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## **An Overview on the Feminism and Its Categories**

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### **Abstract**

This paper tries to analyze the origin and progress of global feminism. Feminism is a mass movement commenced by women of all groups to eradicate all forms of feminist oppressions by men that are prevailing in a patriarchal society. It always fights against all types of oppressions on women. It is a procedure that takes attempts to understand and conceptualize gender roles and advocates for the annexation of women's interests in social organization. It tries to explain the phenomenon of gender inequality. It is considered as a politics to achieve gender equality in all spheres of the society. Feminists support of ensuring equal individual rights and liberties for women and men. This study takes attempts to discuss a comprehensive understanding of feminism, and the different variants of feminism. This paper also tries to highlight the major challenges that the feminists are facing and the future goals of the feminist movement should be.

**Keywords:** Feminism, female movement, patriarchy, exploitation, gender liberation,

## 1. Introduction

About half of the global human population is women. In every step, all over the world; women face inequality, subordination, and secondary class status. Often they are victim of the oppression, marginalization and exploitation in the patriarchal societies. Before the First Industrial Revolution (IR), the human life was not men dominated, and both men and women contribute equally in the society. The IR began in England in about 1750-1760 that lasted to sometime between 1820 and 1840. The IR dramatically changed the global social order and consequently, a new gender system started worldwide that disadvantaged women (Mohajan, 2019). During this period men started to work in the industries and women were restricted to the domestic sphere. As a result, they remain vulnerable socially, politically, and economically. The industrialization also developed a new class system; aristocratic class (Anderson & Zinsser, 2000). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is no straightforward definition of feminism. At present, there are as many definitions of feminism as there are feminists depending on their own beliefs, history and culture, but gender equality is common to all. Feminism is a women basis socio-political movement and ideology, and supports the idea “*women should share equality in society’s opportunities and scarce resources*” (Delaney, 2005). Oxford Dictionary defines feminism as “*the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim*”. The feminism is characterized by “*the activism for the purpose of challenging and changing women’s subordination to men*” (Ferree, 2006).

Feminism is an ideology that demands an equal right of men and women in terms of politics, decision making, career, and having children. It consists of a number of social, cultural and political movements that take attempts for equal rights of men and women (Asnani, 2020). It is considered as a struggle to achieve same rights, opportunities and dignity as men have in the society (Raj & Davidson, 2014). It has raised much in the western upper-class society and the women have fought for women’s suffrage and reproductive rights (Agger, 1998). The rise of feminism in Europe occurred as “*women of all classes became increasingly aware of the way in which their sex influenced their life chances and experiences*” (Fuchs & Thompson, 2005). It endeavors to see an end to the dominance of men over women, and to provide equal rights between women and men in all fields ranging from household issues to politics (Kuleli, 2019).

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Different disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy, economics, and politics, served as distinctive intellectual backgrounds of feminism (Herouach, 2019).

Feminism explains and suggests directions for the change in social and environmental factors; tries to highlight the propose interventions for women's intrapersonal and interpersonal concerns, and provides a perspective for evaluating social and environmental experiences of groups and individuals, regardless of sex or gender. It has changed the lives of millions of women (Anderson, 2016).

## **2. Literature Review**

Nyoman Kutha Ratna has realized that feminism is a tool for women to fight for their rights, which is closely related to racial conflicts between weaker groups and stronger groups (Ratna, 2004). Shruti Jain has observed that digital revolution has paved the way for a new iteration of feminism. She has believed that the digital space can become a breeding ground for sexism and misogyny. She also highlights the strengths and deficits of contemporary cyber feminism through postcolonial and postmodern feminist theories (Jain, 2020).

Rowland Chukwuemeka Amaefula has discussed the aspects of African Feminisms to enhance the conditions of African women (Amaefula, 2021). Sofian Herouach has investigated students' attitudes towards the social status of Moroccan women. He has realized that feminism, female activism, and international human rights may influence the cause of women's liberation. But, some factors, such as religion, patriarchy (an idea about sex differences that institutionalizes male dominance throughout a society), and marriage legislation could stand against the cause of female freedom (Herouach, 2019).

Alison Jagger has defined four theories of feminism; liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, and radical feminism more clearly for the first time (Jagger, 1983). Bimer Eyayu Enyew and Alemeneh Getaneh Mihrete have analyzed the appropriateness and applicability of liberal feminist theory and strategies that attempt to achieve gender equality and to reduce women oppression and subordination (Enyew & Mihrete, 2018). Ananya Bhardwaj has

Research and Advances in Education, SEP. 2022 VOL.1 NO.3, pp. 11-26. Paradigm Academic Press dealt with the importance of Marxist Feminism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She has also highlighted the struggles of the working class and their revolution within the feminist framework (Bhardwaj, 2021). Silvia Federici focuses on aspects of feminism and gender in Marx's theory. She has discussed the significance and the importance of Marxism on contemporary feminist theory and feminist movements (Federici, 2018).

Bina Agarwal has given some basic ideas within ecofeminism; i) domination and exploitation of nature has a connection, ii) in patriarchal thought women are closer to nature, but men are closer to culture, iii) the domination and oppression of nature and of women have occurred simultaneously, and iv) the feminist movement and the environment movement collaboration can create a more equitable and just society (Agarwal, 2007). Haradhan Kumar Mohajan has discussed the four waves of feminism, where he stresses that sexism, sexual exploitation, everyday sexism, and sexual discrimination need to be ended off. He believes that feminism challenges various reproductive rights, abortion rights, educational rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, salary equality, voting rights, representation, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and sexual violence (Mohajan, 2022).

