

Chapter One

Feminism and Women's Movements

The Central objective of this sequel is the theoretical investigations carried out at a somewhat abstract level and to arrive at a deeper understanding of feminist contentions. Feminism comprises a number of social, cultural and political movements, theories and moral philosophies concerned with gender inequalities and equal rights for women. It may be understood as theory-systems of concepts, propositions and analysis that describe and explain women's situations and experiences and support recommendations about how to improve them.¹⁹ Such theory is distinguished from non-feminist thinking about women or gender by its general respect for women's own perspectives and authority, and its persistent attention to the workings of power structures which privilege men. So, it is a politics to change the existing power relations between women and men in the society. Different areas of life like family, education, worlds of work and the power relations of society structure all politics, culture and leisure. These power relations determine what we are, what we can become and what the limitations are. There is a conviction that women are oppressed and discriminated and an explicit purpose of feminism is to promote the interests of women. The aim is not to substitute women from men but to give the rightful place to women as a sex in society. The driving

¹⁹ See Suchila sing, *Feminism-Theory, Criticism, Analysis*, International, Delhi,1997

force behind women's movements is feminism. It is a movement to assert the interests of women as a sex. This does not mean that feminists want to dominant men or that they are anti-men. Basically, feminism is a humanistic concern. It is a demand to restore to women their humanity. Feminism is about liberation. A feminist perspective is to become aware of the situation of women, of the relation of women to the world, of the oppression and discrimination to which women have been subjected. There are many definitions of what a feminist is, but the simplest and probably the best is what is listed in most dictionaries "A person who believes in the full equality of women and men". Thus, it means that anyone male or female who supports this idea can be a feminist. The goal of feminism is equality and it means that women do what men have done (be fire fighters and corporate executives) and that men do what women have done (be stay at home as fathers and secretaries). It also means that women's supports should have as much support as men's supports and that neither men nor women should be afraid of walking home alone at night. Feminism means the full social, political and economic equality of men and women. The first idea that is likely to occur in the course of any historical thinking about feminism is that feminism is a social force. The emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics depends on the understanding that, in all societies which divide the sexes into differing cultural, economic or political spheres, women are less valued than men. Feminism also depends on the premise that women can consciously and collectively change their social place. While many languages do not

have noun 'feminism', and 'feminism' as a term for the politics of equal rights for women did not come into English use until the 1890s. The word feminism can stand for a belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to eradicate sexist domination and to transform society. So that while most writers agree that in Britain feminism, as a group of political and social movements, probably dates from the 17th century, feminism as a body of answers to the 'question of woman' has a more diffuse and considerably more long-standing existence. The feminisms that constitute 'feminism'- from social reform and suffrage campaigns through to academic feminist theory-are not indistinct. ²⁰A broad frame is needed to encompass political activism as well as theory; to enclose feminist grass roots initiatives, the circling of Greenham Common missile base by 30,000 women in 1982, the suffragette banners, the disruption of Miss America pageants, and protests against dowry deaths in India, as well as organized strikes and movements.²¹

With its slogan 'the personal is political', first written by Carol Hanisch (1970), it is contemporary feminism which recognizes that politics is too diverse to be contained in the tightly boundary categories of political parties. It is small collective groups known as consciousness raising groups (CR), direct action, and radical campaigns which have shaped the political themes of contemporary feminism, not elected politicians. For example, extra-parliamentary tactics include the creation of

²⁰ Maggie Humm, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, Ohio State University Press, 1995, P.251.

²¹ Marie Mitchell Olesen Urbanski, "Margaret Fuller: Feminist writer and revolutionary (1810-1850)". In Dale Spender, *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Key Women Thinkers*, Pantheon books, 1983, PP.75-89.

alternative institutions (Women's Aid), alternative political processes (networking), and alternative political cultures (Greenham pacifism).

Yet feminism is shaped too both by the cultural, legal and economic policies of particular societies in which it forms, as well as by the politics of reforming movements which it outgrew.

The first public declaration describes 'women' as a distinct social category with unequal social status date from before Aphra Behn.²² A clear example is the eighteenth century document by Mary Astell; some Reflections upon Marriage (1700). Organized feminism entered the arena of public politics in America and in Britain in the 1840s with suffrage petitions to parliament and campaigns for grater legislative equality such as the married women's property Act. Suffragist's success in winning the vote, in 1918 in Britain with a limited franchise and universal suffrage in 1920 in America, narrowed to 'welfare feminism' in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s with campaigns for family allowances (Britain) and legal equalities (American League of Women).²³ It was in the 1960s that militant feminism, or Women's Liberation, created a new politics out of Marxist and socialist feminisms, radical feminism and other multifarious responses to the question of why women continued to suffer social inequality, exploitation and oppression.

