



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 7.560 (SJIF 2024)

FEMINIST PRESPECTIVE: A PATH TOWARDS WOMEN EMPOWEMENT AND GENDER JUSTICE

Dr. Harjeet Kaur Virk

Assistant Professor,
Post Graduate Department of Commerce,
Sri Guru Gobind Singh College,
Sector 26 A, Chandigarh, India
E-mail: harjeetvirk04@yahoo.com

DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2024-39966783/IRJHISIC2404004>

ABSTRACT:

It is acknowledged that a society's ability to educate its women plays a major role in quickening the nation's development and sustainability. It is impossible for any modern democracy, civilized society, or developing economy to overlook the rights and ambitions of women. Gender equality is, to put it simply, fundamental to the nation's development process.

The feminist perspective basic ideology is to crafting a global a global sensation towards achieving freedom and justice for women. There are various feminists who strands and provide distinctive contribution to the liberation of women and inspire them to ensure a place of honour and dignity in civilized society. No doubt feminists perspectives lacks of coherence of objectives both in developed and developing countries and which lacks unity of thoughts, actions and objectives. Women were deliberately kept out of public life in the gender based patriarchal ideology. The main objective of this paper is to highlight different feminist perspectives which basically try to portrait that women are equal in terms of their intellectual capacities and creative capabilities.

Keywords: Gender, Women empowerment, Feminist perspective

INTRODUCTION:

In a society, an enlightened woman is seen as a crucial facilitator for quickening processes of progress that are naturally sustainable. Every civilization must do everything in its power to support women's rights and ambitions within that society. The growth of a nation is fundamentally centred on gender equality. Stronger women and girls boost the health and productivity of their families and communities, which enhances opportunities for the coming generation. Gender equality and women's empowerment is one of eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals. In simple words, Gender equality and women's empowerment are considered to be a desirable by product of human

development. The feminist theories have a struck a very justified and defensive reaction against prevailed gender bias in the society. The main purpose of feminist approach was to assault against all forms of gender discrimination and inspired women to strike a collective and organized offensive against their subjugation and exploitation in diverse spheres of human relationships. The gravity of feminist thought is its fervent desire for equality, justice and respect for the basic human rights.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES:

A wide range of concepts known as feminist theory are founded on the idea that women and men are equal and should have the same chances and rights in all areas of their lives. It can also be defined as a set of beliefs that aim to question conventional notions of gender and the associated ideals of femininity and masculinity. The main claim of liberal feminism is that gender inequality exists and can be eliminated by giving women the same rights as men through systemic changes in the legal, political, educational, and other domains. According to socialist feminism, the capitalist system's disparities are mostly to blame for gender inequality. Gender oppression is based on sexual politics, according to radical feminism. Other strands of feminism started to develop from these threads in order to overcome the constraints imposed by these types of feminism. Black feminism emerged as a critique of the radical feminist theory that holds that oppression is a universal experience shared by women everywhere. Black feminist scholars argue that gender oppression must be studied at the intersections of race, class, and gender because these three forms of oppression cannot be separated. According to postmodern philosophy, postmodern feminism has maintained that rather than being taken for granted, some fundamental conceptual categories—such as women and gender—need to be questioned and dismantled.

LIBERAL FEMINISM:

Liberal feminism, as a prominent branch of feminist thought, advocates for women's rights and gender equality within existing societal structures, particularly through legal and policy reforms. Rooted in liberal principles of individual rights, freedom, and equality, liberal feminism aims to dismantle barriers that prevent women from fully participating in political, economic, and social life. Unlike some other feminist perspectives, liberal feminism seeks change primarily through gradual, incremental reforms rather than radical transformation of society. At the heart of liberal feminism is the belief that women should have the same opportunities and rights as men, including equal access to education, employment, and political representation. Liberal feminists argue for legislative changes such as equal pay for equal work, reproductive rights, and antidiscrimination laws to address systemic inequalities. By advocating for legal reforms and policy initiatives, liberal feminism seeks to create a more equitable and just society where women can exercise autonomy and agency over their lives. Moreover, liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of individual choice and agency,

recognizing that women's experiences and aspirations are diverse and multifaceted. This perspective encourages women to pursue their goals and aspirations freely, whether it be in the workforce, academia, or politics, without facing societal constraints or gender-based discrimination. By challenging restrictive gender norms and stereotypes, liberal feminism opens up possibilities for women to lead fulfilling lives on their own terms. While liberal feminism has made significant strides in advancing women's rights and opportunities, critics argue that its focus on legal and institutional reforms may not address deeper structural inequalities or intersecting forms of oppression. Additionally, some feminists contend that liberal feminism's emphasis on individual empowerment may overlook broader social and economic factors that contribute to gender inequality. Nevertheless, liberal feminism remains a crucial pathway towards women's empowerment and gender equality, contributing to on-going efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all genders.