### **3. Methodology of the Study**

Research methodology is the procedure to perform a research in a systematic and process oriented way that provides a guideline to the researchers to investigate a problem (Abbasi, 2015). In this study, variants of feminism, such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, ecofeminism, cultural feminism, black feminism, and postmodern feminism are discussed in briefly. Reliability and validity are the parts and parcel of a good research, and in this study we have tried following these as far as possible (Mohajan, 2017).

Throughout the study, we have tried to maintain ethical principles properly. This study is a qualitative research method that tries to analyze feminist research (Mohajan, 2018, 2020). To prepare this study we have used the secondary data sources that are related to feminism. We have consulted the published journal articles, books and handbooks of renowned authors, websites, etc. to complete the paper.

#### **4. Objective of the Study**

The key objective of this paper is to discuss about the feminism and its variants. Feminism is used to describe the political, economy and social equality of the sexes. The other specific objectives of this article are as follows:

- to investigate the categories of feminism,
- to eliminate the women oppression from all nations, and
- to establish gender equality in the society.

#### **5. Feminism**

There is no fixed definition of feminism and it has a variety of meanings and interpretations. Feminists of different fields of life define feminism according to their own social, political, religious, and cultural perspectives. According to Cambridge Dictionaries, feminism can be seen as *“the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state”*. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, *“feminism is the belief in the social, economic, and political equality of the sexes”*. It consists of a number of social, cultural and political movements, theories and moral philosophies concerned with gender inequalities and equal rights for women. It is against the abuse of power, and seeks equality and justice under different domains, such as economy, class, caste, race, culture, religion, etc. (Hundleby, 2012).

Therefore, feminism is a diverse, rival and often opposing collection of social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies. It mainly looks social, political, and economic inequalities of women (Adawo et al., 2011). It tries to describe women oppression; searches strategies, causes, and consequences to remove discrepancies from the society. It takes attempts to achieve the objective of equality, dignity, rights, emancipation and empowerment of women (Tong, 2009). Therefore, it is the struggle against sexism, where male supremacy and female oppression are happened. Actually, sexism is not a modern phenomenon and is a form of social oppression (Gimenez, 1975).

Women all over the world are seen lacking access to opportunities, knowledge, skill and even some basic human rights. In every nation women are victim of oppression, suppression; and consequently, they are highly marginalized. From the ancient period human took attempts for establishing gender equality in the ancient society by reducing the discrimination (Freedman, 2002). Plato (427-347 BC), a Greek philosopher, revealed that women possess “*natural capacities*” equal to men (Scott, 1996). Some scholars believe that the word “*feminism*” comes from the word “*femme*” that means woman (Collins Dictionary, 2010). Actually it is originated from the French word “*féminisme*” and its derivatives are still obscure. Charles Fourier (1772-1837), a French philosopher and utopian socialist, is credited for the coining of this word in 1837. It is a socio-political movement, first occurrences in France centers in 1880s as an activity under forms of demonstrations (Herouach, 2019). Later, the activity is moved to the USA in 1910 (Hilversum, 1994). Feminism began as a political thought when Olympic de Gouges (1748-1793) wrote the “*declaration of the rights of women and the female citizen*”, in 1791, which demanded equal rights for women based on “*The Rights of Man and Citizen*” that is published during the French Revolution (Mousset, 2007). Similar thinking has risen in the USA in 1848, in England in 1878, in Russia in 1848, and in China in 1911 (Raj & Davidson, 2014).

Feminist is a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes. The feminist aims to terminate all forms of male domination. Feminist research focuses on gender and tries to establish gender equality in the world (Kaur & Nagaich, 2019). The conservative feminist Genevan philosopher, writer, and composer; Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), had argued that men and women are by nature not merely different in kind but different in “*natural rank*”. She wrote that women are biologically fit to play the roles of wives and mothers, and unable for work in the public sphere. She revealed that women being weaker physically, intellectually, and emotionally. She tried to establish sexual dimorphism on the logic that men are more rational, and women are more emotional and passionate, and set up complementary roles for men and women (Rousseau, 1754). She and some other social contractualists have not considered women as rational human beings. Although they have conservative believe about feminism, and do not think about the gender equability; later English philosopher and physician John Locke (1632-1704), known as the “*Father of Liberalism*”, had argued that the sexes should

receive the same education, share equal rights, and responsibilities (Hirschmann, 2009). Betty Friedan, the first president of the National Organization for Women had published "*The Feminine Mystique*" in 1963. Although women has the right to vote and hold property, but they spend too much time for polishing and organizing homes that experience boredom and anxiety. She has realized that they need to go outside of the domestic area by entering into public life as a paid employment. She has argued that equality and human dignity are not possible for women if they are not able to earn. Consequently, employment opportunities for women need to be widened, and many discriminatory laws must be abandoned (Friedan, 1963).

Feminism is an umbrella term for a number of cultural phenomena. It tries to acquire freedom for women to work, and make independent economically, and psychologically (Malinowska, 2020). It indicates institutional and grassroots activities to abolish gender-based inequalities from the society. It hopes to discover the hidden reality of male domination, and women subordination and subjugation in the world, and aims to give equal rights to women economically, politically, and socially (Brunell & Burkett, 2019). It supports a broader struggle of freedom for women to make their own decisions related to their bodies, financial independence, freedom to choice their lives and sexual choices, and liberation from all types of oppression (Omvedt, 1990; Learner, 1994).

