to women's involvement, as they help in maintaining handpumps, constructing rainwater harvesting systems, and monitoring water use.

c) Impact of Water Shortages

When water sources dry up, women must travel long distances to fetch water, which increases **their physical workload** and reduces time for education, income generation, or rest. This shows how **environmental degradation directly affects gender equality and women's well-being.**

d) Environmental Relevance

Women's knowledge of water use efficiency, purification methods, and source protection makes them **key partners in managing water resources sustainably.**

iii. Women in Forestry

a) Daily Dependence on Forests

Women depend on forests for essential items like **fuelwood, fodder, fruits, nuts, leaves, and medicinal plants.** They know which plants can be used for food, medicine, and crafts, showing their close connection with forest ecosystems.

b) Role in Conservation

Because women rely heavily on forest resources, they are naturally motivated to **protect and conserve forests.** Women have historically led movements against deforestation — for example, the **Chipko Movement** in India, where women hugged trees to prevent logging.

c) Community Forestry and Decision-Making

In many regions, involving women in forest committees has improved forest regeneration rates. Women are effective in implementing rules against illegal tree felling and overgrazing.

d) Challenges

However, women often have **limited access to decision-making** in forest management despite being the primary users. Policies that include women's participation have proven to make forest conservation more **equitable and effective.**

iv. Women and Energy

a) Dependence on Traditional Energy Sources

In rural areas, women rely on **firewood, charcoal, crop residues, and animal dung** for cooking and heating. As a result, they spend many hours collecting fuel, which exposes them to physical strain and indoor air pollution.

b) Promotion of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Sources

Women have been key participants in promoting **fuel-efficient stoves, solar cookers, and biogas plants** that reduce smoke emissions, save time, and minimize deforestation.

c) Impact of Energy Poverty

Limited access to clean energy restricts women's productivity, health, and education. When energy needs are unmet, girls are often kept out of school to help collect fuelwood, showing how energy scarcity deepens **gender inequality**.

d) Environmental Contribution

By adopting renewable and efficient energy technologies, women contribute significantly to **reducing carbon emissions, protecting forests, and building sustainable energy futures** for their communities.

D. Impact of Environmental Degradation on Women

Environmental degradation — such as **deforestation, water scarcity, pollution, and climate change** — affects women more severely due to their social and economic roles.

i. Deforestation

Deforestation is the large-scale clearing of forests for agriculture, timber, or urban development. It destroys the natural environment on which many rural communities, especially women, depend.

In most rural areas, women are responsible for collecting **firewood, fodder, fruits, and medicinal plants** from nearby forests. When forests are destroyed, these resources become scarce.

Women are forced to **walk longer distances** to gather fuelwood and fodder, often carrying heavy loads, which leads to **physical exhaustion, back pain, and health problems**.

This extra time spent gathering resources reduces the time they can devote to **education, childcare, income-generating activities, and rest**.

In some cases, women's safety is also at risk when they must travel alone to distant forest areas.

Example

The **Chipko Movement** in India (1970s) showed how women protested tree felling because deforestation directly threatened their survival needs like fuel, fodder, and water.

ii. Water Scarcity

Water scarcity occurs when the demand for water exceeds its supply, often due to drought, over-extraction, or pollution of freshwater sources.

In many developing countries, **fetching water is primarily a woman's responsibility**. When rivers, ponds, or wells dry up, women must **travel farther and spend several hours daily** collecting water.

This physically demanding task results in **fatigue and health problems**, particularly for pregnant and elderly women.

The time spent fetching water reduces opportunities for **education, paid work, and leisure**, thus reinforcing gender inequality.

Lack of access to clean water also affects **women's hygiene and family health**, especially during menstruation and childbirth.

Water scarcity may also lead to **conflicts within households or communities** over the allocation of limited water resources.

Example

In parts of **Rajasthan and Sub-Saharan Africa**, women walk 5–10 kilometers daily to collect water, spending nearly one-third of their day on this activity alone.

iii. Climate Change

Climate change refers to long-term alterations in temperature, rainfall, and weather patterns caused by human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels.

Women, particularly in agrarian societies, are **heavily dependent on natural resources** for livelihood. Climate change causes **irregular rainfall, droughts, floods, and declining crop yields**, which threaten their food security.

When crops fail, women must **find alternative sources of food and income**, often work longer hours or migrate with families.

They also face **malnutrition** because, in times of food shortage, women tend to eat less to ensure that children and elders get enough food.

Displacement due to floods or droughts creates additional risks for women, including **loss of shelter, increased vulnerability to violence, and lack of access to healthcare**.

Example:

During the **2013 Uttarakhand floods** in India and frequent droughts in **Sub-Saharan Africa**, women were among the most affected, losing homes, crops, and means of survival.

iv. Pollution

Pollution occurs when harmful substances contaminate air, water, or soil, negatively affecting human and ecological health.

Water pollution from industrial waste and sewage leads to diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and skin infections, especially among women who handle domestic water use.

Air pollution from smoke (firewood, charcoal, kerosene) exposes women and children to indoor air toxins, leading to respiratory problems and eye irritation.

Soil pollution reduces crop productivity, affecting women farmers' income and food availability.

Pollution-related health issues also increase **women's caregiving burden**, as they often nurse sick family members while neglecting their own health.

Example:

In households using traditional stoves, **indoor air pollution** can be up to five times more dangerous than outdoor air. Women who cook daily in unventilated kitchens face a higher risk of chronic lung disease.

E. Policy and Global Recognition

Several international agreements recognize women's role in environmental sustainability:

i. Agenda 21 (Rio Earth Summit, 1992)

a) Background:

The **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)**, held in **Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992**, is commonly known as the **Rio Earth Summit**. It was one of the most influential global meetings focusing on the environment, development, and sustainability.

b) What is Agenda 21?

Agenda 21 is a comprehensive **global action plan** for sustainable development in the 21st century. It provides strategies for governments, international organizations, and communities to integrate environmental protection with economic and social development.

c) Women's Role in Agenda 21:

Chapter 24 of Agenda 21, titled “**Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development,**” specifically focuses on the participation of women. It emphasizes that:

- ✓ Women have **special knowledge and experience** in managing natural resources and maintaining environmental balance.
- ✓ **Empowering women** through education, training, and access to resources is crucial for achieving sustainability.
- ✓ Governments should ensure **women's full participation in decision-making** at all levels—local, national, and international—regarding environmental management and development policies.

d) Key Actions Proposed:

- ✓ Increase women's access to **education, credit, technology, and land ownership**.
- ✓ Support women's involvement in **environmental organizations and leadership roles**.
- ✓ Collect gender-disaggregated data to understand women's environmental contributions better.

e) Significance

Agenda 21 was one of the **first global policy frameworks** to officially link **gender equality with environmental sustainability**, recognizing women not merely as victims of environmental degradation but as **active agents of change**.

ii. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992)

a) Background

Adopted during the same year as the Earth Summit, the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** is an international treaty aimed at conserving biodiversity, using it sustainably, and ensuring fair sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

b) Recognition of Women's Role

The preamble of the CBD explicitly acknowledges that **women play a vital role in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity**. It states that their **full participation is essential** to achieving these objectives.

c) Why Women's Role Matters in Biodiversity

In many traditional and indigenous communities, women are the **primary custodians of biodiversity**. They select seeds, cultivate diverse crops, and use plants for food, medicine, and rituals, thus preserving **genetic diversity** and **traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)**.

Women's knowledge helps in identifying medicinal herbs, maintaining soil fertility, and conserving water sources — all crucial for sustainable biodiversity management.

d) Implementation Measures

- ✓ Encouraging the inclusion of women in **biodiversity conservation programs and decision-making bodies**.
- ✓ Supporting **community-based projects** that utilize women's traditional knowledge.
- ✓ Protecting women's **intellectual property rights** related to local plant and seed varieties.

e) Significance

The CBD was among the first environmental treaties to formally recognize women's **traditional knowledge as a scientific and cultural asset**, marking a major step toward gender-inclusive environmental governance.

iii. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015)

a) Background

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** were adopted by the **United Nations in 2015** as a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. There are **17 interlinked goals**, and many of them have direct gender and environmental connections.

b) Gender and Environment Linkages

- **Goal 5: Gender Equality**

- ✓ Aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- ✓ It promotes equal access to resources such as **land, energy, technology, and decision-making**.
- ✓ Environmental sustainability cannot be achieved without empowering women, as they are central to resource management, family well-being, and community development.

- **Goal 13: Climate Action**

- ✓ Focuses on urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts.
- ✓ It calls for **gender-responsive climate policies** and recognizes that women are often **the most affected** by climate change impacts like droughts, floods, and food insecurity.
- ✓ Encourages including women in **climate adaptation, disaster management, and green innovation**.

c) Other Related Goals

- ✓ **Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)** – highlights women's role in water resource management.
- ✓ **Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)** – addresses women's energy needs and clean fuel access.
- ✓ **Goal 15 (Life on Land)** – focuses on protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, aligning with women's environmental stewardship.

d) Significance

The SDGs view gender equality and environmental sustainability as **mutually reinforcing** goals. Empowered women create stronger, more resilient, and more sustainable communities.

F. Conclusion

The **Women and Environment** framework stresses that environmental sustainability and gender equality are deeply connected. Women are not just passive victims of environmental destruction — they are **active managers, decision-makers, and protectors** of natural resources. Empowering women through **education, property rights, and participation in environmental policies** ensures both gender justice and ecological balance.

Ecofeminism

A. Meaning

Ecofeminism is a social and philosophical movement that combines **ecology (concern for the environment)** and **feminism (concern for women's rights and equality)**. It explores the connection between the **exploitation of women** and the **exploitation of nature**, arguing that both arise from **patriarchal systems** that value dominance, control, and profit over care, cooperation, and balance.

B. Origin and Background

i. Origin of the Term

The term “**Ecofeminism**” was first introduced by **Françoise d'Eaubonne**, a French feminist, in **1974** in her influential book titled “*Le Féminisme ou la Mort*” (which translates to “*Feminism or Death*”).

In this book, d'Eaubonne argued that the **oppression of women** and the **exploitation of nature** are deeply interconnected and both arise from the **patriarchal system**. She suggested that just as women have been dominated and controlled by men, nature too has been dominated and exploited by humans — particularly by industrial, capitalist, and patriarchal structures. Therefore, she called for a **feminist revolution** to save both women and the environment from destruction.

ii. Development of the Movement

Ecofeminism gained significant momentum during the **1970s and 1980s**, which were decades marked by two major global developments:

- The rise of **environmental movements**, such as those opposing deforestation, pollution, and nuclear energy.
- The growth of **women's liberation movements**, where women across the world were fighting for equal rights, social justice, and recognition.

As these two movements evolved side by side, ecofeminism emerged as a **bridge between feminism and environmentalism**, emphasizing that social justice for women and ecological balance are inseparable goals.

Ecofeminists argued that both the **degradation of nature** and the **oppression of women** result from the same mindset — one that values dominance, hierarchy, and exploitation rather than cooperation, care, and balance.

iii. Major Thinkers and Contributors

Ecofeminism was shaped and enriched by several prominent scholars and activists from around the world who gave it philosophical, cultural, and practical dimensions

a) Vandana Shiva (India)

A physicist and environmental activist, Shiva emphasized how modern industrialization and globalization exploit both women and nature. She highlighted how rural and indigenous women, who are closely connected with nature, suffer the most from environmental degradation. Her works such as *“Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development”* (1988) link women's knowledge and ecological sustainability.

b) Maria Mies (Germany)

A sociologist and feminist, Mies collaborated with Shiva in writing *“Ecofeminism”* (1993). She critiqued capitalism and patriarchy as systems that commodify both women's labour and natural resources. Mies called for a return to community-based, sustainable living.

c) Carolyn Merchant (USA)

In her book *“The Death of Nature”* (1980), Merchant explored how the Scientific Revolution changed people's perception of nature — from a living organism (Mother Nature) to a machine that can be controlled and exploited. She argued that this mechanistic worldview paralleled the subjugation of women.

d) Rosemary Radford Ruether (USA)

A theologian and feminist scholar, Ruether connected ecofeminism with spirituality. In her

book “*Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*” (1992), she examined how patriarchal religious traditions contributed to the domination of both women and nature.

e) Greta Gaard (USA)

A writer and activist, Gaard expanded ecofeminism into cultural and literary studies. She emphasized inclusivity, linking ecofeminism with issues such as animal rights, queer theory, and social justice.

£. Core Idea

Ecofeminists believe that the **same patriarchal mindset** that oppresses women also exploits and destroys nature.

Patriarchal society views both women and nature as **resources to be controlled and used** for economic and political gain.

For example:

- Nature is exploited through deforestation, mining, and pollution.
- Women’s labour, especially in agriculture and care work, is undervalued and exploited.

Therefore, to achieve true environmental sustainability, **gender equality** and **ecological balance** must go hand in hand.

£. Major Principles of Ecofeminism

Principle	Explanation
Interconnectedness	Women and nature share a deep connection. When nature suffers, women suffer too, especially those who depend directly on natural resources.
Rejection of Patriarchy	The patriarchal system promotes domination — of men over women, and humans over nature. Ecofeminism opposes this domination-based worldview.
Holistic Thinking	Ecofeminism promotes harmony, cooperation, and care instead of competition and exploitation.
Valuing Traditional Knowledge	Women’s traditional ecological knowledge, often ignored by modern science, is seen as vital for sustainable living.
Spiritual and Cultural Respect for Nature	Many ecofeminists believe that reconnecting with the earth spiritually — seeing nature as sacred — can restore balance and respect.

C. Types of Ecofeminism

There are two main approaches within ecofeminism:

i. **Cultural Ecofeminism**

Cultural ecofeminism emphasizes the **spiritual, emotional, and biological connection** between women and nature.

It is rooted in the belief that women share a **special bond with the Earth**, not just because of biological roles like childbirth or nurturing, but also because of their **historical and cultural roles** as caregivers, healers, and food gatherers.

This approach celebrates **feminine qualities** such as compassion, empathy, nurturing, cooperation, and intuition — values that are seen as necessary to restore ecological balance and harmony in the world.

Women and Nature as Life-Givers

Just as nature gives life through its fertility (plants, water, soil), women too give life through motherhood. Both are viewed as sources of creation and nourishment.

£ **Spiritual Connection**

Cultural ecofeminists often draw on ancient traditions and indigenous cultures that **revere the Earth as sacred**. They emphasize the spiritual dimension of ecology, viewing nature as a living being rather than an object to be controlled.

£ **Rejection of Patriarchal Dualisms**

Western patriarchal thought tends to divide and rank concepts — man/woman, culture/nature, reason/emotion, mind/body — with the first term valued higher. Cultural ecofeminism challenges this, valuing **feminine and natural traits** as equally powerful and vital.

£ **Restoring Harmony**

It argues that reconnecting with these feminine and ecological values can **heal the planet** from the damage caused by industrialization, exploitation, and materialism.

Examples and Practices

£ **Worship of Mother Earth or Goddess Traditions**

Many ancient and indigenous societies worshipped Earth goddesses — like **Gaia** (Greek),

Bhūmi Devi (Hindu), and **Pachamama** (Incan) — recognizing the planet as a nurturing mother.

Such traditions symbolize respect for nature's cycles and emphasize the need to live in balance with the environment.

£ **Modern Environmental Rituals and Movements**

Some ecofeminist groups engage in earth-centered spirituality, tree-planting ceremonies, and rituals celebrating the interconnectedness of all life.

∞ . **Criticism**

While cultural ecofeminism has inspired many people, critics argue that it sometimes **essentializes women**, meaning it assumes that all women are naturally closer to nature because of biology. However, many defenders respond that this is not a limitation but a **celebration of feminine identity and ecological consciousness**.

ii. **Social (or Materialist) Ecofeminism**

Social or materialist ecofeminism focuses on the **economic, political, and social structures** that oppress both women and nature.

It argues that **capitalism and patriarchy** work together to exploit women's labour and natural resources for profit and power.

Unlike cultural ecofeminism, this strand is less about spirituality and more about **systemic social change**.

Key Beliefs

£ **Common Roots of Oppression**

Both women and the environment are treated as “resources” — women for unpaid care work and reproduction, and nature for raw materials and energy. This exploitation benefits a small elite, typically men in positions of economic or political power.

£ **Critique of Capitalism**

Materialist ecofeminists argue that capitalist systems prioritize **profit over sustainability**, destroying ecosystems and deepening gender inequality. For instance, industries that pollute rivers or cut down forests often displace women from their livelihoods and force them into poverty.

