

# Types of Feminism

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## 1) Liberal Feminism:

- \* There exists gender inequality which can be ended when women get the same rights as men, through legal, political, educational and other reforms within the system.
- \* Equality = Equal opportunity in every field.
- \* The ideal sex/gender system would be one wherein each individual can act as a free and responsible moral agent.
- \* Individuals should be free to choose lifestyle without being judged.
- \* It is consistent with the dominant American philosophical tradition of liberal democracy and capitalism, with its reformist orientation, and its appeals to the value of choice, individualism, responsibility and equality of opportunity.

\* Liberal feminists call for the formation of a society in which each individual can act as a free and responsible agent and be able to live the life that is most suitable for him or herself.

\* Puts emphasis on freedom of choice and equality between the sexes, while pushing for change. It is more reformist in agenda than revolution as it does not question the basic roots of inequality and challenge the present sex/gender system itself.

- Fundamental Tenants:-

\* All individuals have certain essential features. they are capable of achieving rationality, moral agency and self-realization.

\* These qualities can be exercised through legal recognition of universal rights.

\* The inequalities between the sexes are not based on any natural differences but are the consequence of the socially constructed patterns of behaviour.

\* Gender equality can be achieved through an organized appeal to the human capacity to be moved by rational arguments.

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## History of Liberal Feminism:-

- \* Developed largely out of the liberal school of thought.
- \* 1792 → 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' → By Mary Wollstonecraft  
"Women should have the same opportunities as men, in order to develop to their full human potential."  
(Mary Wollstonecraft)
- "Given equal opportunities to education, women would also develop into rational beings."  
(Mary Wollstonecraft)
- Equal political and economic opportunities as well emphasized by Taylor and Mill a century later.
- They believed that the power to vote not only would allow women to express their own political views but that it would also enable and facilitate change in larger political systems and structures which are oppressive.  
(John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor)
- They demanded women's suffrage.

\* Women's movement in the U.S.A was closely tied to the abolitionist movement.

\* Several members of the suffrage movement were strong abolitionist and began organizing for women's rights.

\* 1840: World Anti-Slavery Convention  
- Many feminists attended  
- None of the women were allowed to speak.

\* 1848: Seneca Falls Convention organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

\* Their main focus were:  
- Women's right to vote  
- Changing inheritance and divorce laws  
- Economic inequality of women

\* 1920: Right to vote in U.S.A

\* 1963: "The Feminist Mystique" -> A book by Betty Friedan.

\* The book focused on the experience of white, heterosexual, middle-class women who found the traditional roles of wife and mother unsatisfying.

\* She termed this "problem with no name"

\* Friedan argued that they need to find more meaningful roles in full time public work force, but it is important to note that she did not demand a sacrifice of motherhood and marriage for a career.

### Impacts:

\* Liberal feminism brought to light the central role marriage and family play in re-enforcing gender norms and stereotypes in society.

• Critiqued the traditional nuclear family structure which they claim is discriminatory towards women.

• Women who do take up careers suffer the additional burden of household labour along with maintaining successful jobs.

• Thus, the traditional gender roles of women as caretakers and men as breadwinners continue to persist even when women enter the workforce.

## - Main Ideas:

- \* Another important tenet of liberal feminism is the belief that all women have the right to privacy, and a right to their own bodies.
- \* The basis of marriage was primarily to procreate and extend the family line.
- \* It is only in the modern discourse that marriage came to be known as a means of having a relationship based on love and friendship.
- \* Thus, traditionally, wives were legally considered the property of their husbands with no rights over their own bodies.
- \* Control over pregnancy, abortion, birth control, etc rested in the hands of the husbands or families rather than with women themselves.
- \* This became one of the rallying points for the Women's Liberation Movement, who demanded complete autonomy for women to make their own decisions regarding their lives.

## Critique of Liberal Feminism:

- \* Accused of being racist and classist, neglected the problems of colored women who faced medical experimentation and sterilization in the U.S.A.
- \* Accused of being heterosexist by radical feminists, accused of <sup>being</sup> anti-gay and anti-lesbianism.
- \* Criticized for the idea of 'super woman', capable of successfully combining marriage, family and career. For critics it was considered as very oppressive.
- \* It has been failed to recognize the systemic nature of gender inequality in society. They only focus on independent factors of inequality such as sexism, discrimination, sexual harassment, unequal pay, and therefore do only partial analysis.