In the society, women oppression and subordination are different; consequently, different feminist groups have emerged in different times. But the main goal of every group is to achieve gender equality (Tong, 2009). Feminism can be manifested into seven categories as; i) liberal feminism, ii) Marxist feminism iii) socialist feminism, iv) radical feminism, v) ecofeminism, vi) cultural feminism, vii) black feminism, and viii) postmodern feminism (Jaggar, 1983). Each ideology tries to describe women's oppression, explains the causes and consequences, and suggested strategies for women liberation. Feminists support a gender-based view of the state, which is based on the creation of a gender-neutral society (Brunell & Burkett, 2019). On the other hand, they are against the flawed, vague, and illogical procedures of thinking and writing about women (Papa, 2017). Most feminist categories suggest for the elimination of misperceptions, sexual inequalities, restrictions, and oppression faced by women (Bryson, 2007).



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Feminism seeks to appreciate the ways in which women are oppressed: socially, economically, politically and psychologically to reduce their various oppressions (Bressler, 2007).

## 5.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberalism is a political and economic principle that stresses individual independence, equality of opportunity, and the protection of individual rights. It supports rule of law, civil and human rights, secularism, democracy, freedom of speech, press, religion, and property. It encourages the development of freedoms, particularly in the political and economic spheres (Alterman, 2008). It is a “*feminist theory that believes gender inequality is created by lowering access for women and girls to civil rights and allocation of social resources such as education and employment*” (Giddens, 2001).

Liberal feminism originates from the liberal political theory, inspired by French Revolution, and focuses mainly on equality. It is derived from the liberal political philosophy with the core ideas of autonomy, universal rights, equal citizenship, and democracy. According to liberal feminists, society has a false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men (Tong, 2009). They believe that all human are equally rational to perform any job and subordination of women is due to certain outdated beliefs. Men are judged through their merits, whereas women’s abilities are deemed due to their sex (Jaggar, 1983). They stress that men and women should have equal rights and women have equal opportunities as men. Actually, we cannot eliminate gender oppression unless we change the society from the bottom up (Federici, 2018).

Liberal feminism first emerged between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in the western countries to educate women with liberal ideas, and later expanded in the rest of the world. Finally, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century feminists extended the arguments in favor of equal rights for women under the law to own property and to vote. Liberal feminism is the most widely accepted social and political philosophy among feminists. It has arisen as a theoretical background to nurture the feminism movements (Herouach, 2019). It is a main branch of contemporary feminism that tries to establish gender equality in the society (Maynard, 1995). It is inclusive and socially

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progressive. It “*tends to be adopted by ‘mainstream’ (i.e., middle-class) women who do not disagree with the current social structure*” (Zhang & Rios, 2021). Liberal feminism supports suffrages, such as equal rights to education, equal political and civil rights, right to vote for all citizens irrespective of men and women. It concentrates more on issues, such as equality in the workplace, in education, and in political rights (Jaggar, 1983; Hackett & Haslanger, 2006).

The pioneers of liberal feminism are Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), and Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858), who act for women rights and liberation, when the economic and social position of European women was very low (Herouach, 2019). Seminal feminist work “*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*” developed by famous English author Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792, which is considered as the beginning of the liberal feminist movement. She shows logics that women become as independent and morally strong as the men. If different education system is imposed on men and women; then it is not only unjust but also counterproductive and the nation will be of “*artificial and weak characters*”. For this reason, she argues for equal access to education for women and men. The women who married to wealthy professional and entrepreneurial men, and had no incentive to work outside home, she compared them to the “*feathered race*”, i.e., the birds in cages that do nothing but plume themselves. Therefore, both sexes, should be educated to enhance their rationality that will be benefitted the society (Wollstonecraft, 1792).

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, John Stuart Mill, an English philosopher, political economist, Member of Parliament (MP) and civil servant, has argued for equal economic opportunities, political rights and civil liberties for men and women in “*The Subjection of Women*”. He thought that same educational and civic opportunities as like men, most women would choose to remain wives and mothers, by improving domestic life for the family (Mill, 1869). On the other hand, Harriet Taylor disagreed on Mill’s concepts; women would choose to participate more fully in public life, going beyond simply voting and performing charity work. Instead, they would become the partners of men in productive industry and would have fewer children. His works largely focused on issues of marriage and divorce. He believes that both divorced men and women have a role to play in children’s lives (Mill & Taylor, 1832; Mill & Mill, 1970).

Liberal feminists also demanded equal rights for voting, reproduction, abortion and child healthcare, and reaction against sexual harassment. They believe that nobody benefits from existing gender inequalities; both men and women are harmed, because the potential of females and males alike is suppressed. Consequently, many skilled members of the workforce do not get the opportunity to develop their talents. On the other hand, a dual income family is more solvent than a single earning family (Hackett & Haslanger, 2006; Zhang & Rios, 2021).

Movement of liberal feminism results the right to vote for women in 1920 in the USA with the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution. Liberalism has become an intellectual tool towards freeing humans in all domains of life, such as in social, political, economic and religious domains (Herouach, 2019). Liberal feminists are of two forms: i) classical feminists, who fought for the removal of discriminatory laws, and ii) welfare feminists, who think to eliminate socio-economic obstructions to women progress (Papa, 2017).

Liberal feminism works within the structure of mainstream society to integrate women into it and make it more responsive to individual women's rights. But it does not directly challenge the system itself or the ideology behind women's oppression. It has failed to fully address the root cause of gender inequality. There becomes a great global social change due to liberal feminism. It considers that women are foremost human beings and not sexual beings. As women are rational creatures as like men and they should not be denied from natural rights and should have freedom to act according to their wishes. Moreover, liberal feminists aim for gradual change in the political, economic and social systems of societies (Tong, 2009; Zhang & Rios, 2021).

