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UNIT - I

1. APPROACHES - LIBERAL FEMINISM

FEMINISM :-

Feminism advocates social, political, economic, and intellectual equality for women and men.

Feminism defines a political perspective, it is distinct from gender.

Feminism means very different things to different people. The many variants of feminism are associated with a variety of philosophical and political outlooks.

Many people in Europe, the U.S., and elsewhere practice feminism without self-identifying as "feminists." The vast majority of Europeans and

Americans are feminists, at least liberal feminists, that is to say, they support equality and professional opportunities for women. It is important to recognize that what is labeled "feminist" in one time and place becomes business as usual in another. It is a curious phenomenon that when feminist practices or points of view become widely accepted in science, medicine, engineering, or the culture more generally, they are no longer considered "feminist"; but mostly in simple "just" or "true". The result is the term "feminist" continues to refer to people and policies on the radical cutting edge.

FEMINISM - APPROACHES :-

Here four broad feminist approaches. Although, these approaches differ, they are not mutually exclusive, nor does one supersede any other. These approaches represent basic strategies guiding, research, legislation, and policies.

1) EQUALITY APPROACH :

It has been the leading form of feminism in the U.S. and much of Western ~~Approach~~

Europe since English feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's vigorous call for equality for women in her 1792 Vindication of the Rights of Woman. It has informed major legislation guaranteeing women equal rights, education, pay and opportunity (in Europe the Amsterdam Treaty of 1999; in the U.S., the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title IX of the Education Act Amendments of 1972, and the Equal Opportunity Employment Act of 1972). It has been criticized for not recognizing gender differences. It is often considered "assimilationist", meaning that women, and not society or culture, are required to change in order for women to succeed.

2) DIFFERENCE FEMINISM:

It represents a broad spectrum of feminisms that emphasize differences between women and men. This approach arose in 1980's and 1990's in efforts to revalue qualities traditionally devalued as "feminine" - such as subjectivity, caring, feeling, or empathy. This approach identifies bias in science and technology by seeing what has been left out from feminine

perspectives - sometimes expressed as "women's ways of knowing". Difference feminism has been criticized as being essentialist. Difference feminism tends to romanticize traditional femininity and masculinity, and to reinforce conventional stereotypes. This approach fails to take into account that women and men across classes and cultures hold many different perspectives and values.

3) CO-CONSTRUCTIONISM:

It analyzes how science / technology and gender mutually shape each other. Gender identities are produced simultaneously with science and technologies; neither precedes the other. Gender is understood to be material, discursive, and social; it permeates artifacts, culture, and social identities. Co-constructionism seeks to avoid both technological determinism (seeing technology as the prime driver of modernity) and gender essentialism (seeing gender characteristics as innate and unchangeable).

4) GENDER ANALYSIS:

It enriches science, health and medicine,

and engineering research by analyzing how gender influence all phases of research, including setting priorities, making funding decisions, establishing project objectives and methods, gathering and analyzing data, evaluating results, developing patents, and transferring ideas to markets.

This approach prioritizes analysis (not prescription) to guide efforts to achieve gender equality.

Simultaneously, this approach employs gender analysis as a resource to stimulate creativity in science and technology, and by doing so enhance the lives of both women and men.

LIBERAL FEMINISM

Liberal Feminism was described as theory and work that concentrates more on issues such as equality in the workplace, in education, and in political rights. Liberal feminism also focuses on how private life impedes or enhances public equality.

Thus, liberal feminists tend to support marriage as an equal partnership, and more male involvement in child care. Support for

abortion and other reproductive rights have to do with control of one's life and autonomy.

Ending domestic violence and sexual harassment remove obstacles to women achieving on an equal level with men.

GOALS:

Liberal feminism's primary goal is gender equality in the public sphere, such as equal access to education, equal pay, ending job sex segregation, and better working conditions. From this standpoint, legal changes would make these goals possible.

Private sphere issues are of concern mainly as they influence or impede equality in the public sphere. Gaining access to and being paid and promoted equally in traditionally male-dominated occupations is an important goal.

Liberal feminists believe they want the same things men wants:

- * to get an education
- * to make a decent living
- * to provide for one's family.

MEANS AND METHODS

Liberal feminism tends to rely on the state to gain equality - to see the state as the protector of individual rights.

Liberal feminists, for example, support affirmative action legislation requiring employers and educational institutions to make special attempts to include women in the pool of applicants, on the assumption that past and current discrimination may simply overlook many qualified women applicants.

Passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) has been a key goal for liberal feminists. From the original women's suffrage proponents who moved to advocate a federal equality amendment to many of the feminists of the 1960's and 1970's in organizations including the National Organization for Women, each generation viewed the amendment as necessary to create a more just society.

