CHAPTER 3

THEORIES:

FEMINIST THEORIES AND FILM THEORIES

Theory is not an idea for researchers to understand rather it is the way that they interpret the facts. However, feminism means to value women and their contributions to the society. Feminism has many political agendas, ideologies, values, and viewpoints. It analyse the past to understand the old patriarchal values and the way it has subordinated women.

The society never guaranteed to give all the rights to the women let alone any kind of privileges that are considered appropriate to the status of being a human. Liberal feminists have this view that whatever a man is given by the society, the woman is always given less than that. If in any culture one has to see what it values less, one simply has to look at what it leaves or gives to the women. In the societies where skirt were prestigious to be worn, it were worn by men. Women are not given any kind of power, property, pleasure, or prestige. Even these deprivations do not fall equally within women in the same society or different ones.

Feminism needs to willingly work for it with a better historical knowledge so that we could stand up on behalf of all the women who are facing misogyny every day and who do not want to hear “be nice” every time.

When the feminist movement started in the United States, the activists promoted the male ideology and oppression of females more than the feministic ideology and significance of equality. it somehow presented the feminist movement in a negative light highlighting the fact that feminists were ‘male-haters’ and want to dominate them.

The age old oppression and exploitation of women resulted in a rift between the two sexes. It gave rise to sexist discrimination in every field and feminist movement could easily offer an ideological space for a transformation. It could transform the feelings of hatred and competition with feelings of mutuality and camaraderie.
Unfortunately, these positive outcomes were ignored by the feminists and bourgeois white women in America narcissistically focussed on the problems that involved themselves rather than focussed on the issues regarding all the females in general. Leaders convinced many women who were not white and who did not belong to the bourgeois but only a few joined them initially. Feminist activists did not explain the significance of the movement to the masses which in return created several wrong perceptions about it. They were mostly seen as radicals who want to live in a utopian world and want to exterminate all the men and dominate the world themselves.

Even today it is a common belief that feminism deals with hatred of males and a wish of female domination. The clouds of misconception of the movement is still hovering around the earth and it seems to be very difficult to make the masses understand the purpose and need of feminism which basically involves the end of sexist oppression and not female domination over males.

It is believed by many feminists that sexist oppression must be eradicated as it is the cause of all the other oppressions. Racism and classism all have been stemmed out of sexism. However, it is also believed that sex role divisions were existing from ancient period and the earliest civilizations has been discovered to be in Africa where there was no distinction between the sexes and their roles in the society. The issues regarding sex, race, and class can be seen in the Western culture which resembles the systems globally. In almost all the cultures and societies of the world, the Western culture and tradition is imitated. Although, all kinds of oppressions and subjugation is supported by the Western traditional thinking.

In the book *Cultural Basis of Racism and Group Oppression: An Examination of Traditional “Western” Concepts, Values, and Institutional Structures which Support Racism, Sexism, and Elitism* by John L. Hodge, Donald K. Struckmann, Lynn Dorland Trost, the authors discussed how the “Western religious and philosophical thought is the ideological basis of all forms of oppression in the United States.”

The sexist oppression must be given importance not only because it is the basis of all the other kinds of oppression but because most of the people experience this practice of domination either by playing the role of the discriminator or of the
discriminated. This is a practice which most people are brought up to accept without consciously knowing about the other forms of oppressions. Eradication of sexism will not necessarily eliminate all the other oppressions but it would surely play a major role in initiating the elimination of other oppressions.

It is something most people observe in their homes. Both the roles – that of the oppressor and the oppressed – can be seen in most of the households. We unknowingly accept and instil these roles within us according to what we experience and observe since childhood. It is in our socialisation process and we do not feel that it has anything to do with domination or subjugation of any kind. In a family we are socialised to accept and support all kinds of oppressions.