Liberal feminists show mixed opinions on prostitution and pornography. The three main elements in prostitution practice are: payment, promiscuity, and emotional indifference (Asnani, 2020). Many liberal feminists reject to condemn or criminalize the prostitution and pornography, because much of it involves coercions and choices that are not autonomous (Barry, 1995). Liberal feminists have observed that women who pose for pornography and engage in prostitution are violently forced or coerced into it (Reiman, 1979). On the other hand, many liberal feminists oppose prostitution and pornography (Shrage, 1994). In the society these are inconsistent with dignity, solidarity, and equality (Jensen, 2017). They realize that prostitution

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was not the selling of sex but the selling of mastery; they do not provide a service but sell their own subordination. Childhood sexual abuse, drug dependency, and poverty are endemic among prostitutes and other sex workers (Pateman, 1983).

## **5.2 Marxist Feminism**

Marxism is a political philosophy, led by left-wing people; inspired and founded by the two great German philosophers, Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), and is generally referred to as the economic theory of history. It is a political doctrine that deals in releasing the chains of oppression is applied by the elite class using frames like law, religion, race, and sources of production. Capitalism has created two major social classes: i) bourgeoisie, which is the owner of the means of social production (i.e., owners of capitalist companies), and ii) proletariat, which is the employer of wage-labor (sell labor force in exchange for a wage) having no means of production of their own, subjugated in all affairs of socioeconomic life. The bourgeoisie makes profits from the exploitation (i.e., paying low) to the proletariat (Marx, 1867; Abbasi, 2015).

After the IR, the poor from rural areas are displaced to the urban areas and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the new capitalist class. Both philosophers, Marx and Engels, observe that the difference between men and women is not biological but social. Their philosophy confirms that economy is the controlling factor of all the realities in the shape of culture, class, creed, education, race, religion, etc. Their works strongly support the powerful insights to interpret the structures denoting women's oppression. They have insisted that patriarchy is a product of capitalism. Capitalism has made a sexual division of labor; men to economic production and women to social reproduction (Marx, 1844; Engels, 1884).

According to Marxism, the state is an instrument of class struggle in which the bourgeoisie class exploits the proletariat class. Women should not struggle against men but against the bourgeois system under capitalism, which is a collective work of both men and women of the working class (Khan et al., 2016). Marxism considers that gender inequality within the society has produced from capitalism and *“men's domination over women is a byproduct of capital's domination over*

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*labor*” (Wably, 1990). Engels mentions “*Within the family he (man) is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat*” (Engels, 1884). It is made to appear natural at the behest of patriarchal forces, which Engels calls “*final defeat of female sex*”. He has an intention to emancipate women from the burden of unpaid and devalued domestic duties, patriarchy and economic deprivation. He has highlighted the struggle of women throughout the history. He has observed that economically weak women suffer greatly on patriarchy, but financially solvent women enjoy more social security. He and other Marxist feminists demand women’s liberation from economic deprivation. He assures that to liberate women a revolution against the capitalistic order of society is necessary (Engels, 1884; Lokaneeta, 2001). Nancy Holmstrom says, “*Marxist feminism is an emancipatory, critical framework that aims at understanding and explaining gender oppression in a systematic way*” (Holmstrom, 2002).

Marxist feminism is discovered in the 1970s, which focused on the dismantling of capitalism and way to liberate women that explains the roots of women’s oppression from a class viewpoint (Vogel, 1983). Actually, Marx has never developed a theory of gender, and his contribution in feminism is an indirect procedures; due to the rise of capitalism. Marxism has provided the tools and the categories to enable the society for thinking together gender and class, feminism and anti-capitalism (Federici, 2018). Marxist feminism is “*critical of traditional Marxism for its gender blindness*”. It is concerned with women’s double oppression of both class and sex (Calas & Smircich, 1996). It directly blames that the root cause of women oppression is capitalism (Tong, 2009). Marxist feminists have observed that oppression on women is visible in home environment, workplace, and social life due to economic, social, and business reasons (Kuleli, 2019). They believe that women are oppressed by capitalism and gender inequality will vanish when capitalism is replaced by socialism (Papa, 2017).

Marxism has identified the origins of women oppression in the introduction of private property (Chinn & Wheeler, 1985). It believes that capitalism is one of the main reasons for women’s subjugation, oppression, and second class status in society, where women labor is uncompensated and invisible. Therefore, from its view, the equality for women cannot be achieved within the substructure of capitalism (Abbasi, 2015). Marxist feminism argues that “*poverty is a structural feature of a capitalist system. Women’s oppression is regarded as*

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*inextricably linked with class oppression, precluding the liberation of women within the prevailing capitalist world system” (Bandarage, 1984). Marxist feminism has realized that “capitalism is viewed as having created a unique social and economic class for women, which is maintained primarily through economic exploitation of women’s labor in the family, industry, and marketing” (Chinn & Wheeler, 1985).*

Marxist feminists indicate the secondary oppression of women with economic, social and political structures related to capitalism. It has stressed to adjust domestic labor, as well as wage work to support their position. It believes that the contribution in economic household may give women a better position in the family. It has realized that oppression on women is not only from men but also from women (Barrett, 1980). For Marxist feminists, if the class distinctions can be overcome in the society through unity of the working (oppressed) class, then women can be free, and their housework should be valued by the state and society. Moreover, Marxist feminists add that, women must take an active part in the unity of oppressed class against the bourgeoisie. The way to this unity is all about raising awareness according to Marxist feminism (Engels, 1884). In Marxist feminism ethnicity, race, wage labor, etc. are ignored (Grosz, 2010). Although Marxist feminism is very well-known framework, it does not have adequate theoretical involvement for uprooting gender dominance from the society (Balbus, 1982; Jagger & Rothenberg, 1993). Marxist feminists see the patriarchy as a product of capitalism. Women oppression would be linked to private property that creates an environment the control of women by fathers and later by husbands. Marxists reject the capitalist state in totality, but they demand freedom and equality of gender. On the other hand, unpaid domestic work is relatively invisible in Marxist feminism (Engels, 1884).