£ Call for Equality and Justice

This perspective promotes equality in **resource ownership, participation in decision-making, and environmental governance.**

It encourages women's involvement in policies concerning land, water, and forests, emphasizing that sustainable development is only possible with gender justice.

Examples and Movements

£ Chipko Movement (India)

Rural women in Uttarakhand hugged trees to prevent deforestation in the 1970s. They recognized that cutting forests would lead to soil erosion, water scarcity, and loss of livelihood — directly affecting their survival.

£ Women's Land and Water Rights Movements

Across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, women have led movements demanding **equal rights to land and natural resources**, resisting corporate and state exploitation.

£ Grassroots Environmental Activism

Many women's groups worldwide fight against industrial pollution, mining, and unsustainable agricultural practices — linking ecological protection with social justice.

G. Examples of Ecofeminism in Action

Example/Movement	Country	Explanation
Chipko Movement	India	Women in Uttarakhand hugged trees to prevent deforestation. Their slogan, “Embrace the trees, save them from being cut,” reflected ecofeminist values of protecting both life and livelihood.
Green Belt Movement	Kenya	Founded by Wangari Maathai , this movement mobilized rural women to plant millions of trees to restore degraded land and secure livelihoods.
Narmada Bachao Andolan	India	Many women activists fought against dam projects that displaced communities and destroyed ecosystems.
Women's Climate Strikes	Global	Modern ecofeminist activism includes women leading campaigns for climate justice, renewable energy, and protection of biodiversity.

Criticism of Ecofeminism

- Some critics argue that ecofeminism **romanticizes women's connection with nature**, reinforcing gender stereotypes.
- Others say it **lacks scientific grounding**, focusing too much on emotions or spirituality.
- There are also debates about whether ecofeminism applies **universally**, as women's experiences differ across cultures and classes.
- Despite these critiques, ecofeminism remains influential for its **moral, cultural, and environmental insights**.

Significance of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is significant because it:

- ✓ Promotes **environmental sustainability** through gender equality.
- ✓ Encourages **inclusive decision-making** in ecological governance.
- ✓ Highlights women's **leadership and traditional knowledge** in conservation.
- ✓ Inspires grassroots movements that combine **social justice with environmental activism**.

It teaches that caring for the planet means caring for people — especially women — and that both nature and humanity must coexist in harmony.

Conclusion

Ecofeminism provides a powerful perspective that unites the **fight for women's rights** with the **fight for environmental protection**. It challenges the exploitative structures of patriarchy and capitalism and calls for a world built on **equality, respect, and ecological balance**. By valuing women's wisdom, nurturing qualities, and community leadership, ecofeminism envisions a **sustainable and compassionate planet** for all.

Unit III: Women and Work - A Conceptual Clarification

Invisibility of Women – “Statistical Purdah” – A Critique of Methods, Concepts, Definitions Employed in Economic Theory – A Critique of the Data System in India (Application) – Measures to Rectify this Invisibility.

Invisibility of Women

The term “**Invisibility of Women**” refers to the way women’s roles, contributions, experiences, and needs are often **ignored, undervalued, or overlooked** in society, economy, history, and policymaking. Although women play crucial roles in families, communities, and the economy, their work and voices frequently go unrecognized — both in public and private spheres.

A. Meaning

“Invisibility” means **being present but not seen or acknowledged**. When applied to women, it indicates that:

- ✓ Women’s work (especially unpaid domestic or care work) is **not counted or recorded** in official statistics.
- ✓ Women’s opinions, leadership, and achievements are **not given equal importance** in decision-making, media, or history.
- ✓ Women’s specific needs are **not considered** in development planning, research, and policy.

B. Examples

i) **Economic invisibility:** Women’s unpaid household work, child care, and elder care contribute significantly to the economy, but these are **not included in GDP** or national income.

ii) **Social invisibility:** Women’s struggles, achievements, and voices are **underrepresented in media, literature, and politics**.

iii) **Historical invisibility:** Many **female inventors, freedom fighters, and leaders** are left out of textbooks or credited to men.

iv) **Statistical invisibility:** Data collected by governments or institutions often **omit gender-based information**, making women’s issues harder to address.

C. Causes of Women's Invisibility

i. Patriarchal Values

Patriarchy refers to a social system in which men hold primary power and dominate roles in political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property.

In patriarchal societies, men's work, opinions, and achievements are valued more than women's. Women are often viewed as dependents or caretakers rather than as individuals with equal potential.

- ✓ Women's contributions in family and society are taken for granted.
- ✓ Economic and social structures are designed mainly around men's needs and perspectives.
- ✓ Women are pushed into secondary or supportive roles, making their work and identity invisible in public records and decision-making.

ii. Gender Bias in Education, Research, and Policy Formation

Gender bias means unequal treatment or expectations based on gender.

In **education**, textbooks, teaching materials, and classroom interactions often promote male-centered examples — portraying men as leaders and women as helpers or homemakers.

In **research**, data collection and analysis frequently ignore women's experiences, especially in economics, where unpaid work and informal employment (mostly done by women) are rarely measured.

In **policy-making**, development programs are often designed without consulting women or considering how policies differently affect men and women.

- ✓ Women's issues are not properly identified or addressed.
- ✓ Policies fail to reduce gender inequality.
- ✓ The lack of gender-sensitive data keeps women's contributions invisible in official statistics.

iii. Cultural Norms Confine Women's Work to the Private/Domestic Sphere

Cultural norms are shared beliefs, values, and expectations that shape behaviour in a society.

In many cultures, women are expected to take care of the household, children, and elderly while

men are seen as breadwinners. Such division of labour limits women's access to education, paid work, and leadership positions. Even when women engage in productive work (like farming, craft-making, or running small businesses), it is often labelled as "help" rather than recognized as real labour.

- ✓ Women's economic role remains **unrecognized and unpaid**.
- ✓ Their work is **excluded from GDP** and national accounts.
- ✓ Society fails to see women as equal contributors to development.

iv. Lack of Representation of Women in Decision-Making Positions

Representation means having women in leadership roles where important decisions are made — in politics, business, education, and governance.

Due to social barriers, gender stereotypes, and lack of support, women are underrepresented in positions of power and influence.

Without women's participation, policies and programs tend to reflect **male perspectives** and ignore issues such as childcare, reproductive health, safety, and equal pay.

- ✓ Women's priorities and challenges remain invisible in governance.
- ✓ Leadership continues to reproduce male-cantered viewpoints.
- ✓ The cycle of invisibility and inequality persists because women are not present to voice their experiences and shape inclusive policies.

D. Consequences

i. Women remain economically dependent and undervalued

Women's work, especially unpaid domestic and care work, is often **not recognized as productive labour**. As a result, they rely financially on male family members or spouses.

Because women's contributions are invisible in economic statistics like GDP, they are **not considered when determining wages, pensions, or social security benefits**.

Even in paid jobs, women often earn less than men for similar work due to **gender wage gaps**.

Economic dependence limits women's freedom to make decisions, pursue opportunities, or escape abusive or unfair situations.

- ✓ Women have **less bargaining power** at home, work, and society.
- ✓ Their talents, creativity, and labour remain undervalued, reinforcing social inequality.

ii. Policies fail to meet women's real needs and challenges

Policies designed without considering women's unique experiences often **ignore gender-specific issues**.

Many government programs, healthcare services, or development schemes are planned based on men's experiences, leaving out women's concerns like reproductive health, childcare, safe transport, and equal access to education or employment.

Lack of **gender-sensitive data** makes it difficult to identify women's needs accurately.

- ✓ Programs intended to reduce poverty or improve living standards may **benefit men more than women**, leaving gender gaps unaddressed.
- ✓ Women remain marginalized despite development efforts.

iii. The cycle of gender inequality continues

Invisibility reinforces **social, economic, and political disparities** between men and women.

When women are undervalued and excluded, **their opportunities for education, employment, and leadership are limited**.

Limited access to resources perpetuates dependence and **reinforces traditional gender roles**. Children growing up in such environments learn **stereotypes**, continuing the cycle into the next generation.

- ✓ Gender inequality becomes **self-reinforcing**, making it harder for women to achieve equality.
- ✓ Women's exclusion from decision-making and economic participation perpetuates systemic disadvantage.

iv. Society loses valuable human potential

Women's skills, knowledge, and contributions are **underutilized**, depriving society of benefits.

Women often possess talents in areas like education, healthcare, agriculture, management, and innovation. When women are excluded or invisible, **society misses out on their full participation**, innovation, and leadership.

- ✓ Development slows because **half of the population's potential is not fully engaged**.
- ✓ Societies become less equitable, less productive, and less sustainable.

E. Addressing the Invisibility

1. Gender-sensitive data collection

Collecting information that specifically captures the experiences, contributions, and challenges of women.

Traditional statistics often ignore unpaid work (like childcare, elder care, and household chores) that women perform daily.

Time-use surveys track how people spend their time on different activities, highlighting the substantial unpaid labour done by women.

Including such data ensures that women's contributions to the economy and society are **recognized, measured, and valued**.

- ✓ Policymakers can design programs that **directly address women's needs**.
- ✓ Women's work becomes **visible in national accounts**, reducing economic undervaluation.
- ✓ It creates a foundation for more **equitable resource allocation** and policy intervention.

2. Women's representation in leadership, media, and research

Ensuring women hold positions of power and influence in all sectors of society.

Leadership positions in politics, business, education, and research allow women to **voice their perspectives** and make decisions that reflect their realities.

Media representation helps **challenge stereotypes** and highlight women's achievements and contributions.

Women in research ensure that studies and data collection include **gender-specific perspectives** rather than being male-centric.

- ✓ Policies, laws, and programs become **more inclusive and effective**.
- ✓ Women gain **role models and visibility**, inspiring future generations.
- ✓ Society starts valuing women's contributions as **essential rather than supplementary**.

3. Gender mainstreaming

The systematic inclusion of women's perspectives in **all stages of policy, planning, and program development**. Gender mainstreaming ensures that policies do not unintentionally

favour men or perpetuate inequality. It involves analysing **how every policy or program impacts women and men differently** and adjusting accordingly. Examples include budgeting for women's education, healthcare, safety, or employment programs.

- ✓ Reduces gender disparities across sectors.
- ✓ Ensures **equal access to resources, opportunities, and benefits**.
- ✓ Promotes long-term social change by embedding gender equality into **institutional structures**.

4. Education and awareness to challenge stereotypes

Teaching society about gender equality and challenging norms that undervalue women.

Education empowers women with knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate in decision-making.

Awareness campaigns help **break cultural myths and biases**, such as “women belong only at home” or “men are the main earners.”

Programs can target schools, workplaces, communities, and media to **sensitize people to women's rights and contributions**.

- ✓ Reduces discrimination and harassment.
- ✓ Encourages **equal participation of women in all spheres**.
- ✓ Helps society recognize and respect women's work, leadership, and potential.

F. Conclusion

“Invisibility of women” means that women's contributions and issues are present everywhere but remain unseen, uncounted, and undervalued due to deep-rooted gender biases. Recognizing and making their roles visible is essential for achieving true gender equality and inclusive development.

“Statistical Purdah” – A Critique of Methods

The term “**Statistical Purdah**” was coined by feminist economists to describe how **conventional statistical methods and data collection practices hide or obscure women's economic activities and contributions** — much like how the purdah (veil) hides women from public view.

A. Meaning

“Statistical purdah” refers to the **invisibility of women in economic statistics** due to biases in data collection, definitions, and measurement tools. Although women contribute significantly to the economy—especially in unpaid domestic work, subsistence farming, and informal labour—their work often goes **unrecorded** in official data like GDP or employment surveys.

B. Critique of Methods

The critique focuses on the **limitations and gender bias** in mainstream statistical methods. Here’s how these methods contribute to women’s invisibility:

1. Definition of ‘Work’

In most official statistics, **“work” is defined narrowly** as activities that generate *paid income or market value*. For example, employment surveys and national income accounts usually consider only:

- Jobs in formal sectors,
- Wage or salary-based employment, and
- Market-oriented production.

However, **women perform a large share of unpaid work** that does not enter market transactions. This includes:

- Cooking, cleaning, childcare, and elder care at home,
- Collecting fuel, fetching water, and maintaining household resources,
- Helping in family farms or enterprises without pay.

Because these activities are not monetized, **they are excluded from the definition of “economic work.”** This makes women appear economically “inactive,” even though they spend more hours working than men in total.

Result: Women’s contributions to the economy remain invisible in national income statistics (like GDP), and policies fail to recognize or support them.

2. Household as a Single Unit

In most surveys and censuses, data is collected **at the household level**, assuming that:

- The household acts as a single economic unit, and
- Resources are shared equally among members.

But in reality, **households are not gender-neutral**. Power relations, decision-making, and access to income often differ sharply between men and women. For instance:

- A man may control most of the household income, even if the woman also contributes.
- Women might eat last or get less nutritious food despite living in the same home.
- Ownership of land, house, or assets is usually in men's names.

Thus, when statisticians treat the household as a single unit, **they hide inequalities within it**.

Result: Women's economic vulnerability, lack of asset ownership, and dependency go unrecorded, leading to gender-blind policies.

3. Informal and Subsistence Work Ignored

A large proportion of women's labour occurs in the **informal or subsistence sector**, such as:

- Home-based craft production,
- Selling goods in local markets,
- Working on family farms,
- Seasonal agricultural or construction work.

Traditional labour surveys focus mostly on **formal, wage-based employment**, so they fail to record this informal work. Moreover, **subsistence activities** — like growing vegetables for family consumption or making clothes at home — are seen as “non-economic” even though they replace market expenses.

Result: Women's real participation in production and their role in sustaining the economy are severely underestimated, which undervalues their labour and reduces their visibility in employment statistics.

4. Male-Centric Indicators

Most key economic indicators — such as **GDP, productivity, labour force participation rate, or income levels** — are designed around **market-based, monetized activities**, which are traditionally dominated by men. These indicators ignore:

- Unpaid care work,
- Volunteer work,
- Informal community services, and
- Non-market household production.

Since women’s economic roles are concentrated in these neglected areas, **their economic value remains invisible** in official figures. Even though women may work longer hours than men (counting both paid and unpaid labour), official statistics still portray them as less “productive.”

Result: The economy appears to be male-driven, and women’s unpaid work is undervalued or ignored when calculating economic growth or national wealth.

5. Survey Design and Enumerator Bias

The way surveys are designed and conducted also contributes to “statistical purdah.”

- **Questionnaire design bias:** Many surveys ask questions like “Who is employed in this household?” focusing on wage earners, which leads to ignoring unpaid or part-time female workers.
- **Enumerator bias:** Field investigators often talk only to the **male head of the household**, assuming he knows everything about the family’s economic activities. Women’s voices and experiences are thus filtered or left out.
- **Cultural barriers:** In some societies, women are not comfortable talking to male enumerators, which further silences their input.

Result: The data collected becomes **incomplete and gender-biased**, underreporting women’s economic roles and reinforcing their invisibility in official records.

Issue in Statistical Method	Explanation	Effect on Women’s Visibility
Definition of ‘Work’	National statistics often count only <i>paid employment</i> as work.	Excludes women’s unpaid labor like household chores, caregiving, and food production.

Household as a Single Unit	Data is usually collected at the household level, assuming income and resource sharing is equal.	Masks gender inequalities in access to income, food, and assets within households.
Informal & Subsistence Work Ignored	Many surveys fail to capture small-scale, home-based, or seasonal work done by women.	Underestimates women's participation in labor force and production.
Male-Centric Indicators	Economic indicators (like GDP, productivity) focus on market transactions.	Women's economic value is undervalued since their unpaid or informal contributions are not monetized.
Survey Design & Enumerator Bias	Questionnaires are designed from a male perspective; interviewers often talk only to male heads of households.	Leads to incomplete or biased data about women's roles and economic activities.

C. Feminist Critique

Feminist economists argue that this **“statistical purdah”** reinforces patriarchal structures by

1. Making women's economic contribution invisible in policy and development planning

Feminist economists argue that when official statistics fail to recognize women's unpaid or informal work, **women's true economic value is hidden** from policymakers.

- Governments and international agencies depend on statistical data to plan welfare schemes, budgets, and development programs.
- If this data shows only men as “economically active,” **women are excluded from economic priorities.**

For example: If national income statistics don't count unpaid domestic work, then women's contribution to maintaining households, nurturing future workers (children), and sustaining community welfare is **ignored in economic planning.**

Result: Policies focus mainly on formal jobs and market activities (where men dominate), while **women's needs and labour-support systems (like childcare, health care, or social security)** are under-prioritized.