²² Angelina Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra: a social biography of Aphra Behn*, New York: Dial press, 1980, P.243-248.

²³ Nancy F. Cott, "Feminist politics in the 1920s: The National Woman's Party", *Journal of American History* 71, 1984, pp. 43-68.

In short, if contemporary feminism is marked by its innovatory languages ('oppression', 'liberation'), its innovatory practices (Cr groups) and its innovatory campaigns around issues of rape, 'battery' and child sexual abuse, including the WSPU Abortion Campaigns started in 1911, it is true that both nineteenth and twentieth century feminisms share an urgent desire for equal rights and equal opportunities for women. And in the long view it could be argued that feminist history might stretch from Neolithic matriarchies to contemporary radical feminism, apparent, for example, in Mary Daly's book *GYN/Ecology* (1978), since the sweep of history gathers myriad forms of 'feminism'.²⁴

America

In the 1840s feminism began to grow into a substantial political force in America. The women's rights movement led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony had its origins in their anti-slavery and temperance campaigns. The exclusion of women delegates, including Stanton, from the World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London in 1840, resulted in the famous Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 and its Declaration of sentiments which sought to apply the principles of the American Declaration of Independence to women. When the alliance between feminism and the anti-slavery movement began to dissolve, following the nominal enfranchisement of blacks but not women after the American Civil War, Anthony

²⁴ Nancy F. Cott, "What's In a Name? The Limits of Social feminism; or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History", *Journal of American History*, 1989, PP.809-829.

and Stanton founded the National Woman Suffrage Association While Lucy Stone founded the National Woman Suffrage Association While Lucy Stone created the more conservative American Woman's Association.²⁵ While Anthony and Stanton added economic demands such as protective legislation to their suffrage platform in their Working Women's Association and to their 6,000 signature petition to the New York legislature, Stone tacked divorce law reform.

The suffrage movement inspired other organizations such as the International Council of Women, founded in Washington DC in 1888- the oldest and largest feminist organization in the world. Both suffrage organizations merged in 1890 to form the **National American Woman's Suffrage Association** (henceforth NAWSA) which gained the support of suffrage activists like Alice Paul who returned from Britain to found the **Congressional Union**, later the Woman's Party in 1914 and the daughter of Mrs. Stanton, Harriet Stanton Blatch who founded the Equality League in 1907. In addition, there was a groundswell of socialist feminism perhaps best represented by the settlement movement and by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and her argument, in *The Man-Made World* (1911), that women should be economically independent from men.²⁶ When Carrie Chapman Catt took over the leadership of NAWSA (now the League of Women Voters) NAWSA petitions, the state-by-state campaigns and the militant action of the Woman's Party such as special suffrage

²⁵ See Dale Spender, *There's Always Been a Women's Movement This Century*, Pandora Press, 1983.

²⁶ See Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*, Oxford University Press, 1994.

trains and anti-Woodrow Wilson demonstrations resulted in the Nineteenth Amendment of 1920 which gave women the vote.²⁷ Legal advances of women in the 1920s and 1930s scattered the possibility of a single suffrage identity of American feminism. The Woman's Party proposed equal rights amendments in order to enforce federal equality which was opposed by the League of Women Voters. While 'Welfare feminism' was the aim of New Deal feminist anti-poverty campaigns, pacifist feminists with Jane Addams formed the Woman's Peace Party, later the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom at the 1915 International Congress. But it was the Equal Rights Amendment (henceforth ERA), first proposed to Congress in 1923 by the Woman's Party as an amendment to the constitution: 'Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction', which eventually became a focus for the new feminist movements of the late 1960s. When the Women's Liberation Movement (henceforth WLM) emerged in the late 1960s, it was shaped both by its similarity to first wave feminism in the way that both grew out of their limited roles in Black Rights movements (Civil Rights and Anti-Slavery) and also by changing in the political order brought about by that earlier feminism. For example in 1964, the criterion of sex was added to Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination in employment, and the Act was enforced by an Equal Opportunity Commission. In other ways, Women's Liberation was radically different. Women's

²⁷ Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon, *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from The Women's Liberation Movement*, Basic Books, 2001, PP.23-88.

Liberation extended the terms 'politics' and 'the economy' to sexuality, the body and emotions, and other areas of social life previously treated as 'personal' only, and the household. The movement also created new political organizations-small anti-hierarchical consciousness-raising groups, organized and acting independently of men with a preference for direct action and alternative living patterns.²⁸ The core of WLM, and its socialist and radical heart, grew from radical groups such as the New York Redstockings whose founding membership included Anne Koedt and Shulamith Firestone; from a concern about reproductive issues (*The Dialectic of Sex*, 1970) and the ubiquity of patriarchy (*sexual politics*, 1970); from the first women's studies programmes such as Naomi Weinstein's seminar at the Free University of Chicago in 1976; and from direct actions such as the 1968 Miss America demonstration when bras were trashed (but not burnt).

