Supposedly a geographer's greatest strength is the ability to provide a holistic perspective to the spatial phenomenon, geography as a discipline has remained constrained analytically due to the excessive dichotomisation which still dominates the subject. Import of new ideas, of new issues have rarely been given a proper thought. This is particularly true of the geographers fraternity in the third world. As a result, conceptual and theoretical implications are either grossly misrepresented or misinterpreted. Taking Schummacher's example- 'Small may be Beautiful'. But then, it is also important to consider what is appropriate from the given alternatives, before any judgement is passed on the appropriateness and role. The term woman, gender and feminism have become the major causality, as they have been used rather indiscriminately.

Inevitably, geographers have depended on a plethora of 'a priori' assumptions regarding the role of women and men (Monk and Hanson 1982). In a sense, such holistic traditions have been the product of geographers preoccupation with "the architectonic impulses ... a desire to create an ordered, hierarchical system" (Curry 1992). Issues of social differentiation and inequality never emerged as significant identities to warrant an explanation. Geographers have, all along "dealt with place, space and location as key organising concepts, ungendered, unclassed and unraced", (Hanson 1992:570).

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a major preoccupation with 'growth oriented' strategies, discerned both among the developing and developed countries (Gore 1984). This led to a minimalist concern for the human dimensions of development (Stohr and Taylor 1981; Toye 1987; Barnett 1988; Lipton and Toye 1991). The 1970s witnessed a major departure from the existing tradition, whereby women's issues were linked to development for the first time. Within the large rubric of 'welfare' approach
and 'antipoverty' programmes, the whole issue of 'equity' versus 'equality' came to the fore. The question of who benefits and who looses in the course of development became crucial. Both strategic and practical issues in development began to be highlighted. Failure of 'trickle down' effect was attributed largely to the fact that, planning had ignored women as participants in the development programmes. The result of all this was a new focus on the productive role of women and the need to allow them to have greater access to productive resources (Ostergaard 1992).

This was also the time when one witnessed far reaching changes in the public and social spheres as introduced by feminist movements in Europe and America. If one were to relate these changes to the transformations taking place in the field of geography, results were quite evident. Geography as a discipline could not remain insulated from the diverse changes being witnessed in the social sciences.

At the same time, rapid advances in the field of natural sciences called for a review of the social sciences. The only way was to make the discipline rigorous and scientific. Search for and 'exceptionalism' within geography sparked off a major quantitative revolution. It became the panacea for all the ills in the discipline. Table 1 below provides a bird’s eye view of the parallel changes taking place in the realm of geography.

Over the years, it was found that quantification in geography had led to a preoccupation with abstract spatial processes. There was an obsessive search for patterns and uniformities in the spatial distribution of a phenomenon. The geographers suddenly felt the need to put 'people' back onto the centre stage of geographical map. Subsequently, there was the emergence of three major strands in geography - the Behavioural, the Humanistic and the Lasswellian (Welfaristic) perspectives. Consideration of these three strands revealed that there was a logical evolution and extension in the field of geography from cognition, perception and choice, to lived experiences.

However, the nature of all Knowledge remained circumscribed by androcentricity. Although 'sex' as a variable existed in empirical research, it was strongly influenced by the positivist traditions. Sex as a variable remained insulated from the influence of feminism or gender.
Schematic Approach to the Emergence of Feminist Concerns in Geography

REACTION

1. Crisis in Social Sciences

OUTCOMES

‘Exceptionalism’ and its resultant Quantitative Revolution in Geography (Schaeffer, Gregory)

2. Quantitative Revolution in Geography

Obsessive Search for Spatial Regularities and Uniformities (Berry, Taaffee, Morril, Isard)

3. Abstract, Economic and Social Space

‘People’ again became the Centre of Concern for Geographers

CENTRE OF CONCERN BEING

BEHAVIOURIAL GEOGRAPHY

Definition, Cognition, Perception and Choice

HUMANISTIC GEOGRAPHY

People’s lived experience

LASSWELLIAN APPROACH TO GEOGRAPHY

Inequality - of welfare-who gets what and where?

