

# Pushing the Boundaries of Gender Studies

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## Abstract:

It goes beyond any shadow of doubt that the study of 'Gender Studies' is not to be merely confined within the boundaries of language and literary aspect – rather it has become a matter of discussion although the universe and hence the universal truth embedded with the topic of discussion therein is to be explored. Feminism is not a modern concept through the word is not used before eighteenth century in Europe. It is to be mentioned that an utopian socialist used the term feminism in 1837, which itself clears that the area or the discipline is interdisciplinary. The term feminism had its own implications during the 18th century. The sands of time however brought about a varied and abrupt change in its implication providing a new dimension to the term. We can say that it is as old as the existence of human beings on this earth. In Europe it is traced back to the "Beguine Movement." This paper aims to examine and elucidate as well as explore the modus operandi of conducting a research on Gender Studies barring the differences and limitations to language and literature, in addition to other fields of study inclusive in humanities and social sciences.

**Keywords:** Gender Studies, Multidisciplinary Research, Humanities, Social Science, Political Science, Gender Politics, Sexuality Studies

## I. Introduction

Gender studies form part and parcel of modern study curriculum owing to the fact that the need for enhanced awareness on gender and related problems has been felt, both by academicians as well as the student community, perhaps this is the consequence of the increasing rate of atrocities committed towards women as well as transgender and other gender minorities of late which has culminated to commit to such a bent of mind. Gender studies have been proved to be the latest framework of interdisciplinary studies which is helpful in having a better understanding of socio economic and political scenario as well as the latest global issues faced by the society and the community. Such a positive understanding induces a better thought for an optimistic action towards finding out a solution to global issues faced, by and large, by one and all. This makes us point out that the latest issues relating to sex and gender as well as other issues pertaining to the

social and political network are to be noted as a path towards activism and change and this change implies a change for the better. This study undermines the interdisciplinary approach towards recent trends in women studies and feminist theories which bears a traditional outlook towards research and study in a social science panorama. A trans-multi-disciplinary approach is coined and gradually developed by way of in-depth studies on the subject which is inclusive of methodical research work. The fast changing and multifaceted and composite social and cultural framework of society has force the dire and urgent need for an in-depth study into gender issues and the problems and constraints faced therein which is susceptible to fast change depending upon the individual and the social and cultural panorama which the researcher belongs to. This kind of change in outlook is a prerequisite towards the creation of better environment, a better social and cultural panorama which is to be adapted so as to bring about a change in this background as cited. As

cited above, gender studies has become an inclusive part of studies of scholastic as well as collegiate education owing to the factors mentioned thereof and it goes without saying that mere mainstreaming of the term Gender is uninclusive of the subject on Gender Studies. It has further implications pertaining to the social cultural network of the society and the human community. Recent developments in social and political network have inculcated the inner feeling of the need towards the study of gender and sexuality issues which can be quoted in large number.

There have been instances when gender studies have been included under the theory of women's studies. But it goes without saying that gender studies and women's studies are two different terms, and one is incomplete without the other. That is, the theory of women's studies concentrates and elucidates on issues and writing related exclusively with women whereas gender studies reflects and underlines the aspects relating to all genders and this includes women as well. Be it women's studies or gender studies, the study confines itself and gives importance to the life and writing of women on the one hand. On the other, the study relates to genders in its exclusive sense. When this study is concentrated writings and related work it becomes a literary form of research. On the contrary, a multi-disciplinary approach gives the research an empirical outlook.

The close of eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth century saw the birth and growth of feminist theories in the academia which were later propounded as women's studies. The sands of time were witnessed the birth and growth of gender studies which were, hitherto, classified under language and literature. Problems and constraints relating to gender were responsible for the reopening of a new branch of study termed as 'Gender Studies' inclusive of issues relating to all genders in the social network.

The branch of gender studies has been conducive for the creation and upliftment of theory of distinction between the two terms viz. gender and sex. The traditional views on gender were prevalent since the life of mankind but the exclusive study on gender and the introduction of new branch of study for the purpose therein gave a new definition and dimension to the term called sex. Herein sex as biological and anatomical and gender as socially constructed and culturally manifested. That is gender was social construction and cultural manifestation of prevailing traditional views on the term called sex.