Another crucial stimulus was the appearance of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which criticized the idea that women could only find fulfillment through childbearing and homemaking.²⁹ According to Friedan's Obituary in the new **York Times** the *Feminine Mystique* "dignified" the contemporary women's movement in 1963 and as a result permanently transformed the social fabric of the United States and countries around the world." In the book Friedan hypothesizes that women are victims of a false belief system that requires them to find identity

²⁸John Pettegrew, *Public Women, Public Words: A Documentary History of American Feminism*, Rowman & Littlefield, pp.16-42.

²⁹See Betty Friedan, 1963, "*The Feminine Mystique*", w.w. Norton and Co., 1963.

and meaning in their lives through their husbands and children. Such a system causes women to completely lose their identity in that of their family. Friedan specifically locates this system among Post-World War II middle-class suburban communities. At the same time, American's post-war economic boom had led to the development of new technologies that were supposed to make household work less difficult, but that often had the result of making women's work less meaningful and valuable. It also describes the frustration of White heterosexual middle-class women without careers, locked into domesticity, and Friedan's founding of the National Organization of Women (NOW) in 1966. Now adopted a reformist agenda advocating educational and legal change but, following its 1970 strike for abortion on demand, 24-hour nurseries and equal opportunities, NOW added abortion and gay rights to its platform at the 1977 NOW conference at Houston. The Equal Rights Amendment Campaign, supported by NOW, gathered together a large number of women's organizations to fight for state-by-state ratification until the amendment expired in 1982. This campaign radicalized a wide spectrum of American women. Similarity, by the 1990s campaigns such as Women Against Pornography and Women Against Violence Against Women, Bernice Reagon's 'coalition politics', AIDS activism, Third World Women Against Violence, and the National Coalition of Black Gays, gained support across America so that the Women's movement has continued to grow in spite of New Right pro-family campaigns and Republican anti-women budgets.

Britain

Although feminist ideas date from before Aphra Behn, the first full political argument for women's rights in Britain is Mary Wollstonecraft's 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' (1792). Wollstonecraft based her argument on an analysis of the psychological and economic damage done to women from a forced dependence on men and exclusion from the public sphere.³⁰ Although Chartists and Owenties did hold suffrage discussions, it was not until the 1850s that feminism was recognized in public politics in Britain. Josephine Butler's campaigns against the **Contagious Diseases Acts** of 1864 (which required medical examinations of women suspected to be prostitutes) highlighted women's legal inferiority. In 1856 Barbara Leigh-Smith Bodichon's *A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women* (1854), initiated the Campaign for a Married Women's Property Act; and a national group of women organized through the Langham Place group of feminists, organized a petition to Parliament to widen the electorate. Further Parliamentary debates on electoral reform inspired the founding of the National Society for Women's Suffrage; supported by J.S. Mill who's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), co-authored with his wife Harriet Taylor, and is regarded as a classic liberal argument for equal rights.³¹ By the turn of the century labour women, women in the arts, the women's Cooperative Guild (1882), with its 18,000 members, and other

³⁰ Brody Miriam, "Mary Wollstonecraft's: Sexuality and Women's rights (1759-1797)". In Dale Spender. *Feminist Theorists: Centuries of Key Women Thinkers*. Patheon Books, 1983, PP. 40-59.

³¹ See John Stuart Mill, "The Subjection of Women" 1869.

suffrage groups were combined in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). There were also radical working-class feminists, for example, the Women's Protective and Provident League (1874) which opposed protective legislation for women and the exploitation of women workers.³² But it was the founding of the Women's social and political Union (henceforth WSPU) in 1903, by Emmeline Pankurst and her daughters, which has become the best known organization of first wave feminism although equally important were the NUWSS and the Women's Freedom League (henceforth WFL). By 1908 a WSPU open-air meeting in Hyde Park attracted between a quarter and half a million people, and NUWSS events similarly engaged large numbers of people. feminism's continued high public profile, militancy and shrewd political campaigning, together with the combined effects of the WSPU, the WFL and the NUWSS ensured that with the end of the First World War, at least a limited franchise would be considered for women aged over 30(1918).³³

First wave feminism, then, was a long-lasting, highly diverse movement stretching from before the liberalism of Mary Wollstonecraft to the militant activism of Edwardian feminism. The NUWS became the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship in 1919 and by the 1920s and 1930s its energy was devoted to the political education of women. It joined the Women's Cooperative Guild, the

³²Tong Rosemarie, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. Westview Press (Perseus Books),2009, P. 17.