along with Race and Class-GENDER came to the fore (Zelinsky, Smith, Pinch, Pacione, Thrift, Harvey, Castells, Rose, Monk, Hanson, Momsen, Young, Mollenieux, Bandarage)

Indeed, geography was not devoid of ‘sexism’, a moving account is presented below by the Royal Geographical Society. Major William Cross records the following on the question of admissibility of women as fellows in the Royal Geographical Society (1936-1937) as:

"It is not our desire to change needle and thread in woman’s hands into astrolabes and globes, neither do we consider it necessary that a women should retreat to a room papered with maps and ornamented globes... Their high moral standards allow them in our view to possess wide knowledge of geography on conditions that they do not attempt, through use of terms too coarse for a lady, to appear too eager a group of geographer. I am certainly willing to let them use such words as climate, zones and so forth, but I do not want them to scare me stiff quoting longitudes and latitudes at me."
Let them speak as much as they want about what they read in travellers tales and I will listen with pleasure... But I certainly do not want to see the day when a woman’s knowledge of the earth equals that of man"

Examples of such kind are diverse and widely available both in the First and Third Worlds. However there were exceptions to the rule and acknowledgements are due.


Carl ‘O’ Sauer (1969) recorded that ‘we speak of mankind as masculine collectively, but the great innovation and its elaboration was mainly done by woman : keeper of the hearth and provider of food". He also suggested that women were responsible for several other cultural development (Sauer 1961). In fact, androcentrism - where man as a measure of all things provided a distinctly masculine perspective and the results derived were universally generalised for women and men alike. Furthermore, extensive specialisation and fragmentation of the discipline has provided serious analytical constraints. These two factors became the main cause for the neglect of woman - of gender in geography.

Within the gamut of human systems and their relation to environment, geographers inadvertently neglected women’s role on the face of the earth. The regional and systematic traditions in geography, no doubt compared the agricultural practices of men, yet they ignored the women who were contributing to the food processing activities (Johnston 1991, 1993). Even models of urban geography did not spare such generalisations, where women’s travel patterns were taken for granted and as an appendage with men (Chorley and Haggett 1967; Wilson 1974).

The rapid growth of feminist movements in France, US and UK provided the only true response to ‘sexism’. Geography incorporated feminist
issues, thereby making a cause for equality, as against inequality. But then question of equity was a far cry from equality. In the 1960s, geographers never lagged behind in voicing their anger against racism, imperialism, etc. However the failure to treat gender issues was ironical. Monroe and Monroe (1974) states:

"Human nature condemns to a spatially limited positions in the world". This raises a more pertinent question of 'equity' - who benefits and who looses? As Kingsley Davis, in his assessment of inequalities has commented that, "although the greatest disregard of talent is assumed to arise from class and racial inequality, this source of loss probably is less than that involving women". It was this 'equity' consideration which brought the question of 'Gender' into a sharper focus in geography. This challenged the long established androcentrism in geography. Gender, here, refers to an interrelation of the socially constructed and differential set of roles that women and men perform (Ostergaard 1992; Sterling 1994). This is distinct from 'sex' - which is a purely biological attribute. Such biological differences between a female and a male do not necessarily determine their social roles. Consciously or unconsciously, these very gender roles were taken for granted. The result was that oversimplified generalisations have invariably led to an impoverishment of regional accounts because of a lack of gender balance and a feminist perspective in geography. Attempts are being made to correct this imbalance in the text books of economic, social and human geography.