It fails to change existing social systems, and enters into them hoping for change.

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# Radical Feminism 8-

- \* The basic argument of radical feminism is that men are responsible for and benefit from the exploitation of women. (Eiddens 2009)
- \* The analysis of patriarchy - the systematic domination of women by men - is of central concern to this branch of feminism.
- \* Patriarchy is perceived to be a universal phenomenon that has existed trans-historically and trans-culturally.
- \* Within this system, men learn how to hold women in contempt, see them as non-human, and to control them. (Ritzer 2011).
- \* Radical feminists see in every social arrangement - be it class, caste, race, or ethnicity - the workings of patriarchy.
- \* Their entire politics is based on challenging and eliminating the patriarchal system.



The basis of radical feminism is their analysis of the interlinkages between Sex and power.

While 'sex' had always been discussed, either overtly or covertly, it was not until radical feminism's bold declaration that "the personal is political", that women's sexuality became the subject of much political analysis.

\* Main Tenets:-

- \* Women were, historically, the first oppressed group.
- \* Women's oppression is the most widespread, existing nearly in every society.
- \* Women's oppression is the deepest and the hardest form of oppression to eradicate and cannot be removed by other social changes such as the abolition of class society.
- \* 1949: Simon de Beauvoir's → The Second Sex (1949) → In France, re-opened the subject of sex and power to feminist analysis.
- \* It was followed by Betty Friedan's Feminine Mystique (1963) in America, which heralded the second wave of organized feminism.

- \* At around this time, a group of women who were discontent with their sub-ordinate position within the New Left soon formed the Women's Liberation Movement.

## History of Radical Feminism

- \* Women's Liberation Movement eventually split into two groups based on their differing political leanings, the Liberal and Radical feminists.
- \* Dissatisfied by the political demands of the liberal feminists, by the late 1960s, small groups of women began meeting regularly to discuss the effects of male supremacy not only in the spheres of women's professions, education, and public life, but more importantly on their "private" lives as well.
- \* These early discussions (which soon evolved into the technique called consciousness raising) led to these women sharing and speaking up about the everyday violence that they each suffered and of the sexual shames and terrors they had all carried throughout their lives.
- \* However, the purpose of these discussions was not simply to find some personal solutions

to their problems.

- \* Instead, these discussions were held in order to understand the social basis for their problems, including the sexual, and then to do something to change it - for everyone.
- \* As emphasized in the article "The Personal is Political" by Carole Hanisch, consciousness raising (CR) was not therapy.
- \* On the contrary, it was envisaged ~~that~~ as a political tool, modelled on the Chinese practice called Speaking Bitterness.
- \* Its purpose was to challenge the accepted notions about women which had been built by men, since traditionally they were the so called experts on women and gained from perpetuating certain ideas about them.
- \* Thus, in order to truly understand the situation of women, radical feminists sought to base their analysis on information they could gather and trust.

- \* They began to question all the sweeping statements that had been made in the past about women and question the interests they served, and began to substitute these with their own experiences of being women.

## Impact:-

- \* It led to sexual politics being recognized as a public issue.
- \* For the first time, it so clearly brought together the private and public, the personal and political (Wills, 1984)
- \* One of the most important ideas espoused by the radical feminists was in fact that 'the personal is political.'
- \* The personal is political means that women's private experiences of oppression (e.g. domestic violence, discrimination within the family) are not isolated instances of oppression but part of a larger system of institutional inequality (Shapiro, 2007)

- \* Through the CR groups, issues such as rape, abortion, domestic abuse and sexuality (which were previously considered personal problems) became politicized issues for Feminist movements.
- \* While physical and sexual violence against women are obvious forms of oppression, radical feminism highlighted the covert and complex forms of oppression - seen in the exacting standards of beauty and fashion, in the control of reproductive rights, the oppressive ideals of motherhood. The ideals of chastity and purity, heteronormativity, sexual harassment in the workplace, gynecological practices, unpaid labour, domestic violence, pornography etc.
- \* Due to their stance that sexuality is the principal basis of male power in which uneven gender relations are constructed, a major part of the, ~~a major part of the~~ radical feminist discourse was their objection to pornography, which objectifies and dehumanizes woman, making them vulnerable to violence.
- \* American scholar Andrea Dworkin and lawyer ~~that~~ Catherine Mackinnon worked to introduce anti-pornography legislation in the U.S., and

defined pornography as "the graphic sexually explicit sub-ordination of women ... shown as filthy or inferior; bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual" (Tong 2008)

\* When faced with the objection that people can separate virtual reality from reality, radical feminists argued that pornography often functions in the same way that advertising does.