2. Perpetuating myths that women are economically inactive or dependent

Because women's unpaid and informal work is not reflected in statistics, the data **creates a misleading picture** — that most women do not work or are “dependent” on men for survival. This stereotype becomes socially and economically powerful:

- It strengthens the idea that men are the “breadwinners” and women are “dependents.”
- It justifies women's **lower status** in society and the workplace.
- It leads to **less investment in women's education, skill training, and entrepreneurship**, since they are seen as non-productive.

In reality, women are constantly engaged in productive activities — farming, caregiving, household management, and informal trade — that sustain both the economy and society. But due to “statistical purdah,” their contributions are **not visible in economic records**, making the myth of female “dependence” seem true.

3. Leading to underfunded programs for women's empowerment and economic inclusion

Public funds are often allocated based on measurable statistics — for example, labour participation rates, income data, or productivity measures. If women's contributions are not properly counted, it appears as though:

- Fewer women are working,
- Women contribute less to the economy, and
- The gender gap is not significant enough to warrant major investment.

As a result, **government and development programs** that could empower women — such as:

- Skill development initiatives,
- Microfinance support,
- Childcare facilities,
- Social protection for unpaid workers, often receive **less funding or policy attention**.

In essence: When statistics hide women's real work, policymakers **underestimate women's needs and underinvest in their empowerment**, continuing a cycle of economic marginalization.

D. Way Forward

To overcome “statistical purdah,” feminist scholars suggest

1. Redefining ‘Work’ to Include Unpaid and Care Labor

Traditionally, economists and statisticians define “work” as only **paid employment** or activities that produce goods and services for the market. But women’s most time-consuming contributions—such as:

- Cooking, cleaning, and household management,
- Caring for children, the elderly, or the sick,
- Collecting water, fuel, or food for the family—
are unpaid but essential for the economy and society.

Feminist scholars argue that **this unpaid labour should be recognized as “work”** because:

- It supports the workforce by maintaining their health and productivity.
- It contributes to national welfare and social stability.
- It represents a large share of total working hours, especially in developing countries.

Example: The United Nations’ **System of National Accounts (SNA)** has been revised to encourage inclusion of “household production for own consumption” as part of satellite accounts—an idea driven by feminist economists.

By redefining work, women’s invisible labour can finally be **counted and valued** in economic data.

2. Collecting Gender-Disaggregated Data

Most statistics are presented at the **aggregate level**, meaning they combine data for both men and women. This hides gender-based differences. For example:

- Employment data may show overall job growth, but not whether women are benefiting equally.
- Income or education data may conceal gender gaps.

To correct this, feminist scholars call for **gender-disaggregated data** — separating all statistics by sex. This allows analysts to:

- Compare men's and women's participation in the workforce, income levels, and education,
- Identify areas of gender inequality,
- Design targeted policies for women's empowerment.

Example: The World Bank's **Gender Data Portal** and India's **Gender Statistics Dashboard** are steps in this direction.

Such data helps governments and researchers understand the **true economic position of women** rather than assuming equality.

3. Using Time-Use Surveys to Measure Unpaid Domestic Work

A **time-use survey** records how individuals spend each hour of their day — on paid work, unpaid work, personal care, leisure, etc. These surveys reveal:

- How much time women and men devote to unpaid domestic and care activities,
- The gender gap in total working hours,
- The “double burden” women face — balancing employment and household work.

Through this, economists can **quantify unpaid labour** and even estimate its monetary value.

Example: Studies in India and other countries have shown that if unpaid domestic work were valued in money terms, it could contribute **up to 30–50% of GDP**.

Therefore, time-use surveys make the **invisible economy of care** visible and measurable.

4. Including Informal and Subsistence Sectors in National Accounts

Women are heavily concentrated in the **informal sector**, doing activities like:

- Street vending, home-based production, or domestic service,
- Agricultural labour or subsistence farming,
- Family business work without wages.

These activities are often **unrecorded** in national income accounts, which focus mainly on formal, registered, and paid employment.

Feminist economists urge that the **informal and subsistence sectors** be integrated into national economic statistics by:

- Expanding survey coverage to informal workers,
- Estimating their output and income contribution, and
- Reflecting their role in GDP and employment data.

Result: This gives a more accurate picture of the **real economy**, showing how women sustain livelihoods even outside formal jobs.

5. Training Enumerators to Ensure Gender-Sensitive Data Collection

Even when surveys are well-designed, **data collection can still be biased** if enumerators (the people conducting surveys) are not trained to approach women properly. Problems include:

- Enumerators speaking only to the male “head of household,”
- Cultural discomfort preventing women from responding freely,
- Misunderstanding or overlooking women’s informal activities.

Feminist scholars recommend **gender-sensitive training** for enumerators to:

- Ensure both male and female respondents are interviewed,
- Use inclusive language that recognizes unpaid and informal work,
- Understand social norms that affect women’s participation in data collection.

Outcome: This produces more accurate, complete, and gender-aware data, reducing the bias of “statistical purdah.”

Concepts

1. Statistical Purdah

The term “Statistical Purdah” refers to the **invisibility of women in official statistics and economic data**. The term was coined by feminist economists, it draws an analogy with the *purdah system*, which keeps women hidden from public view — just as biased statistics hide women’s work from economic visibility.

The purpose is to criticize the way conventional data collection and statistical systems systematically ignore or undervalue women’s contributions, especially unpaid and informal work.

2. Gender Bias in Statistical Methods

Conventional statistical tools and methods were **developed from a male-cantered perspective**, assuming men's paid labour as the norm. This bias leads to **underreporting of women's participation** in the economy because their unpaid household and care work are not counted. It questions the neutrality of data and shows that even "scientific" statistics can reproduce gender inequality.

3. Invisibility of Women's Work

Women's work in domestic spheres, subsistence agriculture, or informal sectors **remains unrecognized** in GDP and labour force data. This creates a **false impression** that women are economically inactive or dependent.

4. Feminist Critique of Conventional Economics

Feminist economists challenge the **androcentric (male-cantered)** foundation of economic theories and measurements. They argue that ignoring unpaid labour distorts the true picture of national productivity, welfare, and growth. This critique exposes how economics has historically **excluded the "care economy"** from its core analysis.

5. Redefinition of Work

Feminists call for a **broadier definition of work** that includes both paid and unpaid labour. Activities such as cooking, childcare, eldercare, and household maintenance should be counted as "productive" since they sustain the workforce and society. This redefinition aims to make women's economic contributions **visible and measurable**.

6. Gender-Disaggregated Data

It refers to data collected and presented **separately for men and women**. This helps to identify inequalities in employment, income, education, and health. It enables more **gender-sensitive policies** and fair representation in planning.

7. Time-Use Surveys

- ✓ A statistical tool that records **how individuals spend time on various activities** throughout the day.
- ✓ Reveals the total workload of women (paid + unpaid).
- ✓ Provides evidence of the **"double burden"** faced by women who manage both household duties and paid work.

8. Informal and Subsistence Sector

These sectors include **non-wage, non-contractual, and small-scale production** activities. Women are overrepresented here, yet such work is often unrecorded in national accounts. Including this data gives a **more realistic picture** of women's contribution to the economy.

9. Enumerator and Questionnaire Bias

Bias occurs when data collectors (enumerators) or survey instruments are **insensitive to women's roles**. For example, asking only the male head of the household or focusing on wage jobs excludes women's unpaid activities. Feminists suggest **training enumerators** to adopt gender-sensitive approaches.

10. Policy Implications

Due to statistical purdah, **women's needs are not reflected** in policy decisions. It results in **underfunding of programs** related to women's empowerment, childcare, and social protection. By addressing these biases, policies can become more **inclusive, equitable, and effective**.

Definitions Employed in Economic Theory

When feminist economists talk about "*Statistical Purdah*," they're criticizing not just the data, but the **very definitions** used in mainstream economic theory — because these definitions decide **what gets counted and what gets ignored**.

So here, "**Definitions Employed in Economic Theory**" refers to how **key economic terms** (like 'work,' 'production,' 'employment,' 'labour force,' and 'income') are defined in such a way that **women's contributions become invisible**.

A. Definition of Work

1. Mainstream Definition of Work

In conventional (mainstream) economics, "**work**" is defined very narrowly — it refers only to **activities that produce goods and services for the market** and generate **monetary income**. That means only people who earn a wage, salary, or profit are officially considered "working." For example:

- A man who drives a taxi or works in an office is counted as part of the labour force because he earns money.

- But a woman who cooks, cleans, or takes care of children at home — even if she spends 10–12 hours daily — is not counted as “working,” because her labour does not bring money directly.

This definition was created in a **male-cantered economic framework**, assuming that the “economic sphere” is only outside the home (the public/market domain), while household work is “private” and therefore outside the scope of economics.

2. Effect of This Definition

Because of that narrow definition, **unpaid domestic labour** — such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, caring for children or elders, fetching water, or growing food for family use — is **not recognized as economic activity**. So, when government surveys or censuses ask about employment, women performing these unpaid roles often answer that they are “housewives” or “not working,” even though they engage in continuous and productive labour.

This creates a **statistical distortion**: the data collected does not reflect the actual amount of work being done, especially by women. The economy appears smaller and less productive than it truly is because a huge amount of unpaid labour is excluded.

3. Result — Women Classified as “Non-Workers”

Due to this biased definition, women who do not earn income are officially classified as “**non-workers**” or “economically inactive.” However, in reality, they are working for **long hours every day**, performing tasks essential for the survival and functioning of families and society.

For example: A woman who cooks three meals, cleans the house, takes care of children, and supports elderly parents might spend more hours working than a man with a paid job. But in national statistics, her contribution is invisible — she doesn’t appear in labour force data, employment reports, or GDP calculations.

This misclassification means that **women’s productivity is hidden** behind household walls — creating a false image that they do not contribute to the economy.

4. Feminist Critique — The Idea of “Statistical Purdah”

Feminist economists argue that this definition of “work” is **deeply flawed and gender-biased**. They say that it **creates a kind of “purdah” (veil)** over women’s actual economic roles — not a physical purdah, but a **statistical purdah**.

Just as traditional purdah keeps women invisible in public spaces, **statistical purdah hides women's labour from economic visibility**. It means women's contributions remain unseen, unmeasured, and undervalued.

Feminist scholars therefore demand:

- Broader definitions of work that include **unpaid domestic and care work**,
- New methods like **time-use surveys** to measure unpaid labour, and
- Reforms in **national accounting systems** so that women's invisible labour is recognized and valued.

B. Definition of Production

1. Mainstream Definition of Production

In conventional economics, **production** is defined as the process of creating goods and services that are **sold in the market** or **exchangeable for money**. This means the economy only “counts” activities that generate monetary income or enter formal market transactions. Example: Manufacturing cars, running a shop, building houses, or providing paid services.

2. Effect of This Definition

Because domestic and subsistence work is excluded, many activities **essential for daily life are invisible** in economic statistics.

Examples of excluded work:

- ✓ Home gardening or growing food for the family
- ✓ Cooking and preparing meals
- ✓ Caring for children, elderly, or sick family members
- ✓ Processing or preserving food at home

Even though these activities are **productive in the sense that they sustain life and the labour force**, they **do not generate money**, so mainstream statistics ignore them.

3. Result

National income accounts, GDP, and other economic measures **underestimate total production**. The economy looks smaller than it actually is because **a huge amount of unpaid domestic and care work** is not included. This contributes to the **invisibility of women's contributions**, as most of this unpaid labour is done by women.

4. Feminist View

Feminist economists argue that the **definition of production should be broader**. It should include **reproductive and care work** (household, caregiving, subsistence activities), because:

- ✓ These activities **sustain the labour force** by feeding, caring for, and nurturing workers.
- ✓ They are **essential for the economy** to function, even if they are unpaid.

By including these, statistics would reflect **the true scope of production** and recognize women's economic contributions.

C. Definition of Labor Force / Employment

1. Mainstream Definition of Labor Force

In traditional economic theory, the **labour force** is defined as all people who are **engaged in paid work** or are **actively seeking paid employment**. This includes formal sector jobs (office, factory, service jobs) and informal wage jobs where money is earned. Anyone who does **not earn money** or is **not looking for a job**—like homemakers, caregivers, or family helpers—is considered outside the labour force.

2. Effect of This Definition

Women's work is disproportionately excluded because a large number of women engage in **unpaid domestic labour** or **family/small-scale work**.

Examples of excluded work:

- ✓ Cooking, cleaning, childcare, and elder care at home
- ✓ Helping in a family business without receiving wages
- ✓ Subsistence farming for family consumption

Because this work is unpaid, **women are not counted in labour statistics**, even though they spend long hours working.

3. Result

Official employment data shows **low female participation rates**, which is **misleading**. Policymakers and researchers might assume that women are largely “inactive” or “economically dependent,” even when they perform essential productive and reproductive work. This exclusion is a clear example of “**statistical purdah**” — women's economic contribution is **hidden from official statistics**.

4. Feminist Critique

Feminist economists argue that this definition is **too narrow and biased**. They propose that the **labour force should be redefined** to include: Unpaid domestic work, Subsistence activities, Informal family or community labour.

By doing this, surveys and national accounts would provide a **more accurate picture of women's participation** in the economy. This also ensures that women's labour is **recognized, valued, and considered in policy-making**.

D. Definition of Income

1. Mainstream Definition of Income

Traditionally, in economic theory and national accounts, **income** is defined as **money received from paid employment, business, or market transactions**. Only earnings that can be measured in **monetary terms** are included. Example: salary, wages, business profit, or rental income.

2. Effect of This Definition

The **value of unpaid labour is ignored** in official statistics. Women's daily contributions—like cooking, cleaning, taking care of children or the elderly, and managing households—are considered **economically “worthless”** in GDP or income statistics. This creates a **distorted view of economic productivity**, because a large portion of work that sustains families and the workforce is excluded.

3. Result

Women appear **economically dependent** on men in official data, even though they contribute substantial labour every day. Policies based on such statistics often assume women **don't participate in the economy**, which can lead to:

- ✓ Underfunded social programs for women
- ✓ Lack of recognition for caregiving work
- ✓ Reinforcement of gender inequality in economic and social planning

This invisibility of women's work is a key example of **“statistical purdah”**—their contributions are **hidden by conventional definitions of income**.

4. Feminist Proposal

Feminist economists propose methods to **assign value to unpaid labour**:

i) **Imputed Income Method:**

Estimate the market value of household or caregiving work as if it were paid labour. Example: How much it would cost to hire someone to cook, clean, or care for children.

ii) **Time-Use Valuation:**

Conduct **time-use surveys** to measure how many hours women spend on unpaid work. Multiply hours by an appropriate wage rate to estimate economic value.

These methods help to **quantify and recognize women's contributions**, making them visible in national statistics and informing better policies.

E. Definition of Economic Growth / Development

1. Mainstream Definition of Growth

In conventional economics, **economic growth** is usually measured as the **increase in GDP (Gross Domestic Product)** or other market output indicators. GDP captures only **goods and services exchanged for money in the market**. Example: Factory production, IT services, retail sales, infrastructure projects.

2. Effect of This Definition

Because women perform a **large share of unpaid work** — like cooking, childcare, elder care, and subsistence farming — their contribution is **completely invisible in official measures of growth**.

GDP growth statistics therefore show **only male-dominated sectors** (manufacturing, services, formal jobs) as contributing to development. This creates a **biased picture of the economy**, ignoring sectors where women's labour is essential.

3. Result

Policy and planning often **prioritize male-dominated sectors**, such as industry and formal services, because they appear as the main drivers of GDP growth. Care-based sectors (childcare, eldercare, domestic work, community services), where women are predominant, may receive **less funding, support, or policy attention**. This reinforces **gender inequality** and undervalues women's role in sustaining the economy and society.

4. Feminist Critique

Feminist economists argue that growth should not be measured **only by market output**. They propose **broadening the concept of growth** to include:

i) Social Reproduction: Activities that maintain and reproduce the workforce, like caregiving and household work.

ii) Well-being: Improvements in quality of life, health, and social welfare, not just monetary income.

iii) Equality: Fair access to resources, opportunities, and recognition for both men and women.

By redefining growth this way, women's contributions are **recognized, valued, and factored into development planning**.

A Critique of the Data System in India (Application)

This section examines how **India's data collection methods, definitions, and surveys** — especially those used by the government for employment, income, and production — **systematically hide women's economic contribution**. It applies the **feminist critique of statistical purdah** to the **Indian context**.

1. The Indian Data Collection System

India collects economic and employment data mainly through:

- **Census of India**
- **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)** – now NSO (National Statistical Office)
- **National Accounts Statistics (NAS)**
- **Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS)**

These are the main sources of information used to calculate:

- Employment rates
- Labor force participation
- National income (GDP)
- Productivity and development indicators

But these systems are built on **male-centric definitions** of “work,” “production,” and “employment.”