³³Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon, *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from The Women's Liberation Movement*, Basic Books, 2001, PP.91-112.

Women's Labour League and the Six Point Group in 1921. The six objectives of this group are: equal pay, widow's pensions, equal rights of guardianship, and laws on child assault, equal civil service opportunities, and provision for unmarried mothers. These early decades of the twentieth century saw divisions between 'old' feminists, such as Ray Strachey, who wanted to end protective legislation, and 'new' feminists, such as Eleanor Rathbone, who campaigned for the 'endowment of motherhood' and family allowances. These were the decades of campaigning for equal pay, for example, the annual resolutions at Labour Women's conferences; pacifist feminism in the Women's International League for peace and freedom (henceforth WILPF); and the anti-fascist activism of a wide variety of feminist women. In 1968 the rise of militant feminism which started in America became visible in Britain. The same involvement in, and the same disenchantment with, New Left causes (in Britain the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign) marks the British Women's Liberation Movement as much as its American sister. What was an additional, and uniquely British, inspiration was the impact of the militancy of women workers in the Ford Strike (1968) for equal pay. The first Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin College Oxford (1970) had over 600 participants, and funneled socialist and liberation energies into demands for equal pay, 24-hour child care, free contraception, and abortion on demand.³⁴ Together with its papers *Shrew* (1969), *Spare Rib* (1972), and *Wires* (1975), the

³⁴ See Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen Seventy*, Oxford University Press, 1994.

WLM battled to defend women from sexual and domestic violence by founding the innovative battered women's refuges (Chiswick 1972) and rape crisis centre. The WLM launched campaigns such as Women against Violence against Women and Reclaim the Night, and worked to advance employment rights in a Working Women's Charter (1974) supported by the national Trade Union Council. This pursuit of equal opportunities led to the practical affirmative action programmes of the municipal women's committees of which the largest and most successful was that of the Greater London Council (1982). This far-reaching London programme gave over 4.5 million to women's projects until its disbandment in 1986 by the Conservative government.³⁵

The history of feminism consists of three waves. The first wave appeared in the 19th Century. The Second wave appeared in the 1960s and 1970s and the third wave started from the 1990s to the present. It takes a number of forms in a variety of disciplines such as feminist geography, feminist history, and feminist literary criticism. Feminism has changed aspects of western society. Most of the leaders of feminist social and political movements, and feminist theories, have been middle-class white women, predominantly in Britain, France and the US. At least since Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech to US Feminists, however, women of other races have proposed alternative feminisms. This trend accelerated in the 1960s with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the Collapse of European

³⁵Rosemary Hennessy, Chrys Ingraham, *Materialist feminism: a reader in class, difference, and women's lives*, London: Routledge, 1997, PP 1-13.

Colonialism in Africa and European Colonies and the Third World have proposed alternative 'post-colonial' and 'Third World' feminisms as well. Some Third World feminists or post-colonial feminists, such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, are critical of Western feminism for being ethnocentric. Black feminists such as Angela Davis and Alice Walker, share this view. Since the 1980s, standpoint feminists have argued that the feminist movement should address global issues (such as rape, incest and prostitution) and culturally specific issues (such as female genital mutilation in some parts of Africa and the Middle East and glass ceiling practices that impede women's advancement in developed economies) in order to understand how gender inequality interacts with racism, homophobia, lesbophobia, colonialism, and classism in a "matrix of domination". Some feminists have argued that gendered and sexed identities, such as "man" and "women", are social constructs. The first wave refers to the feminist movement of the 19th through early 20th centuries which mainly dealt with the suffrage movement.³⁶ The second-wave (1960-1980s) dealt with the inequality of laws, as well as cultural inequalities. The third-wave of feminism (1990s-present) is seen as both a continuation and a response to the perceived failures of the second-wave.

First wave feminism

First-wave feminism refers to a period of feminist activity during the 19th century and early 20th century in the United Kingdom and the United States. Originally, it

³⁶Miriam Schneir, *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*, Vintage Books, 1972 (1994), P. xiv.

focused on equal rights of contract and property and opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women (and their children) by husbands by the end of the 19th century. Activism focused primarily on gaining political power-the right of women's suffrage, though feminists like Voltairine de cleyre and Margaret Sanger were still active in campaigning for women's sexual and reproductive and economic rights at this time. The term "first wave", was coined retrospectively after the term second wave feminism began to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as further political inequalities.³⁷

Second-wave feminism

Second wave feminism refers to a period of feminist activity beginning in the early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s and, it was a continuation of the earlier phase of feminism that involved the suffragettes in the UK and USA.³⁸ Second-wave feminism has existed continuously since then, and continues to coexist with what is termed third-wave feminism. The second-wave feminism saw cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked. The movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their own personal lives as deeply politicized, and reflective of a sexist structure of power. If first-wave feminism focused upon absolute rights

³⁷Sarta Ahmed, *Transformation: thinking through feminism*, London: Routledge, 2000, P. 111.