### **5.3 Socialist Feminism**

Socialist feminism is a vibrant intellectual and political current that has come and gone. It has arisen to produce a creative synthesis of debates in the late 1960s about the roots of the oppression of women. It is inspired by Marxism, and is developed for the reaction to liberal feminism, but it does not lead to the abolition of patriarchy in social relations. Marxism is stuck with the complexity of class analysis which socialist feminists consider as gender blind. Socialist

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feminism is gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. It has gradually faded from the 1980s and has abolished after the collapse of communism in the early 1990s (Holmes, 2007; Fraser, 2009).

Socialist feminists believe that women are exploited by a dual system: capitalist and patriarchal. They reject radical feminism idea that patriarchy is the only system at the root of gender inequality (Hansen & Philipson, 1990). They also reject the Marxist notion, where class and class struggle are the only defining aspects of history and economic development. They believe that the home is not just a place of consumption, but of production as well. They agree with the fundamental premises of both Marxist feminism, where capitalism is the source of women oppression, and radical feminism, where patriarchy is the source of women oppression (Buchanan, 2011).

Socialist feminism wants to analyze the effects of fair distribution of rewards to realize the correlation between gender and classes (Bell et al., 2020). The main aim of it is to overcome the historical account of the exploitation of women. It analyzes both economic and gender-based oppressions and any one form of oppression is not the key form of oppression, instead it is a combination of systems related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, social class, and nation that are all interlinked. Gender and class intertwine to create new forms of oppression and privileges (Dworkin, 2007; Armstrong & Armstrong, 1983).

Socialist feminists have realized that liberal feminism does not stress on the depth of the oppression of women, rather it targets the women of the upper and upper middle classes. Actually, women have been oppressed in all known societies, and the nature of oppression is differed for the different economic realities. Oppression of women is not only on the economic system, but also on the combination of patriarchy and capitalism (West, 1981; Bowman, 2016).

Socialist feminists argue that even though women are oppressed in almost all societies, the degree and character of oppression depends upon the economic realities of a given society. They stress that in the society women are considered as birth giver, child rearer and socializer, caretaker of the sick people, etc. When women engage in the job-market, they are subjected to lower wages than men and victim of sexual harassment. To achieve liberation of women, the

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movement should be aimed at taking all issues collectively (Hennessy & Ingraham, 1997). Socialist feminism wishes to promote equal wages and the unionization of women in the society. But it has remained silent on race, sexuality or disability. Social Feminists believe that the state supports the patriarchal structure that exists in the family. They have seen that women liberation is a necessary part of social, economic and political action (Wong, 1997).

Socialist feminism has evolved through the three goals: i) it analyzes the exploitation of women as a result of the two interconnected aspects of patriarchy and capitalism, ii) it provides extensive social analysis methods to realize historical materialism, iii) it shows the need for significant ideas in material analysis to determine human affairs (Ritzer, 2011; Gordon, 2013). Social feminists have seen that class differences among women influence their gender experience. For example, women from the upper classes may employ poorer women to do the domestic work for them (Brenner & Ramas, 1984). It stresses heavily on the economic dimension of gender inequality, the detriment of other areas of women's lives, such as sexuality, violence or abortion. Socialist feminists find economic dependence of women on men as main cause of their subordination. Therefore, they want social and economic equality and financial independence of women (Brenner & Holmstrom, 2013).

#### **5.4 Radical Feminism**

Radical (means root) feminism is a movement founded in the 1960s by the women who had participated in the civil rights and anti-war campaigns, primarily in New York and Boston, then spread to the rest of the USA and Europe; on the basis of the idea that patriarchy is the main cause of discrimination and oppression of women (Millet, 1970; Vukoičić, 2017). It views that patriarchy and sexism are the most fundamental factors in the discrimination and oppression of women and ignore all others forms, such as race, color, age, religion, ethnicity, culture, geographical location, disability, caste, and economic and social classes; patriarchy is based in psychological and biological factors, which is rooted in the society (Nachescu, 2009).

Radical feminism also highlights violence and coercion made by men through rape, sexual harassment, child sexual assault, domestic violence; abuse for women, children, and vulnerable



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men in patriarchy (Jensen, 2021). It blames the exploitation of women on men, who have benefited from the subordination of women. It sees women as one homogeneous group and recognizes them to be oppressed by men. Main advocates of radical feminism are Kate Millet (1934-2017), an American feminist writer, educator, artist, and activist, and Germane Greer (1939- ), an Australian writer and public intellectual (Millett, 1970). They complained exploitation of women as housewives, mothers, and sex partners; and also see the marriage as a formalization of women persecution (Tong, 2009).