Geographical work influenced by feminism was largely descriptive. It relied on concepts of gender role to explain differences between women and men's behaviour. While humanising the environment (Ley 1987), or even when providing a critique to it (Harvey 1987) the role of gender in geographical analysis was largely ignored. As it was with social sciences, so too in case of geography, feminism emerged to challenge the very bastion of knowledge. Ideological fuzziness was removed by highlighting various interconnections in daily life, namely public versus private (Anderson and Duncan 1983) and waged work versus domestic labour (Bowles and Klein 1983). Subsequently concepts of inequality, production and reproduction over space were broadened (Massey 1984). Gender identities were analysed over space (Bowlby, Foord and Mackenzie 1980; McDowell 1988). Thus "feminist research in social sciences clearly influenced and directed research methods in geography". Such research methods "embody a view of society and reflect the social conditions of the production of knowledge" (Massey and Meegan 1985; McDowell 1988).

Ironically enough, over the years, sex, gender and feminism have
been used inter-changeably in geographic literature and research. This has led to a lot of confusion, thereby blurring the concepts and theories which enhance explanations. Furthermore, the concepts and issues which develop and die in social sciences, remain partial at best marginal to geographical inquiry.

The Next section will summarise the concepts of woman, gender and feminism as used in geography. At the same time it would outline the thrust areas of research, whereby a state of art in gender and geography may emerge in the future.

Questions which naturally develop may be stated thus:

(1) Is the distinction between gender geography and feminist geography important?

(2) Does this distinction really matter?

(3) Why is that gender issues are not addressed as feminist issues?

(4) Is it necessary to introduce questions of gender in geography?

(5) Or is it imperative to incorporate feminist perspective in all human geographical concerns?

All of the above questions can be answered once the distinction between a feminist perspective, gender perspective and a geographical perspective becomes clear.

**Feminist Perspective on Geography**

Feminist concern in geography emerged primarily to remove blatant sexism within the discipline of geography. This ensured the removal of sex blindness which had pervaded the discipline since its inception. It was engaged in eliminating invisibility of women vis-a-vis men. Such a feminist critique was total, implying a restructuring of the entire plethora of assumptions. Challenging the separate world of men and women - of androcentrism. Such a perspective also considered the issue of marginalisation, of oppression of women. In a sense, the relevance of feminism to geography was expressed both theoretically and empirically.

This approach had its own attendant problems which came to be questioned. There was duplication of traditional research in its methods and
Knowledge of women was added to existing knowledge of men (McDowell 1988-158). In most cases, women began to be evaluated against a male norm, rather than a female norm. Dissatisfaction was expressed in respect of the "qualities or attributes of femaleness and feminity and maleness or masculinity, as somehow natural and unchanging" (McDowell 1988). Thus, conventional method of the positivists tended to reinforce such ideas. The need was to consider the social basis of inequality. Overemphasis on structural factors highlighting the differences between Women and Men implied denying the validity of individual experiences. Research 'on' women implied 'integration' into the curriculum. Inevitably, emphasising differences between female and male categories forced us to overlook important similarities. Integration of women led them to becoming more invisible than before (Spender 1983). Male/female monoliths in research variable became primary means to reenforce such invisibility. Even substituting male research objects with female research objects did not necessarily transform the philosophy of the researcher. There was greater danger of "fallacious reasoning" (Dogan and Rokkan 1969) as well as "contextual stripping" (Parlee 1979) to provide over stretched generalisations.

The main thrust areas of research being:

1. Research which shows the importance of women’s paid work in both the first and third worlds (WGSG 1984).

2. Link between patriarchal assumptions and practices relating to the family and the spatial organization and planning of western cities (McDowell 1983).

3. How do women live and work in urban and rural areas?

4. Geographical study of the distribution of women’s secondary economic activities in the various regions.

The questions posed being:

1. Is it necessary to make women’s contributions to civilization greater than that of men, to compensate for its neglect in the past?

2. Is feminism a moral or a humanitarian issue?

3. Is feminist geography primarily there to stress the importance of women’s role in development?

Finally to reiterate Peake (1986) "it would be in the fitness of things
to introduce specialist courses in geography to remove sexism, rather than create separate courses". A more sensitive handling of women's issues is essential to developing a non-sexist, if not a feminist human geography. Both geography and feminism are concerned with differentiation. Geography, while concentrating on areal differentiation ignored gender issues, whereas feminism while dwelling up on gender ignored spatial differences. This then brings us to the next step of clarification, namely gender perspective in geography.