The amendment is one state shy of

the 38 needed for passage, but ERA supporters in 2019 saw renewed hope as the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage approached.

A vote that could have made Virginia the 38th state to ratify the ERA missed by a single vote in early 2019. But the U.S. Supreme Court upheld new redistricting lines in the state later in 2019 and a move was underway in Congress to officially extend the ratification deadline.

The text of the Equal Rights Amendment, as passed by Congress and sent to the states in the 1970's, is classical liberal feminism:

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of gender."

While not denying there may be biologically based differences between men and women, liberal feminism cannot see these differences as adequate justification for inequality, such as

the wage gap between men and women.

CRITICS:

Critics of liberal feminism point to a lack of critique of basic gender relationships, a focus on state action which links women's interests to those of the powerful, a lack of class or race analysis, and a lack of analysis of ways in which women are different from men. Critics often accuse liberal feminism of judging women and their success by male standards.

"White feminism" is a kind of liberal feminism which assumes that the issues facing white women are the issues all women face, and unity around liberal feminist goals is more important than racial equality and other such goals.

"Intersectionality" was a theory developed in criticism of liberal feminism's common blindspot on race.

In more recent years, liberal feminism has sometimes been conflated with a kind of

libertarian feminism, sometimes called equity feminism or individual feminism. Individual feminism often opposes legislative or state action, preferring to emphasize developing the skills and abilities of women to compete better in the world as it is. This feminism opposes laws that give either men or women advantages and privileges.

2. MARXIST AND SOCIALIST FEMINISM

MARXIST FEMINISM :

Marxist Feminists argue the main cause of women's oppression is capitalism. The disadvantaged position of women is seen to be a consequence of the emergence of private property and their lack of ownership of the means of production.

From a Marxist Feminist perspective, the traditional nuclear family only came about with capitalism, and the traditional female role of housewife supports capitalism - thus women are double oppressed through the nuclear family and capitalist system. Women's

oppression within the nuclear family supports capitalism in at least three ways:

1) Women reproduce the labour force - through their unpaid domestic labour, by socialising the next generation of workers and servicing the current workers (their husbands!)

2) Women absorb anger - Think back to Parson's warmth bath theory. The Marxist-Feminist interpretation of this is that women are just absorbing the anger of the proletariat, who are exploited and who should be directing that anger towards the Bourgeois.

3) Women are a "reserve army of cheap labour" - if women's primary role is domestic, and they are restricted from working, this also means they are in reserve, to be taken on temporarily as necessary by the Bourgeois, making production more flexible.

Key Thinker - Fran Ansley argues women absorb the anger that would otherwise be directed at capitalism; Ansley argues women's male

Partners are inevitably frustrated by the exploitation they experience at work and women are the victims of this, including domestic violence.

SOLUTIONS TO GENDER INEQUALITY:

For Marxist Feminists, the solutions to gender inequality are economic - We need to tackle Capitalism, to tackle Patriarchy.

Softer solutions include paying women for childcare and housework - thus putting an economic value on what is still largely women's work, stronger solutions include the abolition of Capitalism and the ushering in of Communism.

They are more sensitive to differences between women who belong to the ruling class and proletarian families. Marxist Feminists believe that there is considerable scope for co-operation between working class women and men and that both can work together.

CRITICISM:

Women's oppression within the family existed before capitalism and in communist societies.

SOCIALIST FEMINISM;

Socialist Feminism is further to the left of the political spectrum and was the prevalent approach within the second-wave of the women's movement.

Theorists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Charles Fourier argue that the root cause of female oppression is the economic system. Capitalism and patriarchy are linked. Women's work is underpaid, undervalued and often unpaid. Women are also underrepresented within the most powerful jobs, more likely to be part of the precariat, more likely to be in part-time work. Capitalism also relegates women to the status of the 'reserve army' of labour with a disproportionately high number of housewives and other females.

Socialist feminists also claim that the nuclear family reflects and reinforces patriarchy.

Firstly, it maintains the dominant position of the bourgeoisie by enabling fathers to pass on their wealth to their sons.

Secondly, the family also provides a safety-valve to relieve some of the pressure the male proletariat may experience within the workplace. In doing so, a form of false consciousness is generated that prevents the

proletariat from overthrowing their capitalist oppressors.

Thirdly, the family is a unit of consumption which helps the bourgeoisie maintain a profit.

As Karl Marx once said; "the bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation."

Finally, mothers are expected to undertake the main responsibility for nurturing children and taking care of male workers. The owners of capital therefore gain a healthy supply of workers without having to pay for costly health-care schemes. As such, the emancipation of women demands nothing less than the abolition of the traditional nuclear family with the male as breadwinner and head of the household.