³⁸See Jane F. Gerhard, *Desiring revolution: Second- wave feminism and the rewriting of American sexual thought, 1920 to 1982*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

such as suffrage, second-wave feminism was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end to discrimination.

Third wave feminism

The Third-wave of feminism began in the early 1990s. The movement arose as a response to perceived failures of the second-wave. It was also a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second-wave. Third wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second-wave's "essentialist" definitions of femininity, which over emphasized the experiences of upper middle class white women.³⁹ A post structuralism interpretation of gender and sexuality is central too much of the third wave's ideology. Third-wave feminists often focus on "micro politics", and challenged the second-wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females.⁴⁰

Thus, in the western world various social, ideological and political circumstances were responsible for encouraging the women's movement for gender equality. In communist countries, especially Russia, Lenin and his wife Krupskaya were great advocates of women's equality and the Soviet rule gave equal rights to women. Russian women worked with men in secret police and in the army. In fascist countries, women were valued for producing children and bringing them up. Nitler

³⁹ See Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational conflict and Third-Wave-Feminism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

⁴⁰ Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*, New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 20-28,

did not favour women's participation in war efforts. He said a woman's battlefield is her home where she produces children for the nation. Thus Fascist countries did not encourage women's movement.

In India women's movement was born out of the social reform movements of 19th and 20th century. At first philanthropic men initiated welfare programmes for women, later on, women took the lead themselves by starting All India Women's Conference. Gandhi's encouragement of women taking part in the freedom struggle gave a new confidence to women and helped the women's movement. All feminists are concerned about women's subordination and want to find out its cause. Within the women's movement there have been three major ideological positions described as *Liberal Feminism*, *Radical Feminism* and *Socialist feminism*. They differ in their analysis of the causes of the subordinate position of women and consequently in their action programmes.

Liberal Feminism started in 18th century in Europe. Liberal feminism is the most widely known form of feminist thought. It is certainly the 'moderate' or 'mainstream' face of feminism. Liberal philosophy was based on reason, equality and individual freedom.⁴¹ In this approach the explanation for women's position in society is seen in terms of unequal rights or artificial barrier to women's participation in the public world, beyond the family and household. The focus of

⁴¹Tong Rosemarie, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Oxon, United Kingdom: Unwin Human Ltd, 1989, Chapter 1.

liberal feminist was on the public sphere, on legal, political and institutional struggles for the rights of individuals to compete in the public market.

The basic idea of liberal feminism was that women are foremost human beings and not sexual beings. Women should have freedom to act according to their wishes, as they are rational creatures and they should not be denied natural rights. Though sometimes this freedom from social restraint is understood in terms of freedom from 'interference' by the state or government, more often it is seen as freedom from the bonds of custom or prejudice. The Liberals accepted the sex role differences and expected women to take care of the home and thus contribute to the well-being of society. But they contended that both sexes are equal and so women should have the same role like men. In this context, it can be mentioned that the Indian social reformers of 19th century had similar thoughts. Liberal feminist political strategies reflect a conception of a fundamentally sexually undifferentiated human nature, i.e., since women are much the same as men so women should do the same what men can do but they did not emphasize upon the reform of society rather than revolutionary changes.⁴² Liberal feminism draws on welfare liberalism—a form of liberal political thought influenced by writers such as J.S. Mill. Liberal feminists also take from welfare liberalism a limited acknowledgement of social or collective responsibility, i.e. they accept a need for some intervention in the competition between individuals for social opportunities and reject so-called laissez-faire

⁴² See Bell Hooks, *Feminist Thought: From Margin to Center* Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1984.

liberalism which argues that freedom and justice are best served by nominal government and that a just and natural inequality will emerge if individuals are left to their own devices. In the 1960s, liberal feminism extended the concept of equality to new areas like demand for children facilities, rights of poor women and control over one's reproductive life. Liberals accepted the existing social order and also wanted equal rights but they were not able to provide more insights into causes of inferior status of women.