RADICAL FEMINIST:

The perspective which plays a significant role for the emancipation of women is known as radical feminism. It emerged in the year 1960s and continues to stimulate the gender movement to a very great extent. The radical feminists try to bridge the difference between 'public sphere' and 'private sphere'. It was found that the 'public sphere' continues remains to be controlled and regulated by the male. Similarly, 'private sphere' the family is equally controlled by the male through patriarchal customs and the male dominated rules and regulations in the family affairs. So, the main emphasis of the radical feminist perspective was to carry forward a powerful theoretical protest against the patriarchal ideology. The foundation of radical feminist perspective is lies on the fact that there is an establishment of egalitarian society. Radical feminist strives to obliterate the gender based public-private divisions of functions. It has been found that the difference between public and private not only prevent women from participation in public life but also ignores the issue of domestic violence against them. Thus, the emphasis of radical feminists not only to demonstrates the idea of fair equality of opportunity but also seeks equality of entitlements, treatment and honor. Radical feminists contributed a lot in rejecting the stereotype tradition sex roles as boys are most active and girls are passive. Similarly, an adult male is more capable of to control; complex socio-economic and political conditions whereas the female is affectionate, caring, submissive, could better be honored as mother and wives. They emphasized that gender inequality is not nurtured through biological sex but is historically and culturally constructed. This approach seeks to eventually deconstruct the patriarchal power prevalence both in public and private spheres. Radical feminism makes a clear distinction between sex and gender. Sex stands for biological differences and gender is socially and historically constructed idea. As to enhance gender equality in the society, radical feminists try to totally destroy the constructed parameters of gender differences. Radical feminism presents a

distinctive approach to achieving women's empowerment and gender equality, advocating for fundamental societal transformation to address the root causes of women's oppression. Rooted in the belief that patriarchy is a pervasive and entrenched system of power that underpins various forms of inequality, radical feminism seeks to dismantle existing social structures and institutions that perpetuate gender-based oppression. Central to radical feminism is the recognition that women's subordination is not merely a result of individual prejudice or discrimination but is deeply embedded in the fabric of society. Radical feminists contend that patriarchy operates through systems of domination and control, including but not limited to capitalism, colonialism, racism, and hetero normativity. Therefore, achieving women's empowerment and gender equality requires challenging and dismantling these intersecting systems of oppression.

Unlike liberal feminism, which often focuses on reforming existing institutions, radical feminism advocates for revolutionary change and the creation of alternative, non-hierarchical forms of social organization. This might involve grassroots activism, collective action, and community organizing to challenge power structures and create spaces where women can exercise autonomy and self-determination. Radical feminists prioritize the voices and experiences of marginalized women, recognizing the importance of solidarity and intersectional approaches to feminist struggle. Furthermore, radical feminism critiques traditional notions of femininity and gender roles, challenging the idea that women's worth is tied to their conformity to patriarchal standards. Instead, radical feminists celebrate women's diverse experiences and advocate for the liberation of all individuals from restrictive gender norms and expectations. While radical feminism has been critiqued for its rejection of mainstream institutions and strategies, its emphasis on systemic change and collective liberation offers a powerful vision for achieving women's empowerment and gender equality. By addressing the root causes of oppression and centering the voices of marginalized women, radical feminism contributes to broader movements for social justice and transformative change.

SOCIALIST FEMINISM:

The Marxist and the socialist movement focus primarily on the economic aspects of women exploitation. Marx and Engels tried to understand women operations and exploitation in terms of the nature of material and production and the concept of alienation. The basic ideology of Marxist thinking with regard to women exploitation is essentially analogous to the alienation of the working class in a capitalist mode of production. The powerful capitalistic exploitative culture not only prevails in economic sphere but is equally implied to the exploitation of women in the narrow confine of household affairs. According to Engels, they basically pointed out that the frame of women subjugation is in parallel to the emergence of the private property over an extending period of

history. With the expansion of the civilization and material possession, male remains always in a powerful position and assert greater control over the exchange value of produced goods. It was fortified with the emergence of the family, a primary unit of the society. In simple terms it was found that exclusive controls of the males over the domestic affairs as an owner of private property further worsen the condition of women to a greater extent. Women were completely marginalized in socioeconomic and political life. Therefore, the main focus of Engels was the complete demolition of 'private domestic labor' and supports the spread of 'public industry' for the liberation of the women. One of the main themes of the Marxist feminist is that it basically tries to integrate women's emancipation in the wider context of a class struggle against the capitalist society. This strand of feminism envisages that an accumulation of wealth in the hands of few is the root causes behind an exploitation of both the proletariat and women by the dominant bourgeois. In this approach exploitation of women is systematically planned and is socially constructed. Marxists believed that inequality is not natural but it is created.

