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## Feminism without Illusions

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### Abstract

This research paper presents an idea of feminism without illusion. Basically, feminism is multi-layered. Certain mainstream feminists and humanists, under specified conditions, strongly reiterate a fact that women's experiences in personal and social life are not bright, pleasant and praiseworthy. Their role as a mother, daughter and sister might have been duly respected but it seems that woman as a person has hardly been respected and allowed to enjoy a full-fledged freedom compared to the lifestyle of man. Through this research paper an attempt will be made to present a feministic perspective to women's experiences, biological conditions, social strata and their psychological functioning to present a constructive picture of women society and their challenges. These constraints have been fully depicted in various feministic theories. In today's aura women are taking new (in traditional terminology-bold) steps, compared to their traditional life. It has impetus women's studies, particularly feminism, which has taken various turns from its inception. Thus, a new perspective is a must to look in this matter seriously which will present feminism without illusions.

**Key Words:** feminism, illusion, patriarchy

### Concept of Feminism

A feminist history highlights the concept of feminism, women's major issues and challenges, and other allied aspects. Feminism is a study of woman's life which strives to regain woman's identity as a woman and reiterate that she must enjoy a freedom to live in style without pressures or limitations based on false conceptions that may substantially affect her life. Feminists strongly refute a wrong notion that woman, being subordinate, must offer services to man irrespective of her priorities, attitude, mood(s) and abilities. This restricted life, in which they were and are enforced to follow (blindly and rigorously) the unhygienic and irrational demands of man, made them feel

miserable, insulted, side-lined and stretched. They even experienced themselves as a mere tool and outsiders even in their own (two) families that of their parents and in-laws. This subversion makes women restless and determinately enforces them to strive for their human identity and impetus feminism. Feminism may miraculously reward. Susanne Kappeler (1986:219), "Part of a feminist strategy must be the elaboration of a concept of community that differs from male bonding over commodities and enemies." It is generally accepted notion that men's power and attitude towards woman is the root cause that initiated feminism. Lynne Segal (1987 :69), maintains that the "uneven, sometimes

widening gap between what feminism had seemed to promise and women's still, vulnerable, and for some increasingly impoverished, position in the world, fits most neatly with a biologicistic and fatalistic interpretation of the inevitability of men's power."

### Etymology

As this paper explores the idea of feminism without illusions, it is essential to understand basic concept of feminism and illusion. We will not study about word feminism, the word feminism but the term feminism. Feminism, in grammar, is a mass/uncountable noun. It is derived from French *féminisme*. According to online *Oxford Dictionary* feminism is "the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes." It further states, "The issue of rights for women first became prominent during the French and American revolutions in the late eighteenth century. In Britain it was not until the emergence of the suffragette movement in the late nineteenth century that there was significant political change. A 'second wave' of feminism arose in the 1960s, with an emphasis on unity and sisterhood; seminal figures included Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer." According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, feminism is "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. She had a lifelong commitment to feminism." Further, according to *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus* (Cambridge University Press), feminism is a "Belief in the social, political, and economic

equality of the sexes," and also, "The movement organized around this belief."

### Woman's life in general and Feminism

A natural tier of woman's life states that woman plays a role of a daughter, sister, wife, sister-in-law, mother, and mother-in-law. Her father, sister and brother, husband and in-laws, her son and daughter and even grandchildren add substantially to her life at different stages. The relationship of father and daughter is the most pious in the universe. No father can see ailing daughter. He strives to provide best for her irrespective of his conditions. Considering social conditions, till last century, he may not have provided comprehensive education and job opportunities to his daughter. But, it is a mother (a female), who has been repeatedly training her in kitchen. She also had enforced her to adjust with social conditions irrespective of her attitude. This training of getting adjusted with society includes getting married to a person of parent's choice, offering services to family members and remaining at home and at agricultural or specific land of parents' choice under their supervision. This is a first step, in history and social life of women, where she is trained to adjust not to fight or correct the social conditions hazardously affected woman's life in general. She had been repeatedly asked to submit and surrender to demands of senior family members and offer her services (like cooking and cleaning). Marriage brings a major change in her life. She is dethroned from her maternal family and enters in the new family. Her role from daughter is changed and she becomes a daughter-in-law.

Here she is asked and enforced to serve her husband and other in-laws. Her personal choices in this family also are restricted and its exploration(s) depend on the mood and attitude of her husband and his family members. It seems that no full-fledged freedom is enjoyed by her till she becomes a mother or mother-in-law. Though she gets an opportunity in making personal choices after passing middle age, it is found that she never became a complete person to enjoy human life. Additional burden of taking care of children (though a pleasant experience in maximum cases) makes her condition miserably poor due to extravaganza of social conditions and male dominated society. A comprehensive study of all these elements is integral aspects of feminism. These must be presented without illusions to understand a basic concept of feminism.