2. Gender Bias in Definitions

The definitions used in these surveys come from **classical economic theory**, which counts only **paid, market-based activities** as “work.”

As a result, activities commonly performed by women — such as **cooking, cleaning, child care, water collection, and care of the sick or elderly** — are **not recognized as economic work**.

Women are often recorded as “**non-workers**” or “**dependents**”, even if they spend 10–12 hours daily doing household and community labour.

This is the essence of **Statistical Purdah** — women’s economic activity is hidden under the veil of biased definitions.

3. Problems in Employment Classification

The Indian data system classifies workers into three main categories:

- i) **Main Workers** – those employed for most of the year (paid or self-employed)
- ii) **Marginal Workers** – those working occasionally or seasonally
- iii) **Non-Workers** – those not engaged in any “economic activity”

Most women performing unpaid domestic or subsistence labour are **pushed into the “non-worker” category**, even though they do productive work for their families or communities.

For instance, a woman who collects firewood, fetches water, grows vegetables, and cooks meals daily is officially “not working.”

4. Underestimation in National Accounts

India’s **National Income Accounts** only include **market transactions**. **Domestic production and care work** — although economically valuable — are excluded from GDP calculations. Hence, the **true size of India’s economy** and the **extent of women’s contribution** are both **underestimated**.

Feminist economists argue that **if unpaid work were monetarily valued**, GDP would rise significantly, and women’s role would appear much more substantial.

5. Lack of Gender-Disaggregated Data

Many surveys do not separate data by **gender, time spent, or type of work**. For example, in family farms or businesses, the **male head of household** is often reported as the “worker,”

while the woman's labour is **recorded as assistance** or **ignored entirely**. This practice **erases women's independent identity as workers or producers**.

6. Issues with Time-Use Surveys

Time-use surveys (which record how men and women spend every hour of their day) are the best way to measure unpaid labour. But in India, such surveys are **rare and irregular**.

The first large-scale **Time Use Survey** was conducted only in **1998–99**, and then a national one again in **2019**. The lack of continuous time-use data means that unpaid and care work **remains unaccounted for** in planning and policy.

7. Policy Implications

Because women's economic activities are **not visible in official data**,

- Government programs tend to **focus more on men's employment** in formal sectors, and
- **Women's economic needs** (like childcare support, flexible work, or recognition for home-based labour) are **ignored**.

This leads to:

- Misguided labour and welfare policies
- Gender-biased development planning
- Underestimation of women's economic and social value

8. Feminist Proposals for Reform

To correct these issues, feminist economists and statisticians in India propose:

1. **Broader definitions of work** that include unpaid domestic and care work.
2. **Regular time-use surveys** to measure total (paid + unpaid) labour hours.
3. **Gender-disaggregated data** in all economic statistics.
4. **Revaluation of national accounts**, incorporating unpaid labour through **satellite accounts** or **imputed valuation methods**.
5. **Recognition of women's unpaid contribution** in policy-making, poverty measurement, and welfare schemes.

Measures to Rectify this Invisibility

Before we get into the measures —

Remember that the “**invisibility**” refers to how women’s economic contribution (especially unpaid work) is **not recorded in official statistics** like:

- National income accounts (GDP),
- Employment surveys,
- Labour force data, etc.

So, to “rectify” this invisibility means **making women’s work visible** in data, policies, and planning.

1. Redefining ‘Work’ and ‘Employment’

a) The Problem

Traditional definitions of “work” or “employment” only count **paid work** — something that earns wages or income.

Unpaid domestic or care work (cooking, cleaning, fetching water, child and elderly care, etc.) — mostly done by women — is **excluded**.

b) The Measure

Redefine “work” to include **both paid and unpaid activities** that contribute to family welfare or the community’s survival. For example, international organizations like the **ILO (International Labour Organization)** now use broader definitions that include “**own-use production work**.”

This can help national surveys, like India’s NSS (National Sample Survey), to capture such activities more accurately.

c) Outcome

Women’s unpaid work becomes part of official statistics; hence, the “statistical purdah” begins to lift.

2. Time-Use Surveys (TUS)

a) The Problem

Regular labour surveys don't show **how much time** women spend in different types of work.

b) The Measure

Introduce **Time-Use Surveys**, where respondents record how they spend every hour of the day — whether on paid work, domestic work, care work, or leisure.

India conducted its first nationwide TUS in 1998–99 and again in 2019. These surveys show that women spend **more time on unpaid work** than men do, revealing the real workload balance.

c) Outcome

Such surveys give policymakers **quantitative evidence** of women's invisible labour and justify programs like childcare support or rural employment schemes.

3. Inclusion of Unpaid Work in National Income Accounts

a) The Problem

GDP measures only goods and services that have a **market price** — unpaid services at home have no price tag, so they're ignored.

b) The Measure

Economists suggest "**imputed valuation**" — assigning a **monetary value** to unpaid household and care work. Example: If someone were hired to do the same tasks (cleaning, cooking, caregiving), how much would they be paid?

Including these estimates in satellite accounts or extended national accounts can show women's real contribution to the economy.

c) Outcome

The economic value of women's unpaid work is recognized alongside paid labour.

4. Gender-Disaggregated Data Collection

a) The Problem

Many official surveys collect data at the **household level** — so men's and women's roles get merged. Women's ownership of assets, participation in decision-making, or independent income sources remain **hidden**.

b) The Measure

Collect data **separately for men and women** (gender-disaggregated data). Include questions on land ownership, access to credit, education, and control over resources.

c) Outcome

This makes it possible to design **gender-sensitive policies** for empowerment and inclusion.

5. Institutional Reforms

a) The Problem

Statistical agencies and ministries often **lack gender expertise**. Data collection priorities are determined by male-dominated bureaucracies.

b) The Measure

Create **Gender Statistics Cells** within statistical offices. Train enumerators to understand and capture women's diverse work roles.

Integrate gender concerns into planning and budgeting systems — known as **“Gender Budgeting.”**

c) Outcome

Permanent institutional mechanisms to ensure women's visibility in statistics and policies.

6. Public Awareness and Academic Research

a) The Problem

Society and even policymakers often believe women “don't work” if they're not employed for pay.

b) The Measure

Conduct **academic research**, awareness campaigns, and educational programs to redefine what “work” means.

Encourage feminist economists to collaborate with statistical bodies to redesign frameworks.

c) Outcome

Cultural change in how society perceives women's economic contribution.

Conclusion

“Measures to Rectify this Invisibility” are about **making women visible in economic statistics** — by redefining what counts as work, collecting better data, valuing unpaid labour, and changing institutional practices. This is how the “statistical purdah” — the hidden veil that covers women's contribution — can be lifted.

Unit IV: Marginalization of Women

Women Sidelined – Gender – Discrimination Theories – Women in the Labour Market – Sexual Division of Labour, Wage Differentials, Micro Credit – Women in the Organised and the Unorganised Sectors of the Indian Economy (Application) – Feminisation of Work and Feminisation of Poverty.

Marginalization of Women refers to the process by which women are pushed to the edge (or *margins*) of social, economic, political, and cultural life — meaning they are denied equal access to opportunities, rights, and decision-making power that men generally enjoy.

In simple terms, **to marginalize** means *to make someone less important or less powerful in society*. When applied to women, it means that women's contributions, voices, and needs are undervalued or ignored.

i) Meaning

The marginalization of women occurs when social structures, institutions, and cultural norms restrict women's participation and treat them as secondary citizens. It leads to gender inequality in education, employment, property rights, political representation, and social recognition.

ii) Dimensions of Marginalization

a) Economic Marginalization

- ✓ Women are paid less than men for the same work.
- ✓ They are concentrated in low-paying, informal, or unpaid domestic work.
- ✓ They often lack access to land, property, and credit.

b) Political Marginalization

- ✓ Women have less representation in political offices and decision-making bodies.
- ✓ Their voices are often ignored in governance and policy processes.

c) Social Marginalization

- ✓ Patriarchal norms limit women's freedom and mobility.
- ✓ Cultural practices (like dowry, child marriage, and preference for sons) reinforce their lower status.

d) Educational Marginalization

- ✓ Girls often have fewer opportunities to attend school.
- ✓ Stereotypes restrict them to certain subjects or discourage higher education.

e) Health Marginalization

- ✓ Women's health needs (especially reproductive health) are neglected.
- ✓ They face barriers in accessing healthcare due to social and financial dependence.

iii) Causes of Marginalization

- ❖ **Patriarchal social structure** – dominance of male power and control.
- ❖ **Cultural and religious norms** – justify gender roles that subordinate women.
- ❖ **Economic dependence** – lack of financial independence restricts choices.
- ❖ **Lack of legal awareness** – many women don't know or can't claim their rights.
- ❖ **Media and representation** – portray women in stereotypical roles.

iv) Consequences

- ❖ Perpetuation of **gender inequality**.
- ❖ **Underutilization of women's potential** in the economy and society.
- ❖ **Intergenerational poverty**, as marginalized women cannot support their children's education or well-being.
- ❖ **Social injustice** and loss of human rights.

v) Measures to Overcome Marginalization

- ❖ Promoting **women's education** and skill development.
- ❖ Ensuring **equal pay and job opportunities**.
- ❖ Increasing **women's political participation** (like reservation in local bodies).
- ❖ Strengthening **laws against discrimination and violence**.
- ❖ Encouraging **awareness campaigns** and **gender-sensitive media** representation.

Women Sideline

To **sideline** someone means to **push them out of focus or importance**, keeping them away from key roles, decisions, and opportunities.

So, when we say “**Women are sidelined,**” it means that:

Even though women are capable, hardworking, and often contribute equally (or more), they are **not given equal visibility, recognition, or authority** in social, economic, or political spaces.

It is not always through direct discrimination — sometimes it happens subtly through customs, expectations, or organizational culture.

A. How Women Are Sidelined — Different Dimensions

1. In the Workplace

- Women are often given **supportive roles** rather than leadership ones.
- Promotions, salary raises, or recognition are more often given to men.
- They face the “**glass ceiling**” — invisible barriers that stop them from reaching top positions.
- After marriage or childbirth, many women are **overlooked** for key projects or responsibilities.

Example:

A woman employee may train others and work efficiently, but her male colleague gets promoted because the management assumes she will be “less available” after starting a family.

2. In Politics

- Women’s representation in parliaments, councils, and decision-making bodies remains **very low**.
- Even when women are elected, they are sometimes **treated as symbolic figures** rather than decision-makers.
- Political parties often **sideline women candidates**, preferring men for important constituencies or ministries.

Example:

A woman leader may have public support, but the party leadership gives her a secondary position to maintain “traditional hierarchy.”

3. In Education

- Girls’ education may be **deprioritized** compared to boys, especially in rural areas.

- In higher education, women are sometimes encouraged to take “soft subjects” rather than science or engineering.
- Teachers or textbooks may reflect gender bias, subtly telling girls that leadership or science is “not for them.”

4. In the Family and Society

- Decision-making (about finances, career, property, or mobility) is often **male-dominated**.
- Women’s opinions are not taken seriously even within households.
- Social customs may make women feel their role is limited to **caregiving and domestic work**.

Example:

In family functions or inheritance discussions, men take the lead, and women are told to “stay out of it.”

5. In Media and Culture

- Women are often shown in **stereotypical roles** — beautiful, emotional, or dependent — rather than as thinkers, leaders, or innovators.
- Women achievers get less coverage, while men’s achievements are widely celebrated.
- Advertisements and movies subtly reinforce the idea that women’s worth lies in their looks or domestic duties.

B. Causes of Women Being Sidelined

- ❖ **Patriarchal mindset:** Belief that men are natural leaders and women are followers.
- ❖ **Gender stereotypes:** Society expects women to prioritize home over career.
- ❖ **Lack of confidence or opportunity:** Continuous discouragement limits women’s self-belief.
- ❖ **Male-dominated systems:** Leadership structures that don’t encourage female participation.
- ❖ **Social conditioning:** From childhood, girls are taught to be “quiet,” “obedient,” and “supportive,” not assertive.

C. Consequences

- ❖ **Loss of talent:** Society loses half its potential workforce and ideas.
- ❖ **Economic inefficiency:** Excluding women from jobs and decisions harms national growth.
- ❖ **Psychological impact:** Women feel undervalued, leading to frustration and low confidence.
- ❖ **Perpetuation of inequality:** The next generation grows up seeing this pattern as “normal.”

D. How to Stop Sidelining Women

- ❖ Promote **equal opportunities and leadership training** for women.
- ❖ Encourage **mentorship programs** for women in workplaces and politics.
- ❖ Enforce **equal pay and anti-discrimination laws** effectively.
- ❖ Create **gender-sensitive education**, removing stereotypes from textbooks.
- ❖ Raise **public awareness** through media and campaigns celebrating women achievers.
- ❖ Encourage **men to share household responsibilities**, balancing the work–life load.

Gender – Discrimination Theories

Gender discrimination means **unequal treatment or valuation of men and women** based on gender, not on ability or performance.

For example:

- ✓ A woman being paid less than a man for the same job.
- ✓ A man being preferred for promotion even when a woman is equally qualified.
- ✓ A girl being denied education while a boy is encouraged.

Major Theories Explaining Gender Discrimination

We can broadly group them into **Economic Theories**, **Sociological Theories**, and **Feminist Theories**.

1. Economic Theories of Gender Discrimination

These theories come from **labour economics** and try to explain *why* women are treated unequally in the workplace — especially in terms of pay, promotion, and hiring. They focus on the **behaviour of employers, workers, and the market system**.

(a) Becker's Taste-Based Discrimination Theory (1957)

Proposed by: Economist **Gary Becker** in his book *The Economics of Discrimination* (1957).

Main Idea:

Discrimination happens because **some people have a personal prejudice (or “taste”)** against working with women. It's not based on productivity or skill — it's based on **emotional bias or preference**.

In other words, the employer, customer, or co-worker simply *feels uncomfortable* with women in certain roles and therefore **treats them unfairly**, even if it's costly to the business.

Example:

An employer thinks “*men are stronger and better at managing teams*” and thus:

- Hires men instead of women.
- Pays women less for the same job.
- Gives promotions mainly to men.

This is **not rational** from an economic point of view because it reduces efficiency — but it still happens due to personal bias.

Result:

Because of such prejudice:

- Women are pushed into **low-paying jobs** or **informal work sectors**.
- Even talented women are **excluded** from opportunities.
- The labour market becomes **segregated by gender** — men dominate high-paying jobs, while women cluster in low-paid or “feminine” work.

(b) Statistical Discrimination Theory

Main Idea:

Employers don't always have full information about an individual's productivity or reliability.

So instead of judging a person individually, they use **generalizations or stereotypes** about a *group* — like gender.

They assume women **as a group** are more likely to take maternity leave, quit after marriage, or be less committed to work. So, **even if one woman is fully dedicated**, she is treated based on what employers *believe about women in general*.

Example:

A company avoids giving a young woman employee a promotion because they *assume* she might soon marry and leave the job. This decision is based on **group averages**, not her personal record.

Result:

- Women get **fewer promotions and less training**.
- They are given **temporary or flexible roles** instead of long-term positions.
- Their career growth is blocked not by their performance but by **assumed behaviour**.

This is called “statistical discrimination” because it relies on **probabilities** and **stereotypes** instead of facts.

(c) Human Capital Theory

Main Idea:

This theory says the gender wage gap exists because **women have less human capital** — that is, less education, training, experience, or time in the workforce.

It assumes women **choose** to invest less in their careers because of their **family responsibilities** — like childcare, household work, or elder care.

So, employers pay them less since their productivity (measured by work experience or hours worked) is *statistically* lower.

Example:

A woman might take a few years off for maternity or part-time work after childbirth. As a result, she has fewer years of experience than a male colleague — so she earns less.

Critique (Important Point):

This theory blames women’s “choices,” but it ignores **social and structural barriers**:

- ✓ Lack of affordable childcare.
- ✓ Cultural pressure to prioritize family over career.
- ✓ Gender bias that prevents women from gaining experience or training.

So, the inequality is not simply because women invest less — it's because **society doesn't support their investment**.

2. Sociological Theories of Gender Discrimination

These theories explain that gender inequality is not natural or biological — it is **socially constructed**. Society **teaches and conditions** men and women to behave differently, and over time, these differences become **norms** that shape power relations.

(a) Social Role Theory

Developed by: Psychologist **Alice Eagly**.