POSTMODERN FEMINISM:

The late 20th century saw the emergence of postmodern feminism, a complex and dynamic framework within feminist philosophy that was primarily developed in response to the shortcomings and criticisms of second-wave feminism. Through an examination of the intricate relationships between race, class, sexual orientation, and other social factors, this method questions conventional ideas of gender, power, and identity. Fundamentally, postmodern feminism stresses the multiplicity and fluidity of gendered experiences while rejecting the notion of a single, universal female experience.

Central to postmodern feminism is the recognition that knowledge and truth are socially constructed and contextual, rather than objective and universal. This perspective draws heavily from poststructuralist philosophy, particularly the work of thinkers like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, who deconstructed dominant discourses and revealed the ways in which power operates through language and discourse. In applying these ideas to feminism, postmodern feminists critique essentialist notions of gender and challenge binary categorizations such as male/female and masculine/feminine. One key concept in postmodern feminism is the idea of "performativity," as theorized by Judith Butler. Performativity suggests that gender is not an inherent or stable identity but rather a repeated set of acts or performances that produce the illusion of a natural and coherent gender identity. Through the repetition of these acts, individuals come to embody and internalize gender norms, which are reinforced and reproduced through social institutions and practices. However, Butler also highlights the potential for subversion and resistance within these performances, opening up possibilities for destabilizing dominant gender norms. Postmodern

feminism also emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, a concept developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which recognizes that individuals experience oppression and privilege along multiple axes of identity simultaneously. This framework acknowledges that gender cannot be understood in isolation from other social categories such as race, class, sexuality, ability, and nationality. By centering intersectionality, postmodern feminism seeks to address the experiences of marginalized groups who have been historically excluded or overlooked by mainstream feminist movements. Furthermore, postmodern feminism challenges traditional notions of agency and liberation by problematizing the idea of a singular feminist goal or endpoint. Instead, it embraces the idea of ongoing critique and resistance, recognizing that social change is complex, contested, and often contradictory. This perspective encourages reflexivity and self-awareness, inviting individuals to interrogate their own positions of privilege and complicity within existing power structures. In practice, postmodern feminism encompasses a diverse array of theoretical perspectives and political strategies, including queer theory, postcolonial feminism, disability studies, and Tran's feminism, among others. While there is no singular definition or set of principles that encapsulate postmodern feminism, its overarching aim is to disrupt normative understandings of gender and power, fostering spaces for multiplicity, difference, and resistance. By challenging dominant narratives and advocating for social justice, postmodern feminism continues to shape and influence feminist theory and activism in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, liberal, radical, socialist, and postmodern feminisms offer many perspectives on women's empowerment and gender equality. Liberal feminism emphasises structural and legal changes as a way to address gender-based inequality. Radical feminism advocates for a comprehensive social transformation by opposing patriarchal power structures. Socialist feminism is primarily concerned with the intersection of economic justice, class, gender, and other forms of oppression. Postmodern feminism questions established views while embracing diversity and intersectionality. When taken as a whole, these feminist perspectives highlight the need for inclusive solutions, collective effort, and structural change to accomplish women's empowerment and gender equality.

REFERENCES:

1. Bierema, L. L., & Cseh, M. (2003). Evaluating AHRD research using a feminist research framework. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 14(1), 5–26.
2. Burton, C. (2014). *Subordination: Feminism and social theory*. Routledge.
3. Earles, J. (2017). Reading gender: A feminist, queer approach to children's literature and children's discursive agency. *Gender and Education*, 29(3), 369–388.

4. Egbert, J., & Sanden, S. (2019). *Foundations of education research: Understanding theoretical components*. Taylor & Francis.
5. Hooks, B. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. South End Press.
6. Mackie, A. (1999). Possibilities for feminism in ESL education and research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 566-573.
7. Pincock, K. (2018). School, sexuality and problematic girlhoods: Reframing 'empowerment' discourse. *Third World Quarterly*, 39(5), 906-919.

