

## Radical Feminism- Reasons, Resources and Results

Dr. Patil Vijaykumar Ambadasrao

*Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai, (M.S.) India*

### Abstract

This research paper makes an attempt to understand radical feminism, as it is sensitive feminist ideology. It is a complex phenomenon which has cross-cultural currents and even personal traits. Scholars look at feminism as an effort to (re)unite wo/men to fight for their causes, sufferings, support and strength. In(ter)ventions of various feminism(s) claim to club priorities of women's issues to ease women's life. Radical feminism strives to give enough power, strength, self-esteem, respect and authority to a woman in her personal, domestic and social life. In patriarchal society, feminine principle is respected but even mother was treated as other and oppressed. (M)ale dominated domestic, social, political, religious and other tenets of life and kept woman aloof. Thus, the idea of negating feminine (dis)course advanced to radical feminism.

**Key Words:** Feminism, radical feminism, causes

### Introduction:

This research paper makes an attempt to understand radical feminism, its reasons and results, as 'radical feminism' projected sensitive feminist ideologies which needed an urgent notice. Scholars, feminists and philosophers have had categorically designed various feminisms with substantial reasons. Each type of feminism stands for a cause. A scholar or a critic may find inter-connection(s) in feminisms. Human behaviour and psyche, lifestyle, social trends, culture, traditions, contemporary strata (re)investigated the strategies to make comprehensive feminist studies. Each feminist approach is genuine and prolific. Woman is integral part of human society and she performs her role at par. Ultramodern generation demands crystal-clear interpretation of even conventional trends. This era has gone too far and has cross-verified the traditional gender barriers. It is

giving more than equal opportunities to woman in many segments of human life. It will surely take human society to new horizons. Thus, it is important to (re)investigate the idea of radical feminism and make a comprehensive study of its causes and concerns in present context.

### Feminism(s):

Considering context(s) and women's life in various societies, historical periods and philosophical traits, one may claim different reasons to find the basic idea of feminism. It is a complex phenomenon which has cross-cultural currents and even personal traits. Scholars look at feminism as an effort to (re)unite wo/men to fight for their causes, sufferings, support and strength. In(ter)ventions of various feminism(s) claim to club priorities of women's issues to ease women's life. Basically, feminism strives to give enough power, strength, self-esteem, respect and

authority to a woman in her personal, domestic and social life. Feminist and humanist studies maintain that the parameters of having power in personal and domestic life may vary as per individual personality trait. Thus, very idea of feminism is personal, political and remains multidimensional and multifaceted. Considering her experiences personal experiences, a woman may not appreciate or even discard, 'what feminist(s) claim?' This advocates consideration of emotions in the study of feminism. Feminists do claim that male supremacy and authority in domestic life needs to be limited and woman should be liberated. She must be given due respect and freedom in domestic and social arena. Feminism refutes the power of male supremacy and rejects the subsidiary place given to a woman in society. For Robin Morgan, "Sisterhood is powerful."<sup>1</sup> It reiterates the power of woman. Taking further the possible advancements of feminists and their specified ideas, Millet claims, 'Sexual Revolution,' (which many feminists assumed as an ultimate essential goal of feminism) would bring eight conditions: the end of sexual repression, unisex temperament and behaviour, re-examination of "mass-culture" and "feminine traits; the end of "sex role and sex status"; the end of oppression of the young "under the patriarchal proprietary family." Bisex," or the end of normative heterosexuality; the end of "hatred" sexuality (violence, warfare, etc); "the attainment of the female sex to freedom and full human status."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, it is important to look at radical feminism from different perspectives since "women's movement is the first in the history with a war on and no enemy."<sup>3</sup> The

feminist dilemma is that "they have most to do, and least to do it with; we must create as no other group in history has been forced to do, from the very beginning."<sup>4</sup> Further Ti-Grace Atkinson maintains, "Women are a political class characterized by sexual function."<sup>5</sup>

### **Radical Feminism:**

According to Bonnie Burstow, "Radical feminism begins with the existential. It is concerned with the fundamental issues of power, freedom, subjects and objects, and human existence itself."<sup>6</sup> Finn Mackay has also presented the idea of radical feminism. For Finn Mackay, "Firstly, radical feminism believes in the existence of patriarchy and seeks to end it.