Main Idea:

This theory says that men and women behave differently because **society assigns them different roles** — not because of natural ability.

Society *expects*:

- ✓ **Men** to be **breadwinners** (those who earn and protect)
- ✓ **Women** to be **caregivers** (those who nurture and support)

These expectations gradually become **stereotypes**, repeated through generations until they appear “normal.”

How It Works:

- When girls see mothers cooking and fathers earning, they **internalize** those roles.
- Teachers, media, and culture **reinforce** this by praising girls for being caring and boys for being strong.
- Over time, women are encouraged to enter “soft” jobs (teaching, nursing), while men are pushed into leadership or technical fields.

Result:

- Women are **discouraged** from entering male-dominated areas like engineering, politics, or science.
- Men are **discouraged** from taking emotional or nurturing jobs like teaching young children or nursing.
- Gender roles become rigid — people are judged for stepping outside them.

Example:

In many families, when a boy helps with cooking, he is teased — “That’s girls’ work!” When a girl speaks up or takes leadership, she’s told — “Be polite, don’t act like a boy.” Such messages create **psychological barriers** that limit confidence and ambition.

(b) Patriarchy Theory

Meaning of Patriarchy

A system of society where **men hold power** — in families, politics, religion, and workplaces — and women are expected to be **subordinate**.

Main Idea

Patriarchy is not just individual behaviour — it’s a **system of domination** built into laws, culture, and traditions. It ensures men have **authority, control, and privilege**, while women have **responsibility without power**.

How It Works

- **Family:** Men are heads of households; women handle domestic work and care.
- **Religion:** Male priests or leaders interpret doctrines, often giving women limited roles.
- **Law:** Historically, property and inheritance passed through men.
- **Culture:** Myths, movies, and customs glorify male dominance.

Women’s **unpaid household work** (cooking, cleaning, childcare) keeps the system functioning — but it’s **invisible** in economic terms.

Result

Even when women enter paid employment, they face a **double workload** — working both outside and inside the home. They rarely get to share power equally because men’s dominance is seen as “natural.”

Example

- A woman who earns equally or more than her husband is still expected to cook, clean, and manage children after work.
- In workplaces, male opinions are taken more seriously; leadership is seen as a “male trait.”
- Society praises men for “helping” at home — as if it’s optional — while it assumes women *must* do household duties.

(c) Socialization Theory

Main Idea:

This theory says that gender roles are **learned from childhood** — not inborn. Children observe, imitate, and absorb the behaviours that society rewards or discourages.

How It Works:

From a very young age, **parents, teachers, media, and peers** teach boys and girls what is “appropriate” for their gender. This learning process is called **gender socialization**.

Examples of Socialization:

- Boys are given **toys like cars, blocks, or science kits** that encourage creativity, leadership, and logic.
- Girls are given **dolls, kitchen sets, or beauty items** that promote care, beauty, and emotional roles.
- Boys are praised for being **brave, strong, or assertive**; girls for being **polite, quiet, and pretty**.

As they grow, these early lessons shape their **career choices, confidence, and behaviour**.

Result:

- Boys grow up confident about leadership and innovation.
- Girls grow up thinking caring and support are their “natural” roles.
- Women self-limit themselves from competitive fields, not because they lack talent — but because they were **taught to think that way**.

Example:

A girl good at mathematics might choose teaching over engineering because society tells her “it’s safer” or “more suitable for women.” A boy who loves art or cooking might avoid it for fear of being mocked.

3. Feminist Theories of Gender Discrimination**(a) Liberal Feminist Theory****Main Idea:**

Liberal feminism says that women are discriminated against because they **don’t have the same legal rights, education, and opportunities** as men. The inequality is due to **unfair systems**, not because women are less capable.

It focuses on **reform, not revolution** — that is, improving laws, institutions, and policies to ensure **equal opportunities** for everyone.

Explanation:

Liberal feminists believe that both men and women are **rational, intelligent, and equally capable**, but women have been held back by **discriminatory laws, customs, and social attitudes**.

So, the solution is to **remove those barriers** through:

- Equal access to education and jobs.
- Equal pay for equal work.
- Legal protection against discrimination and harassment.
- Representation in politics and decision-making.

Example:

- Campaigns for **women’s suffrage (right to vote)**.
- Laws like **Equal Pay Act, Sexual Harassment laws, or Reservation for women in local bodies**.
- Movements that promote **girls’ education and workplace equality**.

Focus:

Create a “**level playing field**” where both men and women can compete and succeed equally.

Limitation:

Critics say liberal feminism **does not challenge the deeper power structures** like patriarchy or capitalism — it only asks for fairness *within* the existing system.

(b) Marxist (or Socialist) Feminist Theory

Main Idea:

Marxist or Socialist feminism connects women’s oppression to **capitalism and patriarchy**. It says that the **economic system** and **gender system** together keep women subordinate.

Explanation:

In capitalist societies, Men usually control **property, income, and production**. Women do **unpaid domestic work** — cooking, cleaning, childcare — which helps reproduce the labour force (workers) for free. This benefits capitalism because it **reduces costs** for employers and keeps women **economically dependent** on men.

Women’s **economic dependence** becomes the base of their inequality.

Example:

A woman who stays home caring for children is doing **essential labour**, but it’s unpaid and unrecognized in GDP. Her husband can work longer hours and earn income because she takes care of everything else — this division supports capitalism.

Solution:

- ✓ Recognize **domestic labour** as valuable work.
- ✓ Encourage **shared household responsibility** between men and women.
- ✓ Change both **family and economic systems** so that women can achieve independence.

Limitation:

It focuses more on class and economy, sometimes ignoring emotional, sexual, or cultural aspects of gender discrimination.

(c) Radical Feminist Theory

Main Idea:

Radical feminism sees **patriarchy** — not capitalism — as the **root cause** of women's oppression. It argues that men, as a group, have historically **controlled women's bodies, sexuality, and labour** to maintain dominance.

Explanation:

Radical feminists say discrimination is not only about laws or jobs — it is about **power**. Men dominate women through: **Sexual violence** and harassment, **Cultural objectification** of women's bodies, **Control over reproduction** and sexuality, and **social conditioning** that teaches women to be submissive.

This system is so deep that **small reforms are not enough** — society itself must be **transformed**.

Example:

Movements like:

- **#MeToo movement** (against sexual harassment).
- Campaigns for **reproductive rights** (right to abortion, contraception).
- Protests against **pornography and beauty standards** that degrade women.

These are radical feminist issues — because they challenge how men control women's bodies and identities.

Solution:

- ◆ Dismantle patriarchy completely.
- ◆ Transform how we think about power, sex, family, and culture.
- ◆ End gender-based violence and objectification.
- ◆ Create a society where **women have control over their own bodies and choices**.

Limitation:

Some critics say radical feminism can be **too extreme or anti-men**, though its core message is about equality and liberation from dominance.

(d) Intersectional Feminist Theory

Introduced by:

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), an American scholar.

Main Idea:

This theory says discrimination is **not only about gender** — it is a **combination of multiple identities** like caste, class, race, religion, disability, and sexuality.

Women experience oppression **differently** depending on their background.

Explanation:

A rich woman and a poor woman don't face the same struggles. A Dalit woman in India faces **both caste and gender discrimination**, which is very different from the experience of an upper-caste woman. So, we must see **how these identities overlap** ("intersect") to understand real inequality.

Example:

A poor Muslim woman might face triple discrimination — for being a woman, for her religion, and for her poverty. Policies that help "all women" may still not reach her unless they address **each layer of discrimination**.

Result:

To create fairness, we must design policies and awareness that are **inclusive of all identities**, not just gender.

Women in the Labour Market

When we talk about *women in the labour market*, we mean **women's participation in paid economic activities** — that is, their involvement in jobs, professions, business, or any productive work that earns income.

But when we study this topic in economics or gender studies, we don't just see whether women are working or not — we look at **how, where, and under what conditions** they work, and **why inequality still exists** even today.

1. Women's Entry into the Labour Market

Historically, women have always worked — in fields, at home, and in family businesses. But much of this work was **unpaid and invisible**. For example:

- Women who worked on farms were seen as "helping" their husbands, not as workers.
- Domestic work (cooking, cleaning, child care) was not counted as part of the economy.

When women began entering **formal or paid sectors** — like education, offices, industries — their **economic role became more visible**. However, even then, they faced many challenges.

2. Gender Segregation in Employment

In almost every country, including India, the labour market is **segregated by gender** — meaning men and women are concentrated in different kinds of jobs.

Horizontal Segregation:

Women and men work in **different occupations**. For example: Women are found more in teaching, nursing, clerical, and domestic work whereas, men dominate construction, engineering, management, and technical jobs.

Vertical Segregation:

Even within the same field, men are at **higher positions** and women at **lower ranks**. For example:

- Many women are schoolteachers, but fewer are principals.
- Many are nurses, but few become hospital directors.

This separation is **not based on ability**, but on **social expectations and bias** — the idea that certain jobs are “for men” and others are “for women.”

3. Gender Wage Gap

Even when women do the same job as men, they often receive **lower wages or salaries**.

Reasons include:

- ✓ Employers undervalue women’s work.
- ✓ Women are assumed to be “less committed” due to family responsibilities.
- ✓ Women are given fewer promotions or pay raises.
- ✓ Sometimes, they are concentrated in **part-time or informal work** without job security.

This results in a **gender wage gap** — meaning the average income of women is less than that of men, even for similar work.

4. Informal Sector and Women

In developing countries like India, **a large share of women work in the informal sector**, where:

- Jobs are **unregistered**, with **no written contract**.

- There is **no job security, maternity leave, or social protection**.
- Women often work as domestic helpers, agricultural labourers, home-based workers, or street vendors.

This kind of work is **undervalued and underpaid**, and because it is not recorded properly, **women's contribution to the economy remains invisible**.

5. Barriers Faced by Women

Women face multiple barriers that prevent them from full participation in the labour market:

a. Cultural and Social Norms

Society often expects women to prioritize family, marriage, and childrearing over career. Some families restrict women from working outside the home.

b. Lack of Childcare and Support Services

Without affordable childcare, many women leave jobs after childbirth.

c. Occupational Stereotypes

Belief that women are “not suitable” for technical or leadership roles.

d. Discrimination at Workplace

Lower pay, fewer promotions, and harassment discourage women from continuing.

e. Double Burden

Even when women work outside, they still handle most household duties — leading to stress and less career growth.

6. Impact of Women's Employment

When women work, it benefits not only their families but also **the economy and society**.

a. Economic Growth: More women working means higher national productivity.

b. Family Welfare: Women's income improves family health, nutrition, and education.

c. Social Change: It challenges gender stereotypes and promotes equality.

d. Empowerment: Paid work gives women financial independence and decision-making power.

7. Recent Trends

In recent years: Women's education has improved. Many women have entered sectors like IT, banking, healthcare, education, and entrepreneurship.

However, female labour force participation in India **has been declining** — especially in rural areas — due to automation, safety issues, and unpaid care responsibilities.

During COVID-19, women were among the **first to lose jobs** and **last to recover**, showing their vulnerable position in the economy.

8. Policies and Measures Needed

To improve women's position in the labour market, we need:

- ✓ Equal Pay for Equal Work.
- ✓ Maternity and Childcare Support.
- ✓ Skill Development and Training for Women.
- ✓ Safer Workplaces and Anti-Harassment Laws.
- ✓ Flexible Work Hours and Remote Work Options.
- ✓ Recognition of Unpaid Work in national statistics.

Sexual Division of Labour

The “**Sexual Division of Labour**” means the way **work is divided between men and women** based on their **sex (biological differences)** and **gender roles (social expectations)**.

In simpler words — it refers to **who does what kind of work** in society.

It is called “*sexual*” not because it's about sexuality, but because this division is based on **sex** — whether a person is male or female.

2. Traditional View

In most traditional societies, there is a **clear separation** of roles:

Men's work → activities done *outside the home*, like farming, trading, or wage labour — considered “productive” and paid.

Women's work → activities done *inside the home*, like cooking, cleaning, raising children — considered “reproductive” and unpaid.

This division is not natural — it is **socially constructed** over generations. It's society that *decided* men should do certain jobs and women should do others.

3. Two Major Types of Labour

Type of Work	Who Usually Does It (Traditionally)	Nature of Work
Productive Labour	Men	Produces goods and income (e.g., agriculture, construction, office jobs)
Reproductive Labour	Women	Maintains daily life — caring, cleaning, cooking, nurturing, emotional support

But both kinds of labour are **essential** for society to function. The problem is, *only men's work is recognized and paid*, while *women's work remains invisible*.

4. Examples

In a farming family, the husband ploughs the land (considered “main work”), but the wife weeds, collects water, takes care of cattle, cooks for workers — yet her work is not counted as economic output.

In offices, even educated women are often expected to handle **household work** after office hours, while men rest — a clear case of double responsibility.

5. Why This Division Exists

The sexual division of labour is shaped by:

a. Biological Arguments – People once believed that women's biological roles (childbearing, nurturing) made them “naturally suited” for care work. But modern research shows these are **social expectations**, not biological necessities.

b. Cultural and Religious Traditions – Many cultures defined men as “breadwinners” and women as “homemakers.” Stories, rituals, and sayings reinforced this norm.

c. Economic Systems – Capitalist economies value *market work* (which earns money) more than *domestic work*, so women's unpaid labour is ignored.

d. Patriarchy – A system that gives men authority and control over women's labour and decisions, keeping women dependent.

6. Consequences of Sexual Division of Labour

a. Economic Inequality

Women's unpaid work is not recognized or rewarded. They depend financially on men. Their economic contribution remains **invisible** in GDP and employment statistics.

b. Double Burden

Working women manage both office work and housework. This causes stress, health issues, and limited career growth.

c. Occupational Segregation

Certain jobs are labelled as "women's work" (teaching, nursing, clerical jobs). These are often low-paid and undervalued.

d. Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes

The idea that men are "providers" and women are "caregivers" continues generation after generation. Even children grow up believing this is "normal."

7. Modern Changes

With modernization, education, and women's movements:

- ✓ More women have entered paid employment.
- ✓ Men have started sharing some household responsibilities (especially in urban areas).
- ✓ Awareness has grown that **domestic and care work** is valuable.

Still, the **burden of unpaid work** remains much heavier for women.

Example (India, NSSO Data): Women spend nearly **5 hours per day** on unpaid domestic and care work, while men spend **less than 1 hour**.

This shows that the sexual division of labour is still deeply rooted.

8. Feminist Perspectives

Feminist economists and sociologists have strongly criticized this division.

They argue that the economy depends on women's unpaid work. Without cooking, cleaning, and childcare, men couldn't go to paid jobs. Therefore, **household labour is productive** and must be recognized in national accounts.

Some feminist economists (like **Margaret Benston** and **Silvia Federici**) demanded:

- Recognition of domestic work as *economic labour*.
- Policies like *wages for housework* and *care infrastructure* (like childcare centres).

9. Policy Implications

To reduce the unfair division of labour, societies need:

- ◆ **Recognition of unpaid care work** in GDP and labour statistics.
- ◆ **Shared household responsibilities** between men and women.
- ◆ **Support systems** — childcare centres, flexible work hours, maternity & paternity leave.
- ◆ **Awareness campaigns** to challenge stereotypes about “women’s work.”

Wage Differentials

In **gender economics**, *wage differentials* refer to the **difference in earnings between men and women** — even when they perform the **same or similar work** or have **similar qualifications**.

This difference is known as the **gender wage gap**. It’s one of the most visible and measurable forms of **gender inequality** in the labour market.

2. The Gender Wage Gap – What It Means

The **gender wage gap** is the percentage difference between the average earnings of men and women.

Example:

If men earn ₹100 and women earn ₹80 for the same or similar job, the gender wage gap = 20%. This doesn’t mean every woman earns less, but on average, **women’s earnings are lower** across most sectors.

3. Causes of Gender-Based Wage Differentials

Economists explain gender wage gaps using different theoretical frameworks — some from classical labour economics, others from feminist economics.

(a) Occupational Segregation

Women are often concentrated in **low-paying jobs** (like teaching, nursing, clerical, domestic work), while men dominate **high-paying jobs** (like management, engineering, finance).

This “horizontal segregation” reflects gendered beliefs about “men’s work” vs “women’s work.”

Example: A female nurse earns much less than a male doctor, though both work in healthcare.

(b) Vertical Segregation (“Glass Ceiling”)

Even in the same field, men occupy **higher ranks** (like managers, directors), while women remain at **lower or middle positions**. Invisible barriers — called the **glass ceiling** — stop women from rising beyond a certain point.