Radical feminism is the radical evolution and extreme development of liberal feminists inside the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Graham, 1994). It opposes patriarchal oppression and female maltreatment, and tries to prevent male-dominated society. It focuses on power of men and patriarchy, and privilege within the social system that seeks to promote women organizations as separate social organizations (Jensen, 2017). It is based on two principles: i) women are of absolute positive value, and ii) they are oppressed violently everywhere due to the system of patriarchy (Rowland & Klein, 2013). It views patriarchy and sexism as the most fundamental factors in women's oppression. It respects women as a political class, because of their biological functions. It does not favor marriage and family, as both of them help to establish patriarchy in the society (Atkinson, 2000). It stresses that women who give birth, are different from men, and therefore they should have their own rights rather than only equal rights to those of men have (Atkinson, 2000). It seeks to promote division between peoples on superficial differences; its propositions seem to be unrealistic, and often considers as the route to violence. So that it is considered as both class and color blindness and also heterosexuals (Rudy, 2001). Weibo, a Chinese social networking site, demonstrates radical feminism characteristics (Mao, 2020).

Radical feminists see the society as patriarchal, and it is dominated and ruled by men, i.e., men are ruling class, and women are the subject class. Moreover, they believe that women are not just equal but are actually morally superior to men and patriarchy can be replaced by matriarchy. They want to transform the women life and the society through radical actions (Tong, 2009). They think that men to be enemies of women and consider marriage as a hegemonic contract to exploit women. They prefer the use of technologies to men for the fulfillment of sexual desires and reproductive need (Abbasi, 2015).

The early radical feminists Betty Friedan has realized that women are oppressed by the cultural construction of society because of their sex. The radical feminist group shows logic that a woman's decision to marry should be a rational strategy rather than surrendering to a false sentiment. They viewed 'gender' as a socially contrived absolute category than masculinity or femininity (Rudy, 2001). Mary Daly and other activists have argued that women are closer to ecology, but men are to their sexuality. According to radical feminism, women exploitation has resulted from socio-cultural practices in patriarchal societies and the Marxism believes that the main source of oppression and causes is inferior position of women in the communities (Cronin, 2007).

Radical feminists believe that prostitution, pornography, stripping, massage parlors, escort services are sexual exploitation industries, and men routinely buy and sell objectified female bodies for their sexual pleasure. Feminists like Andrea Dworkin and Catherine Mackinnon are very strongly against pornography, because it is dehumanizing and degrading for women (Jensen, 2021). In the 1980s, some radical feminists argued that participation of women in the manufacture of pornography and in prostitution were not link to patriarchy (Shrage, 1994).

## **5.5 Ecofeminism**

Oppression of women and domination of nature are connected and mutually strengthening. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, ecofeminism is emerged with the supports of the fight for women empowerment and sustainable environment. Ecofeminism defines as "*the feminist position most explicitly concerned with environmental degradation*" (Braidotti et al., 1994). It is much more spiritual than political or theoretical in nature. It contains two major components; ecology and feminine. It believes that women realize and love nature instinctually, and oppose oppression of women and aggression against nature under patriarchy (Zhang, 2021). Ecofeminists Alice Walker, Vandana Shiva, Ivone Gebara, and others deal with the moral basis of human connection to nature (Warren, 1990). There are many movements in the world that are related to ecofeminism, for example, Chipko movement in India, Anti-Militarist movement in Europe and the USA, Green Belt movement in Kenya (Quinby, 1990).

In our society, there are some order dualities, such as male/female, white/black, culture/nature, West/East, human/nature, white/black, conscious/unconscious, logic/emotion, strong/weak, and spirit/body occur, and former dominates the latter. For example, conscious is superior to unconscious, the West is superior and civilized but East is inferior, white people have in superior positions than black people, and logic is superior to emotion. In some societies, culture is superior to nature, and man is superior to woman (Said, 1977; Kümbet, 2012). Therefore, if man symbolizes culture, consciousness, logic and spirit; woman must represent nature, unconsciousness, emotion and body. If we consider case of women and nature, both are similarly conceptualized, and both are exploited in the masculine-dominated society (Öztürk, 2020).

Ecofeminism is an organic combination of feminist and ecological thoughts that are articulated through the work of women gardeners, botanists, animal welfare advocates, etc. It focuses ecology and feminism into one point, and seeks to draw parallels between the exploitation of the environment and the exploitation of women. It is rooted in a reawakening of earth honoring and earth caring. It shows that women are closer to nature than men are (Anjum, 2014; Zhang, 2021). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the nature is in the dangerous position due to rapid urbanization, industrialization, commercialization and unlimited needs of human beings (Mohajan, 2015). Women and nature are same in various ways due to their biological status, reproductive role, and discrimination; both defined as passive subjects that subjected to violence and social inequalities (Zhang, 2021).

Françoise d'Eaubonne (1920-2005), a French author, labor rights activist, environmentalist and feminist, introduced the idea of ecofeminism in 1974 through the publication of her book "*Le Féminisme ou la Mort*". She has realized that the only way to save the environment is through the destruction of male power by women (Lagarde, 2021). The movement was further developed by Ynestra King in about 1976 and became a movement in 1980 (Rao, 2012). Ecofeminists believe that male-dominated culture thrives on sexism, racism, class-exploitation, and environmental destruction. Of course, they agree that there is a close link between the liberation of women and of nature. They have called the women and men to re-conceptualize world in non-hierarchical ways (Anjum, 2014). They claim that environmental problems and women's issues

Research and Advances in Education, SEP. 2022 VOL.1 NO.3, pp. 11-26. Paradigm Academic Press are interrelated (Zhang, 2021). For example, women bring humans into the world; nature ensures the continuity of life on earth (Öztürk, 2020).