Perhaps, the key distinction between the two main strands of feminist thought is that liberal feminists are individualist whereas socialist claim that the feminist movement can only progress via solidarity amongst women. A sense of sisterhood is necessary in order that women may liberate themselves from patriarchal oppression. In a society

based upon the tenants of socialist feminism, there would be genuine equality between the genders. In doing so, the self-esteem and expectations of females would rise to that of their male counterparts. In contrast, liberal feminism is focused primarily upon personal choice.

3. RADICAL FEMINISM

Radical Feminists see society and its institutions as patriarchal - most of which are dominated and ruled by men - men are the ruling class and women the subject class. Gender inequalities are the result of the oppression of women by men, and it is primarily men who have identified and benefited from the subordination of women. Women are "an oppressed group."

Again, Liberal Feminists they argue that paid work has not been "liberating". Instead women have acquired the "dual burden" of paid work and unpaid housework and the family remains patriarchal - men benefit from women's paid earnings and their domestic labour. Some Radical Feminists go further arguing that women suffer from the "triple shift" where they have to do

paid work, domestic work and "emotion work", being expected to take on the emotional burden of caring for children.

Violence, rape, and pornography are also methods through which men have seized and maintained their power over women. For evidence of this, Radical Feminists point to the "dark side of family life". According to the British Crime Survey domestic violence accounts for a sixth of all violent crime and nearly 1 in 4 women will experience DV at some point in their lifetime and women are much more likely to experience this than men.

Rosemarie Tong (1998) distinguishes between two groups of radical feminist:

* RADICAL - LIBERTARIAN FEMINISTS - believe that it is both possible and desirable for gender differences to be eradicated, or at least greatly reduced, and aim for a state of androgyny in which men and women are significantly different.

* RADICAL - CULTURAL FEMINISTS - believe in the

superiority of the feminine. According to Tong radical cultural feminists celebrate characteristics associated with femininity such as emotion, and are hostile to those characteristics associated with masculinity such as hierarchy.

SOLUTIONS TO GENDER EQUALITY:

Radical Feminists see the traditional nuclear family as particularly patriarchal, and advocate its abolition and the establishment of alternative family structures and sexual relations.

The various alternatives suggested by Radical Feminists include separatism - women only communes, and matrifocal (female centered) households. Some also practise political lesbianism and political celibacy as they view heterosexual relationships as "sleeping with the enemy."

Radical feminists have often been actively involved in setting up and running refuges for women who are the victims of male violence.

CRITICISM:

* Ignores the progress that women have

made in many areas e.g. work.

* Too realistic - due to heterosexual attraction separation is unlikely.

4. POST-MODERN FEMINISM

Post-modern feminism is distinct to the three main strands of feminist thought. Post-modern feminists begin with the assumption that the modernist conception of feminism places overt emphasis upon gender differences between women and men whilst ignoring the differences within each gender.

Post-modern feminists also claim that gender is largely developed from a discourse that we learn to adopt over time. Gender is therefore neither natural nor innate. Instead, gender is constituted by the way we talk, create images and present ourselves to others.

Another key element of post-modern feminism is the claim that patriarchy operates differently due to the social characteristics of women. The nature and extent of patriarchy is therefore different for a middle-class white woman than a poor black-woman. This view

is framed within the concept of intersectionality which seeks to examine how biological, social and cultural categorisations interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. It is a framework which enables us to identify how systemic injustice and inequality exists on a multitude of levels.

Given, the sheer diversity within feminist thought, it may well be appropriate to use the term feminisms. At the very least, we should be careful to avoid generalisations when considering the ideology of feminism. It is also debatable to what extent feminists speak for women. The American academic Camille Paglia is a particularly forceful opponent of feminism. Paglia believes that feminism has generated a sense of victimhood that does not apply to all women. From a similar angle, Christina Hoff Sommers adds that modern feminist thought often holds an "irrational hostility to men". She therefore claims that contemporary feminism is overtly radical and therefore disconnected from the lives of everyday women.

Finally, it is worth reminding ourselves

that many women do not class themselves as feminists. Perhaps the most famous line of argument here derives from the first female Prime Minister of the UK who boldly declared "I owe nothing to women's liberation." It is a view which perfectly encapsulates the conservative strand of thought amongst women who have smashed through the glass ceiling with no outside assistance. They have merely shown themselves to be outstanding at their jobs and better than any comparable man. As such, it may be enough to adopt a 'pro-women' stance rather than labelling oneself as a feminist. This argument is particularly persuasive for those who feel the term itself carries a certain degree of ideological baggage. At the very least, it must be recognised that the issues facing women are different to previous waves of feminist thought. It also reflects a recognition that some objectives of the women's movement have been achieved.

REFERENCE:-

- * Alison M. Jagger - Feminist Politics and Human Nature.
- * Mary Wollstonecraft - A Vindication of the Rights of Women.