Example: There are many women in schools as teachers but fewer as principals or education officers.

(c) Human Capital Differences

This explanation (from classical economists) says wage gaps exist because women invest **less in education, training, or work experience** due to family roles.

But feminist economists **critique** this — they argue that women’s “lower investment” is a *result* of social constraints, not free choice.

Example: If childcare facilities are lacking, women are forced to take breaks — so their work experience becomes “less continuous,” leading to lower pay.

(d) Statistical Discrimination

Employers may assume, based on stereotypes, that women are **more likely to leave jobs** for marriage or maternity — so they **pay less** or **avoid promoting them**, even if a particular woman is highly committed. This is called **statistical discrimination** — judging individuals based on group averages.

(e) Direct Discrimination (“Taste-Based Discrimination”)

Proposed by economist **Gary Becker (1957)** — Some employers simply have a **bias or prejudice** (“taste”) against women.

They *prefer* male employees and therefore: Offer women lower salaries, or avoid hiring them in key roles, even when it costs the firm’s efficiency.

This is **irrational but socially persistent**.

(f) Undervaluation of Women's Work

Work typically done by women — like care, teaching, or service — is often seen as “less valuable,” even if it requires equal effort and skill.

Example: A woman who manages a household efficiently performs complex managerial tasks — but it's unpaid and unrecognized in GDP. Similarly, professions associated with care (nursing, teaching) are low-paid because society undervalues them.

(g) Workplace Practices and Motherhood Penalty

Women face wage loss due to **career breaks** for childbirth or care work. After maternity leave, they often get fewer promotions. Men, on the other hand, enjoy a “**fatherhood bonus**” — being seen as more stable or responsible.

Micro Credit

Microcredit means **small loans** given to poor individuals — especially **women** — who do not have access to traditional banking services. It is part of a broader idea called **Microfinance**, which also includes **savings, insurance, and training**.

These loans are usually given **without collateral** (no need to mortgage property or assets), offered at **lower interest rates**, and repayable in **small instalments**.

i. Purpose of Microcredit

In **gender economics**, the goal of microcredit is not just poverty reduction — it is also **empowerment of women**.

It helps women to:

- ✓ Start small businesses (tailoring, food stalls, livestock, etc.),
- ✓ Earn an independent income,
- ✓ Gain self-confidence, and
- ✓ Participate actively in household and community decision-making.

ii. Why Women Are the Focus

In gender economics, women are considered “**credit-constrained**” — meaning:

- ✓ They rarely own land or property (no collateral),
- ✓ Have limited access to formal banking,

- ✓ Are often dependent on male family members for financial decisions.

So, giving credit directly to women helps to **remove gender-based barriers** in the economy.

Moreover, **studies show** that women:

- ✓ Repay loans more reliably than men,
- ✓ Use income for family welfare (education, nutrition, healthcare),
- ✓ And reinvest in community development.

Hence, **microcredit + women = multiplier effect** on development.

iii. Feminist Economic Viewpoint

From a **feminist economics** angle, microcredit is seen as a tool for **economic justice** — a way to value women's unpaid work and give them economic visibility.

Women's empowerment through microcredit challenges: The **male-dominated financial system**, and the **traditional sexual division of labour**, where men earn and women serve. It shifts women's position from **“dependents” to “earners.”**

The Grameen Bank Example (Bangladesh)

The **Grameen Bank**, founded by **Dr. Muhammad Yunus**, is the most famous example. It pioneered giving microloans to rural women in Bangladesh without asking for collateral.

Results:

- ✓ Women became entrepreneurs (selling crafts, dairy products, etc.).
- ✓ Household living standards improved.
- ✓ Social status of women increased.

This model inspired **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** and **microfinance institutions (MFIs)** all over the world — including India.

iv. Microcredit and Gender Empowerment in India

In India, the **Self-Help Group (SHG)-Bank Linkage Programme** by **NABARD** (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) is a key initiative.

Here's how it works:

1. 10–20 women form a **Self-Help Group**.
2. They pool small savings regularly.
3. The group gets a collective loan from a bank.

4. They lend the money among themselves for small economic activities.

Example: Kudumbashree (Kerala), DWCRA, Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM – Maharashtra), etc.

These SHGs have transformed many rural women into small entrepreneurs.

v. Economic Impacts

Positive Impacts	Explanation
Income Generation	Women start income-generating activities and contribute to family income.
Employment Creation	Microenterprises help reduce rural unemployment.
Savings Mobilization	Encourages women to save regularly.
Empowerment	Increases self-confidence, decision-making power, and reduces gender dependency.

vi. Criticism from Gender Economists

However, gender economists point out that **microcredit is not a magic solution**. There are some **limitations**:

- a. Small-scale, low-profit ventures:** Women are often restricted to small businesses (like handicrafts, food processing) that don't grow much.
- b. Hidden male control:** In some cases, men take over the money or business started with women's loans.
- c. Debt burden:** High interest from private MFIs can trap women in debt.
- d. Social barriers remain:** Economic credit alone doesn't remove patriarchy, gender violence, or discrimination.

So, **credit alone cannot create empowerment** — it must be supported with: Education, Training, Market access, Legal protection, and Social change.

Women in the Organised Sectors of the Indian Economy (Application)

1. Meaning of Organised Sector

The **organised sector** (also called the **formal sector**) refers to all enterprises that are: Registered under government laws (like Companies Act, Factories Act, etc.), Provide regular

wages and job security, offer benefits like pensions, maternity leave, insurance, and paid holidays, and follow official labour laws and regulations.

Examples: Banks, schools, hospitals, government offices, IT companies, public sector undertakings, large manufacturing firms, etc.

2. Current Status of Women in Organised Sector

Although the organised sector offers better job security and wages, **women's participation remains low** compared to men.

According to gender economists and labour surveys:

- Women form **less than 25–30%** of the organised sector workforce in India.
- Majority are still concentrated in **education, healthcare, banking, and public administration** — sectors considered “feminine.”
- Their presence in **manufacturing, construction, and top corporate management** is limited.

3. Factors Affecting Women's Participation

(a) Gendered Education and Skill Gap

Women often choose or are pushed into “safe” or “acceptable” professions like teaching, nursing, or clerical work — due to: Social conditioning, Lack of technical or industrial training, Gender bias in STEM (Science, Tech, Engineering, Math) education.

Hence, women's entry into high-paying organised sectors (IT, engineering, management) remains restricted.

(b) Workplace Discrimination

Even within the organised sector:

- ✓ **Wage gaps** persist — women are paid less for the same work.
- ✓ **Promotions** are slower due to gender stereotypes (“women are emotional,” “women can't lead”).
- ✓ **Glass ceiling effect** prevents women from reaching top managerial or board positions.

This is a key topic in **gender economics**, where structural discrimination is studied as a cause of unequal labour outcomes.

(c) Family and Social Barriers

Marriage and childbearing often interrupt women's careers. Lack of childcare support and flexible working hours push many women to quit. Patriarchal norms still expect women to prioritise home over work, even in urban educated families.

(d) Occupational Segregation

Women are overrepresented in-service **sectors** (education, health, finance) and underrepresented in **production sectors** (industry, technology, logistics). This is a form of **gender-based labour market segregation**, a central issue in gender economics.

4. Sectors Where Women Are Prominent

Sector	Nature of Involvement
Education	Large share as teachers, professors, administrators.
Healthcare	Nurses, doctors, midwives, paramedical staff.
Banking and Insurance	Clerical, administrative, managerial positions increasing.
IT and BPO	Significant participation in urban India; many in entry-level coding, HR, customer service.
Public Sector / Government	Teachers, nurses, clerks, civil servants; yet fewer in senior bureaucracy.

5. Economic and Social Applications

(a) Economic Empowerment

Women's participation in the organised sector improves: Household income, Children's education and nutrition, Economic independence and bargaining power at home.

Hence, from a **gender economics** viewpoint, women's employment is a form of **redistribution of economic power**.

(b) Impact on GDP and Growth

Studies show that if women's participation in organised employment equals men's, India's GDP could increase by **25–30%** (as per McKinsey Global Institute). Thus, gender inclusion is not only a moral issue but also **an efficiency issue** in economic terms.

(c) Human Development Impact

Employment gives women: Identity and social respect, Access to social security (EPF, pension, health benefits), Voice in decision-making — both in family and workplace.

Therefore, women's formal employment contributes to **gender equality** and **inclusive development**.

6. Government Policies and Legal Support

Policy / Act	Objective
Equal Remuneration Act, 1976	Equal pay for equal work irrespective of gender.
Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017	26 weeks paid maternity leave + crèche facility.
POSH Act, 2013	Prevention of Sexual Harassment at workplace.
Reservation in Panchayati Raj	Encourages political representation that can influence local employment policies.
Skill India / Digital India Missions	Promote women's participation in skill training and IT jobs.

7. Challenges That Still Exist

i. Low female labour force participation rate (FLFPR): Only around 25–27% (as per PLFS 2022–23).

ii. Informalisation: Many women work in private companies on contract or part-time basis — technically outside full formal protection.

iii. Glass Ceiling: Very few women in top management or board positions.

iv Harassment and workplace safety issues.

v. Work-life balance pressure — lack of flexible working options.

8. Applications in Gender Economics

In **gender economics**, the analysis of women in the organised sector focuses on:

- ✓ **Gender wage differentials:** Pay gaps between men and women.
- ✓ **Occupational segregation:** Why women cluster in certain jobs.
- ✓ **Labour market discrimination models:** Becker's taste-based or statistical discrimination.
- ✓ **Policy evaluation:** How laws and affirmative actions reduce inequality.

So, women in the organised sector become a **practical application** of these theories — showing how gender bias operates even in formal, regulated markets.

9. Case Studies / Examples

- **IT Sector (Infosys, TCS, Wipro):** Women constitute 30–35% of the workforce but less than 10% in top leadership.
- **Banking Sector:** Women like Arundhati Bhattacharya (former SBI Chairperson) show increasing visibility, but overall representation in senior roles is still low.
- **Education Sector:** High female share, yet most principals, deans, and policymakers are men.

These reflect “**vertical segregation**” — women present in numbers, but concentrated in lower levels.

10. Conclusion

Women's entry into the organised sector in India marks a **significant step toward gender equality**, but it is still **uneven and incomplete**. While education and policy reforms have opened doors, **social norms, workplace bias, and unequal care responsibilities** continue to restrict their growth.

From a **gender economics** lens: True empowerment means not just more women working — but women having **equal access, equal pay, and equal power** within the organised economy.

Women in the Unorganised Sectors of the Indian Economy (Application)

1. Meaning of Unorganised Sector

The **unorganised sector** (or **informal sector**) refers to all economic activities that are **not regulated by government laws** and **do not provide job security or social benefits**.

Examples: Agricultural labourers, construction workers, street vendors, domestic servants, handloom and handicraft workers, home-based workers, daily wage labourers, etc.

These workers: have **irregular income**, no **written contracts**, no **social security** (like pension, ESI, PF, or maternity leave), and are **vulnerable to exploitation**.

2. Extent of Women's Involvement

According to labour data and gender economists:

- ✓ Around **90–94%** of women workers in India are employed in the **unorganised sector**.
- ✓ Women's work is mostly **invisible, unpaid, or underpaid**.
- ✓ Even when they work full-time, they are often **not recognized as “workers.”**

3. Nature of Women's Work in the Unorganised Sector

Sector	Type of Work Done by Women
Agriculture	Sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, cattle care, dairy, poultry.
Construction	Helpers, load carriers, sand sifters — physically demanding but low paid.
Home-based industries	Beedi rolling, agarbatti making, tailoring, embroidery.
Domestic work	Maids, cooks, caregivers in urban households.
Street vending / petty trade	Selling vegetables, fruits, snacks, flowers, etc.
Textile & garment work	Stitching, cutting, packaging — often piece-rate and without contracts.

4. Economic Characteristics

- ❖ **Low Wages:** Women earn less than men for similar work.
- ❖ **Irregular Employment:** Work depends on season or demand.
- ❖ **Lack of Social Protection:** No maternity benefits, no insurance.
- ❖ **No Union Representation:** They have little bargaining power.
- ❖ **High Vulnerability:** Risk of exploitation, harassment, and sudden unemployment.

5. Gender Economics Perspective

From a **gender economics** viewpoint, the unorganised sector is a **mirror of gender inequality** in the economy.

(a) Sexual Division of Labour

Women are assigned “feminine” or “supportive” roles — domestic work, care work, handicrafts — which are **extensions of their household roles**. These are undervalued economically and often **classified as non-productive**, though they contribute significantly to GDP and family welfare.

(b) Invisible and Unpaid Labour

Many rural women work on family farms or home-based industries but are recorded as “housewives.” This **statistical invisibility** hides the real economic contribution of women — a key issue highlighted in **gender economics**.

(c) Discrimination in Wages and Opportunities

Even in informal jobs, **wage differentials** exist:

- Women are considered “secondary earners,” hence paid less.
- Men are preferred for skilled or leadership roles, women for repetitive or manual work.

This reflects **Becker’s taste-based discrimination** and **statistical discrimination theory** in application.

(d) Intersection of Gender and Poverty

Most poor households depend on women’s informal labour. Thus, **feminisation of poverty** occurs — where women are more likely to be poor due to unpaid work, low pay, and lack of assets.

6. Applications and Real-Life Examples

Let’s see how these concepts apply in different parts of India:

(i) Agricultural Sector

In states like Bihar, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh, women form **nearly 70–80% of the agricultural labour force**. They do most of the manual and repetitive work but own **less than 10% of land**. Hence, they remain **labourers, not decision-makers**.

(ii) Construction Sector

Urban migration has increased women’s participation in construction — carrying bricks, cement, water. Work is **seasonal**, with **no safety gear**, **no crèche**, and **no fixed wages**.

(iii) Domestic Workers

Millions of women (especially migrants) are employed as maids, cooks, caregivers. Most are **unregistered** under any labour act and are **excluded from social security**.

(iv) Home-Based Work

Women working from home in beedi-making, handloom, and tailoring contribute to exports but are **paid per piece** with **no contracts or benefits**.

7. Government Policies and Legal Measures

Policy / Act	Purpose
Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008	Provides identity cards and access to welfare schemes.
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	Guarantees 100 days of paid employment per year; 1/3rd of jobs reserved for women.
Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)	A trade union empowering women in the informal sector (Ahmedabad-based).
National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)	Promotes women's Self-Help Groups and entrepreneurship.
Janani Suraksha Yojana, PMMVY, etc.	Provide maternity benefits and healthcare for women workers.

8. Economic Significance

Despite informality, women's contribution in this sector is **vital for the Indian economy**:

- ✓ They form the **backbone of agriculture** and small-scale production.
- ✓ Their earnings sustain **rural consumption** and **urban services**.
- ✓ They contribute to **GDP growth**, even though not fully counted in national statistics.

Gender economists emphasize the need to **recognize, redistribute, and reward** women's unpaid and informal work to achieve inclusive growth.

9. Challenges Faced by Women in the Unorganised Sector

- ❖ Low and irregular income.
- ❖ No maternity or health benefits.
- ❖ No legal protection or minimum wage enforcement.
- ❖ Occupational hazards and unsafe working conditions.

- ❖ Social insecurity, harassment, and lack of respect.
- ❖ Limited access to credit and technology.

10. Policy Recommendations (Gender Economics View)

To address gender inequality in the informal economy, economists suggest:

- ✓ **Recognition:** Count women's unpaid work in GDP.
- ✓ **Social Protection:** Universal social security for informal women workers.
- ✓ **Skill Training:** Upskill women to shift to higher-paying activities.
- ✓ **Credit Access:** Expand microcredit and SHG networks.
- ✓ **Legal Rights:** Enforce equal pay, safe workplaces, and maternity support.
- ✓ **Collective Organisation:** Encourage unions and cooperatives like SEWA.

11. Conclusion

Women in India's unorganised sector represent the **largest but most neglected part of the workforce**. Their economic activities sustain households, agriculture, and informal industries — yet they remain **invisible, unpaid, and unprotected**.

From the **Gender Economics** perspective: True economic empowerment lies not only in giving jobs to women, but in **recognising, valuing, and protecting** the work they already do.

Policies must therefore aim to **formalise informal work**, provide **social security**, and ensure **gender justice** — only then can women's contribution to India's economy be fully realised.

Feminisation of Work and Feminisation of Poverty

1. Meaning of Feminisation of Work

► Definition

Feminisation of work refers to the **increasing participation of women** in the labour force — especially in **low-paid, insecure, and informal jobs**.

It means: More women are entering the workforce, but they are concentrated in **low-wage, part-time, or casual** employment, often **without social protection or job security**.