Ecofeminism views patriarchy and its focus on control and domination not only as a source of women's oppression but as being harmful to humanity as well as destructive of all living creatures and the earth itself (Warren, 1990). It stresses that humans and nature must live in harmony to maintain ecological balance and sustainable development (Zhang, 2021). It observes women rights and empowerment that are related to political, economic, social and cultural factors, which benefit all living creatures. Women can reproduce and create a life, just like nature. For example, women create humans; they raise children and feed them (Kristeva, 2016; Öztürk, 2020). Nature is just like a mother, ensures the continuity of life on earth with its resources. Nature is mentioned as "*Mother Nature, motherland, or mother earth*" (Roach, 2003). They wanted to use the term ecological feminism to indicate that women are natural environmentalists, by virtue of being born as women (Raj & Davidson, 2014).

## **5.6 Cultural Feminism**

Cultural feminism mainly describes about "*female nature or female essence*" that attempts to revalue and redefine attributes ascribed to the feminine character. This female essence includes a greater emphasis on cooperation, relationships, and peace; also referred to as an ethic of care. The cultural feminism tries to find differences between men and women, based on biological differences in reproductive capacity. It seeks to validate feminine attributes that have been systematically undervalued within a patriarchal society. It also highlights the conflict between women and men, but reflects the variation of culturally created rather than biologically innate (Lewis, 2021; Ghodsee, 2004).

In 1972, socialist feminist Elizabeth Diggs, used the label "*cultural feminism*" for applying it to radical feminism for minimizing gender differences (Diggs, 1972). In 1975, the radical feminist critic, Brooke Williams, for the first time, introduced the term "*cultural feminism*" to describe the depoliticization of radical feminism (Taylor & Rupp, 1993).

Cultural feminism refers to a philosophy that men and women have different attitudes to the world around them, and that greater value should be applied on the way women approach the world. In some cases, a woman's way of looking at the world is actually superior to that of men (Alcoff, 1988). Cultural feminism is a theory that praises the positive aspects of women. Aim of it is for the creation of women-only spaces, such as women's bookstores, art, gyms or health clubs, periodicals, etc. to generate a new, patriarchy-free consciousness society, and to engage in radically different ways of living. Cultural feminists have seen an opportunity to rebuild society completely with female-centered institutions and power structures (Daly, 1978; Echols, 1983). The basic principle of cultural feminism is that women have a different culture and even a different epistemology, such as different ethics, ideas, and language from men (Evans, 1995). It attempts to unite all women in a common sisterhood, regardless of ethnicity, race, class or age. The goal of it is to create and maintain healthy relationships and environments that are free of masculinity values (Alcoff, 1988).

Many scholars have observed that when liberal and radical feminism faces difficulties to achieve gender equality in the society; cultural feminism shows ways of thinking, acting, and speaking as distinctive and inherent qualities to build a woman's shared culture (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). Cultural feminists combat woman oppression through means of the creation and sustainability of separate woman-centered spaces that "*promote female biology as the basis of women's power*". They look to find solutions for how the worst offenses of patriarchy can be mitigated (Hyde, 2013). Cultural feminists identified women as superior/preferable to qualities identified with men, whether the qualities are products of nature or culture. Male characteristics are harmful to society, and female characteristics bring benefit for the society. For example, less aggression among nations would lead to less war and conflict (Echols, 1983; Lewis, 2021).

## **5.7 Black Feminism**

Black feminism has emerged in the 1970s to produce social thought for opposing oppression (Collins, 2008). It is an intellectual, artistic, philosophical, and activist practice grounded in black women's lived experiences. It is a political struggle to combat oppression faced by any women of color. It provides the idea that "*black women are inherently valuable, that [black*

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women's] liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because our need as human persons for autonomy" (Combahee River Collective, 1978). It has many terminologies, such as Black Canadian feminism, African-American feminism, African feminism, etc. (Wane, 2004). Black feminism is formed to empower Black women towards fighting for their unique cause for social justice. In 1989, scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1959-) coined the term "Black Feminism" in her doctoral thesis, where she argues that a Black woman have to deal with the concept of the "double bind" which refers to being Black and being a woman (Crenshaw, 1989).

Black feminism plays an important role in the formation and stability of black families in the USA. It emphasizes on the issue of racism that is a main cause of oppression to women of color, and black women face different forms of oppression that is racist and sexist (Désiré, 2016). Majority of African black women were brought to the USA to work as slaves, in a form of oppression. In the American society, black women and white women have different status. The lives of African-American women have been critically affected by racism, sexism, classism, and ethnicism. All African Black women have experienced living in a society that devalues them, and most of them are victim of much oppressions, such as child rape, child marriage, female genital mutilation, etc. (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016). Backgrounds for Black women is challenging because, they are considered to be less than human, and "*there is no more isolated subgroup in academe than Black women*" (Carroll, 1982). In the society, ethnicity is determined by cultural factors, such as nationality, language and culture; while race is determined by physical characteristics, such as skin color, facial features, and hair type (Betancourt & López, 1993). Black feminists have expanded the notion "*Black Feminism*" to include issues of class and sexuality, in addition to race and gender (Salzman, 2006). Maria Stewart (1803-1879), Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), and Frances E. W. Harper (1825-1911), agitated for the rights of women of color. In 1851, Sojourner Truth, a former slave who became a public speaker later, told that when white women were struggling for voting and labor rights; black women struggled to be seen themselves as human, i.e., in the same society, black women face a radically different situation than white women (Brezina, 2005; Ribeiro, 2016). Feminist African-American writer Alice Walker coined the term "Womanism" in 1979 to describe an intersectional alternative to white feminism. In 1982, her novel "*The Color Purple*" is published where she used "Womanist" to describe the black feminist movement (Walker, 1983).