\* Although there is no law stating that women need to look like the supermodels they see on television, there is a standard of beauty being created, which they feel pressured to live up to.

\* In much the same way, they argue that pornography creates an ideal for sexually acceptable behaviour which is discriminatory towards women.

— On Patriarchy—

\* Patriarchy was established and maintained through the use of violence, rape, sexual abuse, prostitution, sadistic pornography, female infanticide, clitorrectomy etc.

- \* Since men have the advantage of physical force, they use it to establish control over women. This, according to radical feminists, is the reason for the almost universal existence of patriarchy.
- \* Men create and maintain patriarchy not only because they have the means to do so (physical power) but because doing so serve their own interests in multiple ways. Women are exceptionally effective means of satisfying male heterosexual desire.
- \* Their bodies are essential to the production of children, who satisfy both practical and neurotic needs for men (Ritzer-2011). Women also make an inexpensive labour force, one without cost.
- \* Women are also looked upon as ornamental signs of male status and power.
- \* The fact that they make great companions to both the child and the adult male, that they are pleasing partners, sources of emotional support.

- \* Women's inferior position re-inforces the male's sense of central social significance, makes certain that men everywhere benefit from keeping them compliant.

## D Demands of Radical Feminism

- \* Overthrow of the system of patriarchy rather than demanding reformatory changes within the system.
- \* It can happen through consciousness raising among women and by dumping men's tools of submission of womanhood chastity, etc and by increasing their ties with other women.
- \* Once such a sisterhood is established, it would make it easier for women to confront any aspect of patriarchy that they come across.
- \* Lesbian feminism, a strand of feminism which grew out of radical feminism, contends that erotic/political commitment to women is essential for the battle against patriarchy.



## Criticism :-

- \* Ignores the role of class, race and ethnicity in maintaining and reinforcing the patriarchal system. By believing that other political issues such as class and race were secondary to their political goals, the radical feminist was overwhelmingly white and middle class. (Wills)
- \* It saw 'women' as an undifferentiated, homogenous category rather than a heterogenous category separated by race, class and ethnicity.
- \* Does not adequately address structural oppression, nor does it take into account an intersectional approach to understanding women's experiences.
- \* Intersectionality Theories :- Women are differentially oppressed on basis of class, race, caste, sexual preference, etc. (Ritzer, 2011)
- \* Radical feminism fails to adequately explain "patriarchy", however, focuses mainly on it.

# Marxist Feminism.

## - Background :-

- \* A Species of feminist theory and politics that takes its theoretical bearings from Marxism, notably the criticism of capitalism as a set of structures, practices, institutions, incentives, and sensibilities that promote the exploitation of labor, the alienation of human beings, and the debasement of freedom.
- \* For Marxist feminists, empowerment and equality for women cannot be achieved within the framework of capitalism.
- \* In 1840s, Marxism has analyzed unpaid, reproductive, "women's work" as an integral part of capitalism.
- \* 1884 : "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" → Book by Friedrich Engels. In which Engels argued that woman is an important means of unpaid labour and household management. Her work lost value as a private source only under capitalism. Therefore, structure of capitalism is responsible for women's oppression.

\* In the early 1900s socialist feminists demanded a better understanding of how reproduction became women's work and demanded end to monogamous marriage and objectification in the family.

\* Marxist feminists saw social class as the factor responsible for women's oppression.

### - Main Tenets:-

- \* Inequalities created within different institutions including the family led to oppression.
- \* Women were oppressed through system of capitals and private property.
- \* Capitalist system should be replaced with communism to end women's oppression.

### - How capitalism exploits women?

- \* Housewives are vital to capitalism.
- \* Unpaid work in the home maintains bosses and workers and reproduces the next generation of bosses and workers.
- \* Women take care of elders and children which is unpaid labor and not included in economy or gdp.

## - Relations of Production:- (First Aspect)

- \* Women are disadvantaged in the labour market as they are paid less, have fewer options of work, and employed less frequently than men.
- \* They are engaged in unpaid domestic work at home.
- \* Women's labour is 'reserve labour'.
- \* During the great wars women were employed only until the wars lasted.
- \* House service is necessary for capitalism as mothers raise future workers.