► Background

During globalisation and economic liberalisation (1990s onwards), developing countries like India saw: Growth in **informal, service-oriented, and export sectors**, Rise in **home-based and subcontracted work** (like garment, beedi, electronics, packaging).

Women entered these jobs in large numbers because: They accepted **lower wages**, Employers preferred them for **docility and patience**, and social norms allowed only certain “female” types of work.

► Examples of Feminisation of Work

Sector	Type of Women’s Work
Textile & Garment Industry	Stitching, cutting, packaging — often piece-rate, home-based.
Electronics Assembly / IT-BPO	Repetitive data entry, customer service — low skill, high turnover.
Agriculture	Casual labour, transplanting, weeding, harvesting — seasonal, low pay.
Domestic Work	Cooking, cleaning, caregiving — informal and unregulated.
Self-Help Groups & Microenterprises	Women take up small income-generating activities.

Thus, women are increasingly visible in the economy — but often **not empowered** through their work.

► Characteristics of Feminised Work

1. Low pay and undervalued jobs
2. Lack of job security
3. Part-time or temporary contracts
4. Limited career growth
5. Poor working conditions
6. Combination of productive (paid) and reproductive (unpaid) work

This is often called “**double burden**” — women work both at home and outside, but only one part is paid.

► Gender Economics View

In gender economics, feminisation of work is seen as a **paradox**:

- It increases *quantitative participation* (more women working),
- But decreases *qualitative empowerment* (poor pay, poor rights).

Hence, the real question is not “Are more women working?” but “**Under what conditions are women working?**”

► In India (Application)

Post-1991 reforms created new jobs in services and informal sectors, but most women workers entered low-paid or home-based employment. According to NSSO and PLFS data, over 90% of employed women are still in the informal sector. The trend shows casualisation and feminisation happening together.

2. Meaning of Feminisation of Poverty

► Definition

Feminisation of poverty means that **women are disproportionately affected by poverty** compared to men — both in terms of incidence and severity.

It refers to:

- The growing number of **women-headed households** among the poor,
- And the **greater vulnerability of women** to economic deprivation due to gender-based inequality.

► Origin of the Concept

The term was first used by **Diana Pearce (1978)** to describe how women in the United States were increasingly represented among the poor. Later, it became central in **feminist economics** and **development studies** to highlight how poverty has a **gendered face**.

► Why Are Women Poorer? (Key Causes)

i. Unequal access to resources: Women own less land and property. Lack of inheritance rights and access to credit.

ii. Concentration in low-paid work: Most women work in informal or part-time jobs with low earnings.

iii. Unpaid domestic and care work: Women spend more time in unpaid family work, which limits their earning potential.

iv. Single motherhood / widowhood: Single women or female-headed households face higher risk of poverty.

v. Discrimination in wages and employment opportunities: Even in the same job, women often earn less.

vi. Lack of social protection: Limited maternity benefits, healthcare, or pension coverage.

► **Indicators of Feminisation of Poverty**

Indicator	Explanation
Higher female unemployment	Women face greater difficulty finding jobs.
Lower asset ownership	Very few women own land or housing.
Higher dependency ratio	Many women support children and elders with fewer resources.
Lower education and health levels	Poor women face multiple deprivations.
Rural female-headed households	Among the poorest of the poor.

► **Gender Economics View**

In **gender economics**, feminisation of poverty is not just about income — it's about **power, opportunity, and social structure**.

It shows how economic systems are **not gender-neutral**:

- ✓ Women's unpaid work sustains the economy, but it is **excluded from GDP**.
- ✓ Market and household both undervalue women's time and effort.
- ✓ Poverty, therefore, is not accidental — it is **structurally linked to gender roles**.

► **In India (Applications)**

1. **Rural areas:** Women work longer hours in agriculture but earn less. At the meantime, widowhood, desertion, and migration of men create **female-headed poor households**.
2. **Urban areas:** Women in slums and informal jobs face unstable income and lack of housing security.
3. **Intersectionality:** Dalit, Adivasi, and minority women face **double disadvantage** — gender and caste/religion.
4. **Data Point:** Women form about **48% of India's population**, but hold **less than 10% of land titles** (NSSO).

► Link Between Feminisation of Work and Feminisation of Poverty

Feminisation of Work	Feminisation of Poverty
More women are joining the workforce.	But more women are among the poor.
Increased labour participation.	Increased economic vulnerability.
Work in informal, insecure jobs.	Leads to low income and no social protection.
Represents <i>quantitative inclusion</i> .	Represents <i>qualitative deprivation</i> .

So, while women are entering the economy, **they remain trapped in poverty due to poor working conditions and unpaid labour**. This is the **central paradox** of gender economics.

3. Government and Policy Responses

Policy / Programme	Purpose
Self-Help Groups (SHGs)	Promote savings and credit for women's enterprises.
MGNREGA	Ensures paid employment for rural women.
National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)	Encourages entrepreneurship among women.
PMMVY & Maternity Benefit Act	Support for mothers and childcare.
Property rights reforms	Promote joint land titles for women.
Education & Skill Mission	Increase employability and reduce dependency.

These programmes attempt to **reverse feminisation of poverty** by improving **women's access to income, credit, and property**.

4. Conclusion

The twin processes of **feminisation of work** and **feminisation of poverty** reveal that:

- Women's participation in the economy has increased,
- But **economic empowerment and equality have not followed**.

From a **gender economics** perspective:

Development is not truly inclusive unless women's work — both paid and unpaid — is recognised, fairly valued, and adequately protected.

Policies must go beyond counting women as workers — they must ensure **dignity, equality, and security** in their work.

Unit V: Gender, The Economy and Related Issues

Population – Demographic Features – Health and Education – Policy Measures – Government and NGOs – Gender Budgeting.

Population

In economics and social studies, population refers to the total number of people living in a particular area at a given time. However, when we study population under gender and economy, we don't just look at how many people there are — we focus on how population is structured, how it behaves, and how gender differences influence and are influenced by it.

A. Population and Gender: The Connection

Population is not a neutral concept. It is deeply **gendered** — meaning, men and women experience demographic processes (like birth, death, migration, education, and work participation) differently.

Key Gender-Related Dimensions of Population:

i. Sex Ratio

The **sex ratio** is the number of females per 1,000 males in the population. A low sex ratio (fewer women) often reflects **gender discrimination, female infanticide, or neglect of girls**. In India, the skewed sex ratio reveals deep-rooted **patriarchal attitudes**.

ii. Age Structure

The proportion of children, working-age adults, and elderly people in the population affects economic productivity. Gender plays a role here — women live longer on average but may face **economic insecurity in old age** due to unpaid work and lack of savings.

iii. Fertility Rates

Fertility is the average number of children a woman bears during her lifetime. Fertility rates are influenced by **education, employment, access to healthcare, and autonomy** of women.

Lower fertility is usually linked to greater **female empowerment** and participation in the workforce.

iv. Mortality Rates

Maternal mortality (deaths of women during childbirth) is a major gendered concern. Differences in **life expectancy** between men and women also reveal the impact of social, biological, and economic factors.

v. Migration

Migration has a gendered pattern. Men often migrate for employment, while women's migration is frequently tied to **marriage** or **family reasons**, which affects their access to independent income.

B. Population and the Economy: A Gender Perspective

Population is the foundation of a country's **labour force** and **human capital** — but gender inequalities determine how men and women contribute to and benefit from economic growth.

1. Labour Force Participation

A larger working-age population is called a **demographic dividend**, but this dividend can only be realized when **both men and women** are economically active. Women's labour participation is often **undervalued or invisible** due to unpaid household work.

2. Human Capital Formation

Education, health, and skill development are crucial for human capital. Gender disparities in access to education and health limit women's potential contribution to the economy.

3. Population Policies

Many population control measures historically targeted **women**, placing the burden of contraception and sterilization disproportionately on them. Gender-sensitive population policies should focus on **reproductive rights, family planning, and healthcare** for both men and women.

C. Gendered Implications of Population Growth

i. High Population Growth

- Increases economic pressure on resources.
- Women face heavier workloads, less access to healthcare, and limited educational opportunities.

ii. Declining Population Growth

- Can lead to **ageing population**, especially in developed regions.
- Puts pressure on women as caregivers for the elderly, again reinforcing unpaid care roles.

D. Towards Gender-Equitable Population Development

A gender-equitable population policy or perspective ensures that:

- ✓ Women have **control over their reproductive choices**.
- ✓ Both men and women have **equal access to health and education**.
- ✓ The **value of unpaid work and care responsibilities** is recognized.
- ✓ Population programs are based on **rights, not coercion**.

Demographic Features

A. Meaning of Demographic Features

Demographic features refer to the **statistical characteristics of a population** that help us understand its composition, structure, and changes over time. They include aspects such as **size, growth rate, density, sex ratio, age structure, fertility, mortality, literacy, and life expectancy**.

When analysed through a **gender lens**, these features reveal **how men and women experience population dynamics differently** — and how gender inequalities affect and are affected by economic and social structures.

B. Major Demographic Features (with Gender Perspective)

1. Size and Growth of Population

This indicates the total number of people in a country and how fast it is increasing. India has a large and fast-growing population, with women forming nearly **48%** of it. Rapid population growth puts pressure on **resources, education, and employment**, disproportionately affecting women — especially in terms of **healthcare, nutrition, and reproductive burden**.

Gender aspect:

- ✚ Women are often blamed for high fertility but rarely empowered to make reproductive choices.
- ✚ Women's education and employment tend to reduce population growth by promoting **delayed marriage and smaller families**.

2. Sex Ratio

Sex Ratio = Number of females per 1,000 males.

It is a key indicator of **gender balance** in the population. India's sex ratio (as per Census 2011: 943 females/1000 males; NFHS-5: 1020 females/1000 males) reflects improvement but still masks regional and social disparities.

Gender aspect:

A **low sex ratio** signals deep-rooted **patriarchal practices**, such as:

- Female foeticide and infanticide,
- Neglect of girl children,
- Gender-based mortality differences.

Skewed sex ratios create **social issues** like human trafficking, forced marriages, and violence against women.

3. Age Structure

The **age composition** divides the population into:

- Children (0–14 years)
- Working-age group (15–59 years)
- Elderly (60 years and above)

Gender aspect:

Women tend to **live longer**, resulting in more females among the elderly. However, many elderly women are **economically and socially dependent** due to limited work experience or savings.

Young women in the working-age group face **barriers to employment** despite being a growing part of the population.

Economic link:

A balanced age structure with gender equality can help realize the **demographic dividend** — higher productivity through an active, skilled workforce.

4. Fertility Rate

- Refers to the **average number of children born per woman**.
- India's fertility rate has declined significantly (around **2.0 in 2023**, near replacement level).

Gender aspect:

- Fertility depends on **women's education, autonomy, and access to reproductive healthcare**.
- Early marriage and lack of contraceptive access increase fertility.
- Lower fertility is usually seen in societies where women are **educated, employed, and empowered** to make reproductive decisions.

5. Mortality and Life Expectancy

- **Mortality rate** is the number of deaths per 1,000 people per year.
- **Life expectancy** measures the average number of years a person is expected to live.

Gender aspect:

- **Maternal mortality rate (MMR)** is a critical gender indicator — it reflects women's access to healthcare, nutrition, and safe childbirth.
- Women generally have **higher life expectancy** than men biologically, but **social neglect and poor health facilities** can reduce this advantage.
- High MMR or infant mortality signals **gender inequality** in healthcare.

6. Literacy and Education

Literacy is a major demographic feature that influences population quality and economic growth.

Gender aspect:

The **female literacy rate** is still lower than the male literacy rate in many regions. Education empowers women, enabling them to: Participate in the labour market, make informed reproductive choices, improve family health and welfare.

Gender disparity in literacy limits the full economic potential of the population.

7. Rural–Urban Composition

India's population is largely rural, though urbanization is increasing rapidly.

Gender aspect:

Women in rural areas often face: Poor access to education and healthcare, Limited job opportunities, Greater involvement in unpaid agricultural and household work.

Urban women have better access to education and jobs but face challenges like **workplace discrimination and safety concerns**.

8. Dependency Ratio

This measures the ratio of non-working population (children and elderly) to the working population.

Gender aspect:

Since women often act as unpaid caregivers, they bear a **double burden** — supporting dependents while contributing indirectly to the economy. Gender-sensitive policies like childcare support and elderly care infrastructure are essential to reduce this load.

Health and Education

A. Introduction

Health and Education are the **two main pillars of human development**. They determine how individuals contribute to and benefit from the economy. However, access to both health and education is **not gender-neutral** — it is shaped by **social norms, cultural beliefs, and economic inequalities**.

Thus, when we discuss “Health and Education” under *Gender and the Economy*, we analyse **how gender disparities in these areas affect women's empowerment, productivity, and overall economic growth**.

1. Health and Gender

Health refers to a **state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being**, not merely the absence of disease. In gender economics, health is studied not just as a biological issue but as a **social and economic outcome** influenced by **gender roles and discrimination**.

i. Gender Dimensions of Health

(a) Access to Healthcare

- ✓ Women and girls often receive **less medical attention** than men, especially in poor households.
- ✓ In many regions, **family resources** (money, food, medicine) are prioritized for men and boys.
- ✓ Social norms discourage women from travelling alone or consulting male doctors, limiting their access to timely care.

(b) Reproductive and Maternal Health

Women bear the **biological burden of reproduction**, but often without sufficient healthcare support. Problems include:

- High **maternal mortality rate (MMR)**,
- Limited access to contraception,
- Early marriage and teenage pregnancy,
- Unsafe abortions.

Lack of reproductive health education keeps women **economically dependent and socially vulnerable**.

(c) Nutrition and Health Inequality

Girls often face **malnutrition** due to unequal food distribution within families. Malnutrition leads to **stunted growth, anaemia, and reduced productivity** in later life.

(d) Occupational Health

Women working in unorganised sectors (agriculture, domestic work, factories) face **unsafe working conditions**, exposure to chemicals, long hours, and no maternity benefits.

(e) Mental Health

Gender-based violence, emotional abuse, and social restrictions cause **higher depression and anxiety rates** among women. Yet mental health remains underreported due to stigma.

ii. Health and the Economy (Gender Link)

Aspect	Gendered Issue	Economic Consequence
Poor maternal health	Inadequate reproductive services	Reduces women's labour participation
Malnutrition	Discriminatory food allocation	Low productivity and learning ability

Health neglect	Less healthcare access	High absenteeism and dependency ratio
Gender violence	Physical and mental trauma	Economic loss through lost workdays

Healthy women = **productive women**, and productive women = **stronger economy**. Therefore, **gender equality in healthcare** is not only a social justice issue but also an **economic necessity**.

2. Education and Gender

Education refers to the **process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and values** that enable individuals to participate fully in social and economic life. In gender economics, education is the **most powerful tool of empowerment**, helping to break cycles of poverty and inequality.

i. Gender Dimensions of Education

(a) Access and Enrolment

Historically, girls have **lower enrolment** and **higher dropout rates** than boys, especially in rural areas. Causes include:

- Preference for male education,
- Early marriage,
- Household responsibilities,
- Safety concerns,
- Lack of sanitation facilities in schools.

(b) Quality of Education

Even when girls attend school, they may receive **inferior quality education** due to poor infrastructure or gender bias among teachers.

Curriculum and textbooks often reinforce **stereotypical gender roles** (e.g., men as leaders, women as caregivers).

(c) Higher Education and Skill Development

Women are underrepresented in **STEM fields** (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and **technical courses**, limiting their access to high-paying jobs. Social barriers and lack of mentorship discourage women from pursuing advanced studies.

(d) Female Literacy

Female literacy is a key indicator of gender equality. As of recent data, India's **female literacy rate** (around 70%) lags behind the **male literacy rate** (around 84%).

Educated women have: Lower fertility rates, better family health, greater decision-making power, higher income potential.

ii. Education and the Economy (Gender Link)

Aspect	Gendered Issue	Economic Consequence
Lower female literacy	Limited skills	Shrinks productive labour force
Gender bias in curriculum	Reinforces inequality	Restricts career diversity
Dropouts due to early marriage	Interrupts skill formation	Perpetuates poverty
Lack of technical education	Gender wage gap	Reduces innovation potential

Education empowers women to **enter the labour market, control income, and make independent choices**, creating a **multiplier effect** on development.

3. Interrelationship between Health, Education, and Gender

Health and education are **interdependent**: **Educated women** make **better health decisions** for themselves and their families. **Healthy women** can **pursue education and employment** effectively. Together, they form the foundation for **gender equality and inclusive economic growth**.