Ultramodern lifestyle of woman is lethally attacking false and notorious traditional notions. It is intrinsically including various aspects of her domestic life. Complex cultural and cross-cultural connections are (re)producing human identity of woman. Varied options and opportunities, charged and changed attitude in social strata, substantial contribution at political- social and other fields, education specifically at open and distance education, high qualification and apex professionalism at work place, awareness and alertness of woman in metropolitan as well as other cities had provided new gates for women in today's society. It has taken woman's life at a distinct level where she is able to take her own stance and stick to it irrespective of social and domestic surroundings. Today, woman is able to authentically and

confidently ask for and get divorce (freely). She is freely expressing her views about sex and sexual freedom. It is important to note that she is striving for sexual freedom, taking a firm decision in relation to abortion and/or consumption. Woman in today's aura has become very selective, analytical, critical and strong in the matter of her marriage. She is taking firm decision about her education, career and future plans. Contradictory aspect of today's woman is that she hardly bears any violence particularly domestic violence. This tremendous change in the life of woman must be understood without any illusions then a complete and crystal clear picture of feminism will arise.

Basically, feminists strive to seek a smooth, self-dependent, pleasant, rewarding and complete life for a woman as a woman. It does not mean a complete breakup from traditional domestic life. No woman wants to be alcoholic, whore, sexual worker and live a miserably poor life depending on mercy of man other than her father, husband, brother or blood relative. As Tiresias stated, "woman enjoys a lot," one must accept this reality. Thus, it is the duty of human society to make her happy, pleasant, stronger, self-dependent and provide a life in which she will take initiative and create blissful atmosphere. No one will deny a fact that woman is a most important member of a family. She has dreams, abilities and can successfully use resources to motivate family members to bring heavenly bliss in her family. It will help, ultimately, to have a most competent, healthy and progressive human society. From this perspective one must consider following aspects of woman's



life in contemporary era and present feminist theory.

Feminism is not the negation or denial of womanhood and feminine identity. No woman wants to deny her body, sex and personality. In normal conditions, no woman wants to adapt lesbian style. It is always not that they hate the natural role. She feels happy and remains very aggressive when the question of safety, security and other issues in her domestic life. Woman wants to construct a family and never wants to destruct it. She deconstructs for the benefit of all family members. Thus, it is an utter illusion that woman wants only divorce even in normal course of life. Feminism, of any style, must find and project a picture of complete family in which woman as a wife, sister, daughter, mother and other assigned roles is enjoying her domestic life.

### **Major constraints**

Many women have been experiencing that they are rejected, exploited and humiliated by males and under specified conditions females such as in America white women dominated slave-black women. Such examples in domestic life in countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh may be found where mother-in-law or sister-in-law torture or even harasses daughter/sister-in-law. This realistic aspect is creatively and realistically presented in various stories, plays, serials, movies and literature.

Women feel that they are deliberately and systematically put away from the mainstream life. It enforces them to (re)design, (re)develop, (re)construct and (re)create their own identity. They do want to serve their family/families and humanity

in general. One must seriously consider and nurture this notion. It will provide women self-respect and self-esteem and wonderful/miraculous result will turnout.

Basically and ultimately feminists and women want to see that woman enjoying their personal and social life with respect and dignity. For feminists, these sensible feelings/expectations enhance an urgent need to have an utter feminism for better human society of equal rights, opportunities and strong rapport based on basic understanding between man and woman. These constraints enforced women to “reinforce beliefs about ‘natural’ divisions that have, for too long, constricted our imaginations.” Kennedy (1989: 1745-1819)

### **Major types of feminisms**

There are many types of feminism. Each type of feminism may stand on its own as the canvass of feminism is too vast. Each type is unique and has a scope to get merged with mainstream feminism. Faye Ginsburg (1989: 216) looks at feminism and issues related to women’s life as a, “pro-life view of the world.” Prominent feminisms are social feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism, black feminism, Marxist feminism, and post-modern feminism. It is possible to add more types of feminism to this list. This representative list focuses on multifaceted identity of feminism.

### **Role of Feminists**

Challenges countered by feminists are vast. It is difficult to focus on a single issue as major integrated issues need equal focus. But still creating a human society through feministic perspective is the vision of feminists. In this regard Heilbrun, Carolyn,

G. (1988: 47-64)states that women will “enable women and men to free their minds from patriarchal thought and practice and at last to build a world free of dominance and hierarchy, a world that is truly human.”

### Conclusion

Feminism stands on its own. An illusion that feminism is not necessary is an utter untrue dimension. A factual and human perspective is vital to nourish woman’s life as human. It is the major concern of feminism which will ease human journeys.

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