Radical feminism started in 1970s. This feminism, unlike liberal and Marxist/socialist feminism, is not drawn directly from previous bodies of 'male stream' thought. It has some links with liberal feminism, e.g. some feminists spoke of sexual politics but it offers a real challenge and rejection of the liberal orientation towards the public world of men. Liberal feminism did not consider the connection between sexual oppression, sexual division of labour and the economic class structure. So, it claimed for reforms. Indeed, it gives a positive value to womanhood rather than supporting a notion of assimilating women into arenas of activity associated with men. Radical feminists demand the destruction of patriarchy.⁴³ It pays attention to women's oppression as women in a social order dominated by men. Kate Millet, Germaine Greer, etc., are some well-known radical feminists who see patriarchy as male control over women's fertility. Actually, the distinguishing character of women's oppression is their oppression as women, not as members of

⁴³Zenili, Linda M.G., *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005, P.101.

other groups such as their social class.⁴⁴ Hence, the explanation for women's oppression is seen as lying in sexual oppression. Women are oppressed because of their sex. The notion *shared oppression* is intimately connected with a strong emphasis on the sisterhood of women. There is a strategic focus on women's similarities and the pleasures of forming political and other bonds between women in a world where such bonds are marginalized or dismissed. In this context, Jhonson comments: 'one of the basic tenets of Radical Feminism is that any woman...has more in common with any other woman-regardless of class, race, age, ethnic group, nationality-than any woman has with any man.' Sexual oppression is seen as the oldest and even the most profound form of inequality. The radicals believe patriarchy is an autonomous historical fact rooted in biology than economy and according to them the gender relations are the fundamental form of oppression. Due to the biological differences there is the male domination of power over women in society. The Radical do not favour marriage and family because these institutions help to establish patriarchy in society. Given the significance of patriarchy to radical feminism, it is appropriate to provide a brief account of the term. The subject of considerable debate remains widely used and refers to the systemic and/or systematic 'organization of male supremacy and female subordination'. Stacy summarizes three major instances of its usage: *historical, materialist and psychological*. She notes that some feminists employ patriarchy to trace the

⁴⁴ See Dale Spender, *For the Record: The Making and Meaning of Feminist Knowledge*, London: The Women's Press, 1985.

historical emergence and development of systems of male domination. Others use the term to explore the sexual division of labour (that is, to explore the 'material'-or concrete structural, bodily, physical-aspects of social organization which divide up and differentially value tasks and activities on the basis of sex). And, finally, certain feminists perceive the term as enabling recognition of the deep-rooted nature of male dominance in the very formation and organization of ourselves (the psychological or unconscious internalizing of social patterns of sexual hierarchy). Radical feminists draw upon all three of these usages of patriarchy as well as others and are among the most committed to its continued employment because of its centrality to their analysis. Radical feminism describes sexual oppression as the very least a fundamental form of oppression and the primary oppression for women.⁴⁵ Men, as a group, are considered to be the beneficiaries of this systematic and systemic form of power. In radical feminism, all men are unambiguously viewed as having power over at least some women. Indeed, this approach commonly suggests that any man is in a position of power relative to all women, and possibly some men. Indeed, this approach suggests that any man is in a position of power relative to all women, and possibly some men. In this context, it is stated that radical feminists perceive all men without exception as sharing in the benefits of a social system of male supremacy (patriarchy). This does not, however, mean that all men are invariably oppressive to all women all the time, nor does this

⁴⁵ Margaret Walters, *Feminism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University, 2005, pp. 1–176.

deny that some men, at least, may struggle to overcome this system of domination. Radical feminist thinkers consider sexual oppression to be profoundly entrenched, frequently depicting it as the original form of coercive power. It's strong interest in recovering or discovering positive elements in femininity in combination with its location of men as the beneficiaries of sexual power relations, results in a relatively sharp division drawn between men and women. However, other radical feminist writers note that male domination is a social structure and not the consequence of some in-built male propensity. In other words, feminists in this tradition see a difference between men and women as inevitable. Indeed, the radicals present a social and political change required to overthrow the system of male domination as far-reaching. They generally advocate a revolutionary model of social change and want women to unite and become self-reliant and overthrow male dominance by a complete sexual revolution.