In 1896, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), an American organization, was formed as part of a club movement by educated middle class Black women, which adopted the motto “*lifting as we climb*”. The members of NACW focused on combating harmful stereotypes surrounding Black women’s sexuality and gender identity (Williams, 1994). In the USA, “*The Women Liberation and Black Liberation Movement*” were growing at a rapid pace during the late 1960s and 1970s. Black women did not feel politically represented by either of these. The former is focused primarily on middle-class white women; while the latter is focused on black men. The black women remain in an invisible category and even within the Black Liberation movement. They were being constantly subjected to sexism, and consequently, Black Feminist Movement is developed in response to it (Walker, 1983; Ribeiro, 2016).

Liberation of black women requires freedom for all people, which will end the racism, sexism, and class oppression. The movement believed that the moral and social climate which perceived women as second-class citizens needed to change, and women should be free to define their own individual identity as part of human society. The women liberation movement focused primarily on middle-class; white women and black liberation movement focused on black men, but black women remain in invisible category and being subjected to sexism (Rue, 1970; Cook, 2011; Studer, 2017).

## **5.8 Postmodern Feminism**

Recently the impact of postmodern thinking on feminist theory and politics has created substantial debate. After the development of “*The Women Liberation Movement and Black Liberation Movement*”, worldwide divorce rate has increased alarmingly; consequently, increases the miseries of the children of the divorced families, and also STDs and HIV/AIDS have spread globally. In this stage, feminists face the new dilemma, and begin to rethink male and female relations. They have allowed the feminist movement to protect social rights and interests of women, and side by side they have questioned those feminists who are trying to subvert the traditional family model (Fan, 2017). In this movement, there is a great change of the previous debates within feminism and feminists reveal that language is what constructs gender.

Multiple factors, such as class, race, ethnicity and sexuality collectively are responsible to construct the identity 'woman'. Neither any one of these factors is solely responsible for women oppression, nor would handling any one of these could provide a solution to the problem of suppression of women (Butler, 1999). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are living in the postmodern world, but prejudice and discriminatory attitudes about women have not changed much over a period of time (Jensen, 2021).

Postmodern feminism, also called the third generation feminism, is a combination of post-structuralism, postmodernism, and French feminism. These three terms have emerged spontaneously at the sometimes, and also their themes overlap and philosophies seem contradictory. On the other hand, postmodern feminism has an uneasy relationship between feminism and postmodernism; because some feminists believe postmodern thought weakens the attacks that feminist theory attempts to create, while others are in favor of the union (Sands & Nuccio, 1992). Postmodern feminists believe that there is a multiplicity of women and women's movements, which represent diverse and divergent interests. They recommend a wide range of social forms and behaviors, and argue against a relatively uncomplicated account of oppression based on patriarchy. Postmodern feminism is the destabilization of what is considered normal or natural in relation to gender (Alcoff, 1997). Postmodern feminism rests heavily on social constructivist theories arguing that gender is a construct of language, or discourse (Sands & Nuccio, 1992). It seeks to develop a new paradigm of social criticism that does not rely on traditional philosophical reinforcements and emphasizes the relations of the feminism issues to the languages, sex, and power (Edman, 1997; Kauthar, 2005).

Postmodern feminists reject a common feminist position and support a plurality of perspectives on knowing, such as essentialism, philosophy, and universal truths (Hawkesworth, 1989). They believe that knowledge is always provisional, open-ended, and relational, and each woman can capture the truth differently (Wallin, 2001). They also want to remove gender inequality from the society. They focus on how discourse in society creates social assumptions about how women should be treated. They have followed the ways in which sexual difference is shaped by language and culture (Butler, 1999). They believe that truth is not absolute and merely constructed by individuals groups, culture, and language (Barrett, 1980).



## **6. Conclusion**

Globally women are oppressed, abused, marginalized, and deprived from their legal rights because of their gender. From the ancient time, feminism has always existed but its organized form has seen around the 17<sup>th</sup> century in England. During the second wave of feminism giving rise to several political ideologies, such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, and ecofeminism are raised to protest against the sexist ways of men to the private lives of women. Liberal feminists have stressed for equal rights and benefits both for men and women. Radical feminists think that patriarchy is the basis of women oppression. Marxist feminists consider that capitalism and patriarchy are the root causes of women oppression, which is analyzed only through the class paradigm, and housework should be valued in society. Socialist feminists stress on socialism, and both class and gender factors to be taken into account; patriarchy and capitalism should be articulated. Ecofeminism views patriarchy, and focuses ecology and feminism into one point. Later, during the third wave for a global recognition, some new ideologies, such as cultural feminism, black feminism, and postmodern feminism are presented. Cultural feminism refers to a philosophy that men and women have different attitudes, and tries to create of women-only spaces. Black feminism is emerged to empower black women toward fighting for their unique cause for social justice. Postmodern feminists think heterosexual society with male dominance is a source of women oppression.

All the feminism's basic slogan is creation of a just society, the protection of freedom and liberty, the creation of a class-less society, and the creation of a gender-neutral society respectively. At present, educational equality is accepted in many nations and females have gained many societal responsibilities worldwide. But they have not gained same advantages globally as like males to play a vital role in the courts and public administration. We hope that in near future the justice, freedom, liberty and gender equality will be established in all societies.

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