For example: A healthy, educated woman delays marriage, chooses fewer children, and contributes more productively to the economy. Her children are healthier and more educated — creating an **intergenerational cycle of empowerment**.

4. Policy Perspective

To address gender disparities, governments and international organizations promote:

- ❖ **National Health Mission (NHM) and Janani Suraksha Yojana** – improving maternal health.
- ❖ **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and National Education Policy (2020)** – improving female education and participation.
- ❖ **Poshan Abhiyan** – addressing female malnutrition.

- ❖ **Skill India Mission** – encouraging women’s employability and entrepreneurship.

Policy Measures

Meaning of Policy Measures

Policy measures refer to the **plans, programs, and strategies** adopted by the government to **promote gender equality and empower women** in all areas of life — particularly in **health, education, employment, and economic participation**.

In the context of “*Gender, the Economy and Related Issues*”, policy measures aim to:

- ✓ Remove gender-based discrimination,
- ✓ Improve access to resources and opportunities,
- ✓ Recognize women’s contribution to the economy (both paid and unpaid), and
- ✓ Ensure inclusive growth.

1. Objectives of Gender Policy Measures

- ❖ **Promote gender equality** in education, employment, and income.
- ❖ **Empower women** through access to health, property, credit, and skill training.
- ❖ **Reduce gender-based violence and exploitation.**
- ❖ **Increase female participation** in the labour force and decision-making.
- ❖ **Recognize unpaid care work** as part of economic contribution.

2. Major Policy Measures in India

A. Constitutional and Legal Provisions

The Indian Constitution provides the foundation for gender equality:

Article	Provision
Article 14	Equality before law for men and women.
Article 15(1) & (3)	Prohibits gender discrimination; allows special provisions for women and children.
Article 16	Equal opportunity in public employment.
Article 39(a) & (d)	Equal right to livelihood and equal pay for equal work.
Article 42	Provision for maternity relief and humane working conditions.

These constitutional safeguards ensure that gender justice is a **fundamental right and policy principle**.

B. Health-Related Policy Measures

- i. **National Health Mission (NHM)** – Improves maternal and child health, provides affordable healthcare for rural women.
- ii. **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** – Promotes institutional deliveries and reduces maternal mortality.
- iii. **Poshan Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission)** – Aims to eliminate malnutrition and anaemia among women and children.
- iv. **Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Programme** – Focuses on safe motherhood and family planning.
- v. **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)** – Ensures access to healthcare in rural and backward areas, especially for women.

Gender Link:

These policies recognize women's reproductive roles and aim to ensure **safe motherhood, better nutrition, and equal healthcare access**.

C. Education-Related Policy Measures

- i. **National Policy on Education (1986) and NEP 2020** – Emphasize girls' education, gender sensitization, and equal opportunities.
- ii. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** – Universal elementary education with a focus on the enrolment of girls.
- iii. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** – Addresses the declining child sex ratio and promotes girls' education and survival.
- iv. **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)** – Residential schools for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- v. **National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE)** – Encourages girls to continue schooling beyond class VIII.

Gender Link:

Education empowers women, enabling them to **make independent life choices, participate in the economy, and challenge social barriers.**

D. Employment and Economic Empowerment Measures

- i. **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976** – Ensures equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender.
- ii. **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017** – Increases maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks, ensures crèche facilities.
- iii. **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001)** – Promotes women's participation in decision-making, education, and employment.
- iv. **Mahila E-Haat (2016)** – Online platform for women entrepreneurs to market their products.
- v. **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** – Provides credit to women entrepreneurs under the **Shishu, Kishor, and Tarun** categories.
- vi. **Stand-Up India Scheme** – Promotes entrepreneurship among women and marginalized groups.
- vii. **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM)** – Encourages self-help groups (SHGs) and rural women's livelihoods.

Gender Link:

These measures reduce financial dependence, encourage entrepreneurship, and bring women into the **formal economy.**

E. Social Protection and Safety Measures

- i. **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** – Legal safeguard against physical, emotional, and economic abuse.
- ii. **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013** – Ensures a safe and dignified workplace.
- iii. **Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006)** – Protect women from social exploitation.

- iv. **Ujjawala Scheme** – Rehabilitation of women and children victims of trafficking.
- v. **One-Stop Centre (OSC) Scheme** – Provides integrated support (medical, legal, and psychological) for women facing violence.

F. Political Empowerment Measures

- i. **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992–93)** – Reserve **33% of seats for women** in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies.
- ii. **Women’s Reservation Bill (2023)** – Provides for **33% reservation for women** in Parliament and State Legislatures.

Gender Link:

These measures promote **decision-making power** and **political visibility** for women, ensuring that gender concerns are represented in policymaking.

3. Impact of Policy Measures on Gender and the Economy

Area	Gender Outcome	Economic Impact
Health policies	Better maternal care, reduced mortality	Higher female productivity and longevity
Education policies	Increased literacy and skills	More human capital and innovation
Employment policies	Equal pay, job security, entrepreneurship	Growth in GDP and workforce diversity
Safety and legal measures	Reduced violence, greater confidence	Increased participation in public life

4. Challenges in Implementation

Despite progressive policies, challenges remain:

- ✓ Deep-rooted **patriarchal norms** restrict women’s participation.
- ✓ **Low awareness** among women about their rights and schemes.
- ✓ **Poor enforcement** of labour and safety laws.
- ✓ **Digital divide** and rural-urban disparities.
- ✓ Women’s work in the **unorganised sector** remains undervalued and unprotected.

5. Conclusion

Policy measures are essential instruments for achieving **gender equality and inclusive economic growth**. While India has introduced a wide range of gender-focused programs, their success depends on **effective implementation, awareness, and cultural change**.

A gender-responsive policy framework must:

- ✓ Recognize **women's unpaid labour**,
- ✓ Promote **equal access** to health, education, and finance,
- ✓ Ensure **representation in decision-making**, and
- ✓ Build a society where both men and women can contribute **equally to economic and social progress**.

Government and NGOs

Introduction

In the context of *Gender, the Economy and Related Issues*, both the **Government** and **Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)** play crucial roles in addressing the **social, economic, and institutional barriers** that prevent gender equality.

While the **Government** provides the **policy framework, laws, and financial support**, NGOs act as **grassroots agents of change** — directly working with women and marginalized communities to ensure these policies reach the ground level.

Together, they aim to:

- ✓ Empower women socially, economically, and politically,
- ✓ Reduce gender disparities in health, education, and employment, and
- ✓ Promote inclusive and sustainable development.

1. Role of the Government in Gender and Economic Development

The Government plays a **macro-level** role — it formulates **laws, policies, programs, and welfare schemes** to promote gender equality.

A. Policy Frameworks and Planning

The Government of India has consistently emphasized **women's empowerment** since the **Five-Year Plans**.

a. First–Fifth Plans (1951–1979): Focus on welfare — maternity care, nutrition, and family planning.

b. Sixth Plan (1980–85): Shift from welfare to **development**, recognizing women's economic role.

c. Eighth–Tenth Plans: Introduced **empowerment** as the main goal — access to credit, education, and employment.

d. Eleventh & Twelfth Plans: Focused on **inclusive growth** and **gender budgeting**.

B. Constitutional and Legal Safeguards

The government ensures equality through constitutional provisions like:

- **Article 14** – Equality before law
- **Article 15(3)** – Special provisions for women
- **Article 39(d)** – Equal pay for equal work
- **Article 42** – Maternity relief and humane working conditions

These provide the **legal foundation** for gender equality in the economy.

C. Government Schemes and Programs

1. Economic Empowerment

- a. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)** – Promotes Self-Help Groups (SHGs) among rural women.
- b. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** – Provides small loans to women entrepreneurs.
- c. Stand-Up India Scheme** – Encourages women and SC/ST entrepreneurs to start businesses.
- d. Mahila E-Haat & Udyam Sakhi Portal** – Digital platforms for women entrepreneurs.

2. Education and Skill Development

- a. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** – Promotes girl child survival and education.
- b. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)** – Residential education for girls from disadvantaged groups.
- c. Skill India Mission & PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** – Provides vocational skills for women.

3. Health and Nutrition

- a. Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** – Promotes safe motherhood and institutional deliveries.
- b. Poshan Abhiyan** – Aims to eliminate malnutrition and anaemia.
- c. National Health Mission (NHM)** – Improves access to affordable healthcare, especially for women.

4. Social Protection and Safety

- a. One Stop Centres** – Provide integrated support to women facing violence.
- b. Ujjawala Scheme** – For rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked women.
- c. Nari Adalats & Mahila Police Volunteers** – Ensure women's access to justice and legal aid.

5. Political Empowerment

- ✓ **73rd and 74th Amendments** – Reservation of **33% seats for women** in local bodies (Panchayati Raj & Municipalities).
- ✓ **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023)** – Provides **33% reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures**.

D. Gender Budgeting

Introduced in 2005–06, **gender budgeting** ensures that all ministries and departments allocate funds keeping **women's needs and impacts** in mind. It helps measure how much public spending benefits women and promotes gender-sensitive planning.

2. Role of NGOs in Gender and Economic Development

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) work at the **micro or grassroots level** — directly with communities. They fill the gap between **government policy and public implementation**, ensuring that women's voices are heard and their needs are met.

A. Functions of NGOs in Gender Issues

1. Awareness and Advocacy

NGOs conduct awareness campaigns about women's rights, health, education, and legal entitlements. They challenge social taboos like **dowry, female infanticide, and child marriage**.

2. Education and Skill Training

NGOs run **non-formal education centers**, adult literacy programs, and vocational training for women.

Example: SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) trains women in self-employment and microenterprise skills.

3. Health and Family Welfare

NGOs provide **reproductive health awareness, maternal care, nutrition guidance, and mental health support**.

Example: CARE India and Population Foundation of India (PFI) promote maternal and child health.

4. Economic Empowerment

Promote **micro-credit and self-help groups (SHGs)** that provide women with small loans to start businesses.

Example: **SEWA** and **MYRADA** (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency) pioneered microfinance and SHG movements.

5. Social Protection and Legal Aid

NGOs offer counselling, shelter homes, and legal help to victims of domestic violence and trafficking.

Example: **Snehalaya**, **Apne Aap**, and **ActionAid** focus on rehabilitation and women's safety.

6. Environmental and Rural Development

NGOs involve women in sustainable agriculture, water management, and environmental awareness — linking gender with ecology.

7. Monitoring and Collaboration

Many NGOs act as **implementation partners** for government schemes. They also monitor how effectively programs reach women and marginalized groups.

B. Prominent NGOs Working for Women in India

NGO	Area of Work
SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association)	Economic empowerment and labour rights for informal women workers
CARE India	Women's health, education, and livelihood
MAKAAM (Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch)	Rights of women farmers
Apne Aap Women Worldwide	Anti-trafficking and rehabilitation
Snehalaya	Shelter and support for women and children in distress

Pradan (Professional Assistance for Development Action)	Rural livelihood and self-help group formation
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3. Government–NGO Partnership

Government and NGOs increasingly work **hand in hand** to make gender policies effective.

Examples of Collaboration:

- **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM):** NGOs help mobilize women into self-help groups.
- **POSHAN Abhiyan:** NGOs conduct community-level awareness drives.
- **Swadhar Greh Scheme:** NGOs run shelter homes for women in difficult circumstances with government funding.
- **Skill Development Initiatives:** NGOs deliver training programs funded by government agencies.

Such collaborations help **bridge policy and practice**, ensuring **real benefits** reach women at the grassroots.

4. Challenges Faced

Challenge	Explanation
Bureaucratic hurdles	Complex approval and funding processes slow NGO work
Lack of coordination	Overlapping roles between government departments and NGOs
Funding constraints	Dependence on donations or irregular grants
Cultural barriers	Deep-rooted patriarchy limits women's participation
Limited accountability	Some NGOs lack transparency or professional management

5. Conclusion

Both **Government and NGOs** are vital in addressing gender-based inequalities in health, education, and the economy. The **Government** provides the **legal framework, financial support, and institutional mechanisms**, while **NGOs** ensure **grassroots implementation, awareness, and community participation**.

Together, they:

- Promote **women's empowerment**,
- Improve **access to health, education, and employment**, and

- Create a **gender-inclusive economy** where both men and women contribute equally to development.

Gender Budgeting

Gender Budgeting is the process of analysing government budgets from a gender perspective to ensure that public spending and policies promote gender equality and benefit both men and women fairly.

It does not mean a separate budget for women, but rather ensuring that every budgetary decision — expenditure, revenue, subsidy, or tax — considers its impact on women and men differently.

A. Definition (as per Government of India)

“Gender Budgeting is a method of **incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process** and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.”

B. Objectives of Gender Budgeting

1. **Promote Gender Equality** – Ensure women and men have equal access to government resources, benefits, and opportunities.
2. **Reduce Gender Gaps** – Address inequalities in education, health, employment, and income.
3. **Empower Women Economically** – Direct resources toward schemes that increase women’s participation in the labour market.
4. **Improve Accountability** – Make the government accountable for how budgetary allocations affect women.
5. **Mainstream Gender Concerns** – Integrate gender issues into all stages of policy planning and implementation.

C. Evolution of Gender Budgeting in India

Year	Development
2000-01	Concept introduced in India by the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).
2005-06	Gender Budgeting introduced in Union Budget for the first time.

2007	Gender Budget Cells (GBCs) established in various ministries and departments.
Present	Over 30 central ministries and many state governments prepare gender budgets.

D. Components / Methodology of Gender Budgeting

Gender budgeting in India operates through **two major components**:

1. Gender Budget Statement (GBS)

Every year, the Union Budget includes a **Gender Budget Statement**, divided into:

Part A: Schemes **100% women-specific** (e.g., Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Maternity Benefit Program).

Part B: Schemes where **at least 30% of funds** benefit women (e.g., Rural Development, Education, Health programs).

2. Gender Budget Cells (GBCs)

- ✓ Set up in ministries/departments to **analyse policies and schemes** through a gender lens.
- ✓ Ensure that **allocations, implementation, and outcomes** are gender-sensitive.
- ✓ Provide training, data collection, and evaluation for gender-based planning.

E. Examples of Gender-Sensitive Schemes

Sector	Scheme	Gender Focus
Health	Janani Suraksha Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana	Reduce maternal mortality, ensure safe childbirth
Education	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya	Improve girl child education and reduce dropouts
Employment	MGNREGA (one-third participation for women mandated)	Economic inclusion through wage employment
Entrepreneurship	Stand-Up India, Mudra Yojana for women	Encourage women-led enterprises

Safety	Nirbhaya Fund	Ensure women's safety and justice
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F. Importance of Gender Budgeting in the Economy

Aspect	Role of Gender Budgeting
Economic Efficiency	Utilizes full potential of human resources by empowering women.
Social Justice	Reduces gender disparities in income, education, and health.
Human Development	Improves literacy, nutrition, and life expectancy for women.
Inclusive Growth	Ensures that development benefits reach women equally.
Transparency and Accountability	Shows how funds are allocated and used for gender welfare.

G. Challenges in Implementing Gender Budgeting

1. **Lack of Gender-Disaggregated Data** – Difficult to measure exact benefits to women.
2. **Insufficient Awareness** – Many departments treat it as a formality, not as a planning tool.
3. **Poor Coordination** – Between ministries, state governments, and NGOs.
4. **Limited Capacity Building** – Officials often lack training in gender analysis.
5. **Monitoring Issues** – Weak evaluation of outcomes and real impact on women's lives.

H. Measures to Strengthen Gender Budgeting

1. **Regular Training and Workshops** for officials on gender analysis.
2. **Improve Data Collection** – Use gender-disaggregated indicators in surveys.
3. **Strengthen Gender Budget Cells** with clear responsibilities and resources.

4. **Involve Civil Society and NGOs** in monitoring and evaluation.
5. **Performance Audits** to assess real impact on gender equality.
6. **Encourage State-level Gender Budgets** to ensure localized gender planning.

I. IN Indian Experience — Snapshot (Recent Trends)

The **Gender Budget** in India has steadily increased, crossing **₹2 lakh crore in 2023–24**, accounting for around **5% of total expenditure**.

Major ministries involved: **Rural Development, Health, Education, Women and Child Development, Agriculture.**

States like **Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and Rajasthan** have developed their own gender budgeting frameworks.

J. Conclusion

Gender Budgeting is a **tool for social transformation and inclusive economic growth**. It ensures that every rupee spent by the government contributes not just to GDP, but also to **gender equality, women's empowerment, and human development**. When gender concerns are integrated into fiscal policy, the economy becomes **more equitable, sustainable, and just**.