Socialist feminism is still in nascent form. Socialist feminists attempt to maintain some elements of Marxism regarding the significance of class distinctions and labour.⁴⁶ All socialist feminists assert that women's subordination predated the development of class-based societies and hence that women's oppression could not be caused by class division.⁴⁷ But some socialist women see that complete equality is not found even in socialist society. They feel that to bring equality only the

⁴⁶Charlotte Krolokke, Anne Scott Sorensen, "Three Waves of Feminism: From Suffragettes to Grrls" In *Gender Communication Theories and Analyses: From Silence to Performance*, Sage, 2005, P. 24

⁴⁷D. Hague and L. Carruthers, "Socialist-feminism and trade unions: Work in the P.S.A", In *Scarlet Woman* 13, 1981, PP.2-5.

overthrow of capitalism is not enough but the overthrow of patriarchy is also essential. There are several versions of socialist feminism which sometimes incorporate the influence of psychoanalytic feminisms. The three major socialist feminist's traditions which may be described as deriving from debates between radical and Marxist feminists. The first strand involves a concern with the social construction of sex (gender) which was largely seen in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis. The second major strand of socialist feminism attempts to draw the work of radical and Marxist feminists into one theory to as capitalist patriarchy. The third form of socialist feminism offers a more full-blown account of systems in which sexual and class oppression interact but are not cast as dependent forms. These versions of socialist feminism are identified by their views of the relationship between class and sex i.e., the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy.⁴⁸ According to socialist feminist, women's subordinate status is rooted in private property and class divided society. The powerlessness of women is rooted in four basic structures: those of production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization of children. Some socialist feminist also think that women's oppression is based on unpaid domestic work. They are not anti-man; they believe in collaboration, the men support their cause. So, in general, it can be said that feminism is for liberation and is also for equality. For a long time, there had been an accepted tendency that all types of activities related to women belong to the private domain of individual

⁴⁸ Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, Ballantine Books, 2003, P. 464

within the family. Due to this belief, women's issues were discussed only within the household domain. However, the gradual change in the attitude towards women's questions has started including different dimensions. A new kind of awareness is visible among women and this phenomenon has given rise to women's movement. Women's movement is one of the most dominant thrust areas of 'Gender Studies' having an interdisciplinary nature. It is a way as well as an indicator of social change in society because until now, women have been in back pages with an inferior status in the society as compared to their male counterparts.⁴⁹

By the 1980s western feminism could no longer be divided into the three general categories of liberal, radical and Marxist/socialist traditions because many other possibilities of feminists' perspectives became a feature of academic feminism at least. Psychoanalysis was one of the more influential streams of thought which could be reassessed by feminists in western countries. The work of psychoanalysis was reconsidered as an element within the works of some Marxist/Socialist feminists. Psychoanalytic feminists share in common with radical feminism- an interest in the issue of difference in relation to the sexes. The influence of psychoanalysis has produced two major variants. One is Freudian feminism which attended to the significance of psychology and added scientific justification to claims for female inferiority by analyzing the impact of women's responsibility for mothering. The second groupings are Lacanian feminists who draw upon the work

⁴⁹Sandra Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, London: Routledge, 2003 PP. 1-16, 67-80

of Jacques Lacan, an interpreter of Freud's analytic method. Lacanian feminist approaches are linked with French and to a lesser extent some British and Australians writers. There are two sub-groups within lacanian feminism, that is, those who more or less follow Lacan's interpretation of psychoanalysis and those who may be described as post Lacanians or French feminists.⁵⁰

The main concern of *psychoanalysis* is to offer an account, or analysis, of the mind's- the psychic's structure and its relation to the body, and use that as the basis for treating certain kinds of sickness. Psychoanalysis is popularly known as the 'talking cure'. Some of psychoanalysis' central concepts are penis envy, the Oedipus complex, the phallic symbol. As these terms suggest, psychoanalysis is closely concerned with gender, sexuality, family relations, and, as we shall see, the fact that their expression and construction are not always available to the conscious mind. Clearly these areas are also those of central interest to feminism. How the relationship between psychoanalysis and feminism has functioned, that will be cleared after knowing the Freud's role in the origins of psychoanalysis. Freud described psychoanalysis as a phenomenon of the 20th century (The Interpretation of Dreams was published in 1900), but also acknowledged the 19th century precursors whose work he synthesized in producing his central concepts, particularly that of the unconscious.⁵¹ In 1887, Freud started investigating of the mind by taking up the theory of his colleague Josef Breuer that 'hysteria was the

⁵⁰ Chiesa Lorenzo, *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan*, MIT Press, 2007, P.67.

⁵¹ See Charles Shepherdson, *Vital Signs: Nature, Culture, Psychoanalysis*, New York: Routledge, 2000.

product of a physical trauma which had been forgotten by the patient'. Together they wrote *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), which was based on a collection of five case histories of women 'suffering from reminiscences'. It was clear from the cases that the women's fears and phobias and physical symptoms all turned out to have their origins in repressed memories. While analyzing on the hysteria cases, it suggested that there were parts of the mind unavailable either to the subject her-or himself, or to an observer; these parts are what Freud was to call 'the unconscious. During his analysis, Frued established three principles which he elaborated upon for the rest of his career. The unconscious, argued Frued, consists of the activity of primary sexual and destructive instincts, which are in conflict with internal forces of self-preservation, and external social forces.⁵² Second, the analysis of dreams proved invaluable in accessing the unconscious; as did, thirdly, Freud's working out of the relationship between primary (unconscious) and secondary (conscious) thought processes. Later, he divided the psyche into the more familiar realms of the id (the repository of unstructured instincts), the ego (the realistic element) and the super ego (the internalized parental function, moral and critical).