Secondly, it promotes women only space and women only political organising as paramount.

Thirdly, it views, male violence against women as a key stone of women's oppression. Fourthly, it expands the understanding of male violence against women to analyse the institutions of pornography and prostitution."<sup>7</sup> Patriarchal society gave subsidiary place to women. They have been unequally treated. It granted maximum power to men and made women suffer and surrender without their own fault(s) in domestic, social and political life. Their gender was treated merely an object. Radical feminists strongly maintain that the sex discrimination is the root cause of women's oppression. If it is uprooted, women's life will drastically change. To uproot this, radical feminists were inclined to be belligerent, pugnacious, aggressive and even confrontational. Through this they will be able to lethally hammer the

wrong practices for women in patriarchal society based on gender identity. They negate domestic, political and social organizations. Radical feminism is against the patriarchy and not against men.

Gloria Martin's "Free University" class on 'Women and Society' initiated the 'Radical Women' in Seattle. The purpose and ideology of Radical Women is recorded in *The Radical Women Manifest: Socialist Feminist Theory, Program and Organizational Structure*.

It aims to expose, resist and eliminate the inequities of women's existence by giving a special identity and status to entire 'sexism' through revolutionary renovation. It will lead women to enjoy women full humanity, freedom, sexism, and subjugation. Their prime purpose was to liberate women from male oppression.

They advocated protest against assaults on reproductive freedom and demanded the right to negate forced sterilization. They also strongly recommended and strive for affordable childcare. They were strong, open and played a vital role in lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender liberation movements and motivated and supported women to join workforce to drastically change (hu/wo)men society.

Radical feminism is a standpoint within feminism. Basically it strives to reorder society by eliminating male supremacy. It has cross-questioned the outmoded gender roles and strongly rejected the objectification of women. It spread awareness about rape, vehemence and use of force against women. Liberal feminism opposed the legal systems, anarchist, socialist and Marxist feminisms claimed class conflict as a root cause of women's

suffering and subversion.

Radical feminism is self-supportive and straightforward claims gender discrepancy as a root cause of women's suffering and subsidiary place. For radical feminism objectification of sex is the fundamental form of coercion. Thus, it must be attacked which will automatically affect other forms oppression.

Zerilli, Linda M. G., in *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (2005:101) claims that women should govern women and men.<sup>7</sup> Radical feminists cultivated 'sexual politics' and looked at it as a public issue and supported and strived to legalize abortion. They spoke about total equality even at 'private spheres' such as housework, child care, emotional and sexual needs. They successfully pushed the matter that led 'Equal Rights Amendment.'

The 'sexual' relationship of men and women is natural, inevitable and in maximum cases willing. It is the only resource that protects and nurtures domestic relationship, though role of 'emotional' love and responsibility towards family do matters. But, this is an aspect that enforces women succumb men and respond unwillingly. Radical feminists have the solution to help women and destroy male-dominated society radically. Ti-Grace Atkinson presents this aspect as follows:

The most common female escape is psycho-pathological condition of love. It is a euphoric state of fantasy in which the victim transforms her oppressor into her redeemer; she turns her oppressor into her redeemer; she turns her natural hostility towards aggressor against the remnants of herself-her Consciousness-and sees her

counterpart in contrast to herself as all-powerful (as he is by now at her expense). The combination of his power, her self-hatred, and the hope for a life that is self-justifying- the goals of all living creatures- results in yearning for her stolen life-her self-that is delusion and poignancy of love. "Love" is the natural response of victim to the rapist. What is extremely difficult and "unnatural," but necessary, is for Oppressed to cure themselves (destroy the female role), to throw off the Oppressor, and to help oppressor to cure himself (destroy the male role), It is superhuman,

but the only alternative- the elimination of males as a biological group is subhuman."<sup>9</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Radical feminism is the end result of the reaction to patriarchy. In patriarchal society, feminine principle is respected but even mother was treated as 'other and oppressed.' Male dominated domestic, social, political, religious and other tenets of life kept woman aloof. Thus, the idea of negating feminine (dis)course advanced the 'radical feminism.'

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