One of Butler's major contributions to gender studies and to the study of social relations and the operation of power across disciplines is her critique of sex and sexuality as well as gender as performative. Sex, as much as gender, is produced by the processes and practices through which it is defined and classified. Butler's (1990,1993) work has generated questions and debates about the materiality of sex, the fluidity and the transgressive properties of sex, gender and sexuality. Debates within gender studies about the nature of sex and gender invoke the need for interdisciplinary approaches as well as drawing upon a range of disciplines and theoretical frameworks. (Woodward, 2015)

Research centres on Gender Studies have made use of empirical methodology and have relied on scholarly bases with respect to their field of study. This is true in the case of any branch of study, viz. language and literature, political science, sociology, etc. Though such research trends have been relied upon in view of political network/political makeup. This is the trend witnessed in latest advanced research work. Although feminist theories propounded from time to time have formed the basis of gender studies and women's studies, a shift towards an intellectual trend is to be noted and, hereby, cited for understanding and further action - liberal, Marxist, socialist and

radical strands of the women's movement to the wider inclusion of black feminism, ethnicization, racialization, and issues of bodies and corporeality, disability, sexuality, class defined and geographically located inequalities. This makes the face clear that any study in the field of humanities is complete only subject to multi-inter-disciplinary being inclusive.

'Gender Studies' and 'Queer Studies' are being increasingly inter-related. The issues relating to sexuality minorities are by and large included under gender politics. For instance, it is to be mentioned that the discourses on transgender laws and the LGBTIQ+ rights are deliberated in detail under gender studies and queer studies as well. As a matter of fact, the study of sexuality minorities cannot be included under gender studies but the discourse on transgender rights are a part and parcel of queer studies. However, a discussion on inter-changeability gives rise to trans-disciplinary research.

The emergence of sexuality studies as a discipline gave rise to the studies on the issues and policies for the betterment of the life of the sexuality minorities. Researches in Sexuality Studies and Gender Studies separately will help in the upliftment of the marginalised communities.

Gender has become the preferred term for referring to social difference, partly because of its wider scope and remit than sex, which has been assumed to be biological and anatomical and to challenge the apparent limitations of biological reductionism (Woodward, 2015). However, there is room for a detailed emphasis on sexuality politics in the light of sex and gender. Gender studies form separate branch of study which was hitherto gender studies were inclusive of women's studies and the problems and issues relating to gender have culminated in the growth of a separate branch of study. Women's studies were instrumental towards the formation and growth of a separate branch of study based on gender,

providing greater emphasis to gender policies and programmes and thus, creating new and innovative inputs towards the eradication of gender related issues and creating a new framework for a civilised socio-cultural society in the wake of the eradication of misogyny, sexism and patriarchy.

Gender Studies have been conducive enough towards the transformation of masculinity as well as the existing stereotypical masculinity by way of interdisciplinary approach in research.

The term gender had been traditionally included to women and in accordance with the nep-liberal view, and the problems so related are applicable to women only. In the event of framing of a policy, due care is not being initiated to all genders, only women and men are considered as its contributors and hence they are, alone taken into account. This new branch of study has been responsible for challenging the gender binaries in the public arena. Debates on this framing of policies have resulted in growth of scientific temper and thereby a scientific classification of gender with the assistance of some of the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary capacities of gender studies.

## II. Conclusion

The classification of women's studies and gender studies as two separate branches of research have provided an insight into the modalities of both studies of knowledge with separate exclusive features. The increasing quantum of problems relating to gender has forced to give birth to a new separate branch of topic. An integral and interdisciplinary approach is called for as part of research in the case of gender studies, in the light of constrains and problems faced by the incumbents concerned which have been, nevertheless on the enhancing trend. The modern phase of social and cultural network has forced greater impact and emphasis on the aspect of gender, wherein all kinds of genders have been

classified and grouped under one discipline. An interdisciplinary approach is called for in the context of increasing constraints faced by incumbents and hence there is a inconsequential need for an multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach under research methodology.

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