In between 1893 and 1895, Frued developed the theory of the Oedipus complex and infantile sexuality. In the former the small boy loves his mother and feels a jealous hatred of his father. His complex is resolved by the 'castration complex': the father steps in to forbid the boy access to the mother, on pain of losing his organ, and the

⁵² Sigmund Freud, *On Metapsychology*, Penguin 1984, P. 207

boy, in obeying, identifies with the father and the power he wields. Freud makes the little boy the model for both sexes, and describes the little girl as a deficient version of him: she 'extends her judgment of inferiority from her stunted penis to her whole self', as he puts it (Freud 1962:193). Because she is already 'castrated', in not possessing a penis, the little girl's Oedipus complex is not resolved but initiated by the castration complex. In her case, according to Freud, she now loves her father and hates the betraying mother, who has 'sent her into the world so insufficiently equipped.' It is clear from these comments of Freud's why the Oedipus complex is problematic for feminist psychoanalysis, as it constructs women as the inferior 'second sex', in Simon de Beauvoir's phrase. Post-Freudians have made modifications to this apparent prescriptiveness: Lacan emphasized the power-symbolism of the phallus, which can theoretically be appropriated by either sex⁵³; Klein argued that the Oedipus complex occurs much earlier than Freud suggests, and the infant's drives focus not on the father and his anatomy, but on the mother and hers. Freud only produced writings on feminine identity and female sexuality itself late in his career. As we have seen, his central concepts took the male child as a model, so that the female seemed like an imperfect version. Luce Irigaray has fascinatingly analyzed the scattered writings of Freud on femininity and concluded that his definition of its nature is strikingly similar to that of melancholia, or depression. Like the melancholic, a woman prefers affection to passion; has little

⁵³ See J. Lacan, "The Freudian Thing" and "Psychoanalysis and its Teaching" in *Écrits*, W.W Norton, 2006.

interest in the outside world; and has suffered a primordial disappointment-castration, in the woman's case. In other words, female sexuality is necessarily pathological, as melancholia is in men (Irigaray 1985). Juliet Mitchell claims that feminist objections to Freud, including his ignoring the social position of the women. Her argument is that Freud is describing and not prescribing the nature of the symbolic order. Freudian psychoanalysis offered to feminism a useful synthesis of earlier work on the idea of the unconscious, and a discourse about the body and sexuality.⁵⁴ It may seem that Freudian terms describe the negative sides of femininity in a society in which it is repressed. The primacy of the penis as principal signifier of sexual difference could be read in symbolic terms, as a signifier of power in a society in which men are dominant and control, social institutions, including family. Yet there are some problems with this issue. The attempt to avoid the inevitable patriarchal consequences of psycho-sexual development by making it the historical product of a culture which is patriarchal, but need not always be, is fraught with difficulties. Freudian theory uses visible anatomical difference as its guarantee of psychic difference and women's inferiority. But why social relations should take this form is not clear. It assumes that they are a manifestation of the nature of man. This gives rise to the problem of how anatomical difference can ever acquire a different status and meaning in which femininity is either of equal value or cultural norms of femininity and masculinity are dissolved. Furthermore, feminists

⁵⁴ See S. Freud. (1905), *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality VII* (2nd ed.), Hogarth Press, 1955.

might wish to question both psychoanalytic assumptions about feminine and masculine qualities and the psychoanalytic practice of reducing these qualities and subjective identity to sexual difference, whether this is psychic, biological or socially constructed.⁵⁵

In Freud, the femininity or masculinity which the normal adult must achieve through her or his psycho-sexual development represent culturally and historically specific forms of gender identity. These assume a universal status. The social structures which guarantee psycho-sexual development are also fixed and involve an acceptance of the universality of the oedipal triangle and the incest taboo. These social norms underpinning psycho-analytic theory receive their clearest expression in the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss, who, in an attempt to develop a universal theory of human society, makes the incest taboo and the exchange of women by men the founding principles of all cultures. For feminists, the key questions must be whether this a historicism is politically and theoretically useful, and whether it is possible or desirable to develop a psychoanalytic model which does not make universal claims but is historically and socially specific in nature.

⁵⁵ See Freud. (1906), "My Views on the Part played by Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neuroses", Standard Edition, vol 7, Hogarth Press, 1953.