**Gender Perspectives on Geography**

A gender informed research would need to question how changes in gender roles would affect the spatial/ecological contexts in which women and men live and do their daily work. In geography, the spatial and a functional separation of the world of work and the world of home have always been considered as part of the natural order of things. This has reflected and reinforced a gender-based Division of Labour, which is not natural but is socially created and reproduced. Equity considers the question that development is enhanced only if women have an access to wage income and only if they were increasingly involved in decision making with regard to income generation and utilisation. The separation between production and reproduction has its impact on gender relation and in the organization of space in everyday life. As Hayford (1974) and Rose (1983) suggest, much of the inquiry into the role of women is a question of space.

In this perspective, it is **gender** rather than **women** which is the unit of analysis. Gender relations are socially construed rather than biologically determined. The focal point of this perspective being the essential difference between a female experience from that of the male. In order to theorise inequality, spatiality and differentiation in geographic research, gender must become an important dimension of social differentiation and social inequality. Rather than harping on the description of variations in women's role over space, the social basis of unequal gender relations need to be highlighted. Here women's experience are collectivised, rather than generalise their oppression (McDowell, 1988). Theoretical constructs following such line of reasoning found expression in concepts 'realism' (Bhaskar 1979) as adopted by geographers (Sayer 1984; Sayer and Morgan 1985). The relevance of intensive methods, of interactive, interpretative interviews, qualitative, ethnographic accounts over extensive research methods were highlighted (Mies 1979 and Sayer 1984).

While the naturalised space was replaced by a de-naturalised space after the quantitative revolution, the 1980s saw a reassertion of space within
social theory (McDowell 1988; Cooke 1989; Gregory 1989; Soja 1989). Space has now become a universal feature where social life is produced and reproduced (Rose 1993).

The main thrust areas of research being:

1. Women’s role in production and reproduction in peripheral areas.
2. Questions of patriarchy, and of social and sexual division of labour.
3. How do women live and work in cities?
4. How does third world urbanization affect the employment opportunities of women and men?
5. How do changes in urban and regional labour markets affect women’s employment opportunities?

The question naturally arises whether one should focus on gender and women rather than on feminist issues? The fact that feminist geography still lacks a cohesive theoretical unity is well taken.

However, a truly geographical perspective on women shall focus on women as a geographical force and on women’s use of space as influenced by locational decisions. Such a perspective implies spatial variations in women’s employment mobility, etc. Earlier the issue was; what is it that we not know about women that a geographic perspective might help us to discover. Now the question is: what do we know of women on which a geographic perspective might shed new light? These questions become relevant when we need to go beyond trends and patterns in an effort to explain the process (Pacione 1987).

Gender perspective identifies such a process. The idea is not to make women’s contribution to civilization greater than man’s to compensate for its neglect in the past. Feminist perspective implies bringing women into sharper focus. For any sensitive handling of women’s issues it is essential to develop a gender perspective. In a sense, feminism is more than moral or humanitarian. Indeed, if we study economic participation of male population, we might as well study economic participation of the female population. Just harping on "gender issues without feminist insights would only lead to deradicalisation and marginalisation of the whole project" (Johnson 1955, Williamson - Fien 1985).
It is essential to integrate feminist analysis and gender sensitivity into courses of geography. Men are as much gendered as women are and taking gender into account is taking men into account. This is not to suggest that a focus on gender divisions need to replace other perspectives. Rather it must become part and parcel of analysis of social division, just as class and race have become. This would greatly enhance the explanatory power of geography. While it is no doubt true that, as Brecht would surmise: "women have not been seen by geographers" (McDowell 1988:155), it is now all the more evident that "geographers need to begin to believe in the importance of gender in order to see it" (Bondi 1990).

References


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