

A STUDY ON RADICAL FEMINISM MOVEMENT

ANAGHA ARJUN
Integrated MA English
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham
Amritapuri campus
nishaarjun0078@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper titled "The Radical Feminist Movement" studies about the ideologies and historical roots of the radical feminist movement. It was one of the most prominent second wave feminist movement which involved the complete elimination of male supremacy and challenging of all gender roles. Unlike the other first wave and second wave feminist movements, Radical feminism movement does not only aim to eliminate male dominance but precisely the entire gender distinction. Radical feminists assert that society is a patriarchy in which the class of men are the oppressors of the class of women. They propose that the oppression of women is the most fundamental form of oppression, one that has existed since the inception of humanity. Radical feminists view society as fundamentally a patriarchy in which men dominate and oppress women. Radical feminists seek to abolish the patriarchy in order to "liberate everyone from an unjust society by challenging existing social norms and institutions." Opposing the common belief that that power-over has a final and definitive effect on their lives, radical feminists have emphasized learning from each other how to use personal- power against the use of power-over. Radical feminism also recognizes that sexism limits women's ability to use power-over. By the end of the study, the impact of radical feminist movement in India is discussed. To a large extent, the emerging feminist movement in India was influenced by Western ideals. These called for education and equal rights but also adapted their appeals to local issues and concerns, such as dowry-related violence against women, Sati, sex selective abortion, and custodial rape. Further emphasize is laid on how it had affected the coming of age movies, art and literature and recent body positivity movements all over the globe and particularly in India.

Keywords: feminism, radical feminism, sexism

INTRODUCTION

Feminism, the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. Although largely originating in the West, feminism is manifested worldwide and is represented by various institutions committed to activity on behalf of women's rights and interests.

Feminism is a social movement that seeks equal rights for women. Widespread concern for women's rights date from the enlightenment; one of the important expressions of the movement was Mary Wollstonecraft's "A vindication of the Rights of Woman".

By the middle of 20th century a second wave of feminism emerged to address the more recent issues faced by women. A third wave of feminism arose in the late 20th century and was notable for challenging middle-class white feminists and broadening feminism's goals to encompass equal rights for all paper regardless of any differences.

Prominent among them was the radical feminist movement as it not only aimed at ending any discrimination but erasing the gender distinction itself! Radical feminism is a feminist theory course that starts from the idea of conflict between the sexes as a fundamental conflict and oppression against women as a direct implication of patriarchy. This theory rests on the assumption that all social activity is the result of certain restrictions and coercion, and although every social system contains specific forms of interactive constraints, they do not have to cause repression. Under patriarchy, however, interaction and communication are limited in a way that creates and maintains rigidity which is seen as oppression, while patriarchy takes a central place where, and why, a fundamental power struggle between the sexes takes place. Considering that a starting point of radical feminism is the view that inequality between the sexes is the foundation of all other inequalities and oppression, it is possible to define it as part of the theory of conflict.

Radical feminism always conveys the idea of elimination of male supremacy in social and in economic contexts.

BASICS OF RADICAL FEMINISM

Analytically, the main difference between radical feminism and other directions of this theory lies in the extent to which the social system based on the power struggle between the sexes - ie patriarchy, the rule of men in which women are subordinate category - is considered to be the root of all further oppression, inequality and injustice. The view that the patriarchal society is

generally unjust system in which women are categories of people exposed to various types of discrimination and exploitation, is a universal feature of feminist thought and the starting point for all routes within feminism, which, however, differ in the further formulation of this paragraph, its implications and desirable methods for the solution of problems of the female population. Radical feminist theory is based on the fact that gender inequality is the foundation of all other inequalities and oppression. Repression against women takes place in the patriarchy that is a hierarchical system of male domination over the female gender, which consists of, and is maintained due to the characteristics which include:

- I. The obligatory motherhood and limiting the reproductive freedom;
- II. The social construction of femininity and female sexuality through the creation and presentation of subordinate image;
- III. Violence against women;
- IV. Institutions that favour the dominance of men over women, such as the church and the traditional family models.

The unique position of radical feminism is formed of the idea that, in order to end the oppression of women, the patriarchate has to be abolished, which potentially includes:

- I. Incitement and rejection of traditional gender roles and the ways in which women are presented / constructed in the language, the media, as well as in their personal lives;
- II. Anti-patriarchal constructions of female sexuality by banning pornography and rejection of traditional models of relations between the sexes;
- III. Achieving the reproductive freedom. In the development of radical feminism one of the basic concepts of Marxist theory, such as conflict, class, production, exploitation, revolution played a significant role, as evident in the works of some feminist authors where stated concepts serve as a kind of theoretical pattern in which by the “cut and paste” principle, individual, typically a Marxist, defined terms are replaced by their feminist equivalents, so that, for example, instead of the word “class” is used “sex” instead of “production”, “reproduction”, and the like.

On these bases has been created an extensive feminist literature in which this theory was given its specific forms and directions that separated it from other sociological trends, including Marxism. Radical feminism is a specific feminist conceptual framework that can not be derived from Marxism or any other theoretical perspective, which explains the world from the first cutting blade on the sexual analytical axes, instead of explaining the repression of women and relations between genders in some other way. This approach assumes that the patriarchal society is the repressive system in which male individuals behave and think as “men,” but, at the same time, it claims that patriarchal tendencies are neither ideal nor inevitable for men who also suffer from limitations due to patriarchy and for them therefore, as for women, feminism would represent a liberating movement. The main feature of this feminist attitude lies in the study and the need for reconsideration of the source of power and desire for repression, which is attributed to the complex social factors which are constructed and not innate and essential.