## - Relations of Reproduction (Second Aspect)

- \* Men's relationship with each other was through women, demanding women as brides and offering their labour in return.
- \* It led to objectification of women who were reduced to their reproductive worth.
- \* Children are considered as the property of

husbands, even as they are born by women, who goes through pain and labours.

- \* Patriarchy was an old system which existed before private property and monogamy.
- \* Exchange of women, abduction and rape were means through which female sexuality was sought to be controlled.
- \* This control was institutionalized at several levels: work, culture, custom, religion and education.

→ Both Reproductive and Productive ideas Combined:  
(Third Aspect)

- \* Marriage with a man from the capitalistic class can raise a woman's standard of living but does not make her a member of that class she is not the owner of ~~the~~ means of production.
- \* Her position is not dependent on class relationship but on her self relations of production with her husband. (Christine Delphy)

\* Women's work in home is timeless and limitless with no job description it in direct benefit to men.

\* Employed women who earn are also expected to work in a household.

- Relations of Production and Re-production:  
(Juliet Mitchell)

- Neither of production and reproduction is solely responsible for women's exploitation.

- Social and economic structure that comprising of four levels that perpetuates male dominance and ensures female sub-ordination.

- These four levels are:

1. Production → control due to nature of housework
2. Reproduction
3. Socialization
4. Sexuality

\* Women are paid less and also employed in low wage jobs such as nurses, led to further sub-ordination.

- \* Even vocational centres for women offer low job trainings as sewing, beauty making, baby sitting, receptionist, nursing etc.
  - \* All these involved long hours of work and low pay.
  - \* Reproduction was linked to child rearing and bearing, family is the production site.
  - \* Socialization was women's responsibility.
  - \* Women have also very little control over their sexuality, which led to control over their movements, relationships and nature of work.
  - \* Women should be freed from child bearing, child rearing and sexually dissatisfying relationships.
- Critique of Marxist Feminism:-
- \* Ignores the displays of agency of individual
  - \* Women are not just passive receivers of what the society provides for them
  - \* Women are actively engaged with systems.
  - \* Overemphasis on labour market and economy.
  - \* Influenced Standpoint Theory which states that

Feminist social science should be practiced from the standpoint of women or particular groups of women.

## Men's Feminism

- \* Feminism should study men as well, and their relation to women and to treat both as a gender.
- \* A theory of 'masculinity' should be developed to study and understand men.
- \* Feminists acknowledge that ~~the~~ men are at full potential to oppress women, as men have more power, but they can also oppress other men.
- \* Men feminists support the struggle of women for a range of social relations.
- \* These are the men who are actively involved to end oppression of women by other men.



## Psychoanalytic Feminism:

- \* Developed on the basis of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory.
- \* Women's oppression is rooted within psychic structures and re-inforced by the continual repetition or reiteration of relational dynamics formed in infancy and childhood.
- \* Psychoanalysts wanted to alter the experiences of early childhood and family relations, as well as linguistic patterns that produce and re-inforce masculinity and femininity.
- \* They addressed political and social factors affecting the development of male and female subjects.
- \* Two schools of thought:
  - Freudian: Mostly Anglo-American, more concerned with the production of male dominance and the development of gendered subjects in societies where women are responsible for mothering.

- Lacanian :- Mostly French, they analyze links between gendered identity and language.

\* Early Freudians like Alfred Adler influenced feminist thought emphasized the uniqueness of each human being over rigidly gendered development tracks and explained women's psychic pathologies as generated and sustained by their inferior social status within patriarchy, rather than biologically determined.

\* Later Freud feminists criticize the traditional family structure in which primarily women assume care-taking responsibilities, according to Nancy Chodorow who wrote in ~~his~~ her book 'The Reproduction of Mothering', that girls attach themselves to mother, so they are more intimate and less prepared to take on public life. While boys attach themselves to their father and become gifted, socially powerful and less intimate. One solution of this problem as argued by Nancy is co-parenting. It would require parental leave, adequate compensation for part-time work, quality child caring staff etc.

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- Lacanian Thought:-
- Put emphasis on self-construction and change of language, like phallus is symbolic of the child's entry under the law of father.
- Women need to be liberated from this phallogocentric culture.
- Women should forego neutral, scientific masculine language and embrace a rebellious creativity based in subjective experience of the body and the feminine.