FEMINISM IN INDIAN MOVIES

The Indian film industry is the largest in the world and it is estimated that around 1000 films produced every year in dozens of languages and an international viewership approximately about 3.9 billion, supposedly more than the viewership of Hollywood.

Predominantly an important source of entertainment, our films contribute a lot in fabricating plots that strongly impact the thinking of everyone in the society. The ways in which individuals and groups are portrayed in popular media have a profound effect on how they are viewed by society at large.

Bollywood movies reflect Indian society as the masses can identify with them and in turn, the movies get their subject matter from prevalent culture and stories from the everyday lives of common man. But mostly there is a depiction of ‘people’s desired version of reality’ where there is an appallingly low presence of marginalized groups of society, especially the disabled population.

Though many remarkable women-centric movies have been made over the years, we have not been able to leave behind the age-old constructs created by our patriarchal society. Indian cinema is in a unique position to help bring about cultural change in the nation.

Women are seen only in relation to the men, as their mothers, their wives, and especially their lovers in the films. It is hard to find even one story revolving around a single unattached woman. Thus there is an unjust and unconscious conditioning of thoughts and perceptions of the audiences that take place by watching women playing subsidiary roles on screen.

As for disability, there has been a periodic tryst with disability in Indian cinema. There have been fewer stories about people with disabilities which pertains to the fact that there is a narrower vision of life in general. Sadly in this area too, patriarchy dominates.

ENDINGS ARE NOT HAPPY UNTIL SHE ATTAINS A ‘PERFECT’ AND ‘COMPLETE’ BODY.

Characters with disabilities were overwhelmingly male and are shown engaging in heroic deeds and overcoming their disabilities. In such a scenario, if we try to catalogue the representation of women with disabilities in motion pictures, we would find that this subsection of the disabled population isn't present in the cinematic spotlight.

Even if they are represented, many of those characterizations are inaccurate, and some are even insensitive. The Indian film industry always portrays ‘disability’ on the screen in a listless and strange manner when it comes to the depiction of women with disabilities.

Movies have women characters with disabilities with different motives. One of such objective is to highlight the dauntlessness of the male character. In *Aaj Aur Kal* (1963), a heroic young doctor/ psychiatrist, Sunil Dutt, cures the female lead, Nanda of her paralysis by using his wit and love. Thus caring for, or curing, a disabled woman becomes the means to reinforce the heroic character of the male protagonist in movies such as *Jheel ke us Paar* (1973), *Sunayna* (1979), and *Humko Tumse Pyaar Hai* (2006). Interestingly, the climax of the relationship of the heroine with the hero is seen only after the woman loses her disability. Endings are not happy until she attains a ‘perfect’ and ‘complete’ body.

EVOLUTION OF RADICAL FEMINISM

1. Contemporary radical feminism arose in the late 1960's. It was particularly associated with the consciousness-raising groups of this period. Many of the "classic" radical feminist articles such as "The Politics of Housework" grew out of such groups and were in turn discussed by hundreds of other groups. Many of the participants in these groups were women who believed

that they had suffered oppression within the other progressive movements of the 50's and 60's (civil rights movement, anti-war movement, new left, etc.). The important conclusion that grew out of the groups was the insight that "the personal is political."

2. Many radical feminists prioritized the struggle against violence against women since they saw that violence as upholding patriarchy. Radical feminists often were the driving force behind rape crisis hotlines and shelters for women subjected to domestic violence. In speaking out and organizing against violence against women, radical feminists transformed the discussion within our society. Their efforts successfully ended the silence about rape and domestic violence and helped to begin changing our criminal justice system. Many radical feminists took a stand against pornography, because they viewed it as propaganda for patriarchy and violence against women. This was more controversial and was rejected by many other feminists.

3. Radical feminists were also involved in speaking out and organizing for the right to choose abortion.

4. Radical feminists emphasized the creation of alternative institutions and women-only spaces. They were involved in cultural initiatives such as women's music festivals.

5. Important examples of works by radical feminists:

Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*

Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*

Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father*

CONCLUSION

Radical feminism is one of the directions of feminist theory, formed on the view that the social system is based on a patriarchal basis, resulting in the marginalisation and discrimination against women in all spheres of society. This root starts from the idea of conflict between the sexes as a fundamental social conflict, which classifies this theory as a sociological theory known as the 'theory of conflict'. Radical feminism share the belief that the main problem is the fact that the repressor, in order to maintain a repressive system requires constant application of force, and as a way to change the system both theories propagate the known cooperation by subordinate population with the system.

Radical feminists argue that because of the magnitude of the gender gap varies across time and space and yet remains constantly wide at all times and in all places that biological factors must play a large part. The most root of gender ratio lies in the fundamental difference between the genders.

Once Simone de Beauvoir's said these words:

"All oppression creates a state of war. And this is no exception."

Women all over the world the world has been oppressed since time immemorial in all grounds one can think of. It hasn't been much time since people have become aware of the oppression they had been gone through ages. And this awareness led to the feminist movement. This movement movement is in fact a war against intact patriarchal world and can only be stopped when a world order, where no gender distinctions exists, is formed. The changes are starting to show, the pace maybe slow but it is happening!

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