As John Hodge has argued, “The traditional Western family, with its authoritarian male rule and its authoritarian adult rule, is the major training ground which initially conditions us to accept group oppression as the natural order.” We are always taught love and care in the families but are often taught how power is also important to have and, hence, the elders are often dominating the younger siblings as they are being dominated by the adults of the families.

The patriarchal state wanted family members to support the hierarchical control and authority and politically vested interest in depicting that feminism may destroy the family values and would result in disastrous household situations. A collection of essays edited by Barrie Thorne with Marilyn Yalom, *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions*, in 1982 argued that family life supported by feminist activists has been used in political campaigns by the New Right groups saying, “Of all the issues raised by feminists, those that bear on the family – among them, demands for abortion rights, and for legitimating an array of household and sexual arrangements, and challenges to men’s authority, and women’s economic dependence and exclusive responsibility for nurturing – have been the most controversial.”

Feminist activists want to improve the family conditions by eradicating authoritarian rule of the males in it, whereas, many people have the notion that anti-feminism is a way of improving family life. However, this is not the case. Sexist oppression is the cause of several family disputes and disastrous living conditions especially for females. It has to be replaced by shared responsibility and mutual
flexibility. This movement will change the social demographic which in turn strengthen and sustain family relationships and ties.

A political conscious person has to recognise the need to struggle against all kinds of oppression, including the fight against sexist oppression because this fight has a grave political significance. Feminism is not a movement confined for women only as it focusses on the liberation of people from the bonds of sexist oppression and even males can play a vital role in spreading awareness and liberating people.

The different theories and definitions of feminism shows the diversity amongst feminists. The beliefs and ideas of feminism are somewhat different in various branches of feminism. It has been a primary source of conflict in the feminist movement as well. Feminists do not fit themselves into the beliefs of any of the branches of feminism. They just believe in the idea of equality of men and women and how could they make a difference in the present scenario to fulfil this goal. They believe that people must be politically, economically, and socially equal to one another and practice feminism in their own way. However, according to various ideologies feminism has been divided into different theories. There are many kinds of feminism but in this study we will discuss only a few of them.

**FEMINIST THEORIES**

**Liberal Feminism**

The earliest form of feminism is the Liberal feminism. It is basically an individualistic form of theory where the focus is on the ability of women to maintain their equality with their own actions and choices. The main aim of these feminists was to acquire gender equality and spread awareness of the same. Liberal feminists demanded equality in access to education, equal pay for equal work, better working conditions, and to end job segregation.

During the civil rights movement in the United States in 1960s, liberal feminists drew parallels between the race discrimination by the system and sex discrimination. To encourage others to speak up for women’s rights, many groups emerged during this period. Some of such groups were National Organisation for Women, National Women’s Political Caucus, and Women’s Equity Action League.
Mary Wollstonecraft and Abigail Adams were involved from the start to argue about equality for women. Liberal feminism was one of the earliest kinds of feminism. It was started during the first wave of feminism. The earliest demand of the liberal feminists was that of suffrage, franchise, and right to vote. They wanted women to gain education, to have job opportunities, and to take part in the political system of the society by being an active participant. They believe that God has created men and women equally, hence, both must have equal rights in all the spheres of life. In a few words, liberal feminists want to free women from the bondage of performing gender roles. Whatever privileges a man enjoys, the same must be given to a woman without getting discriminated on the any basis, especially on the basis of sex.

Other important issues that the liberal feminists focussed upon included the reproductive rights and abortion access. But it was not limited to only these rights, they also concentrated on sexual harassment, voting, education, compensation for work, affordable childcare and healthcare for all, and wanted to throw light on the sexual and domestic violence prevailing in the society against women.

Mary Wollstonecraft has always been very influential through her writings. Her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* encouraged women to speak up against patriarchy that was holding their voices for so long. Wollstonecraft wanted “personhood” for women and denied the popular belief that women are by nature more gentle and giving than men. She argued if men were confined to the same limitations as women, they too would develop these traits.

Another important writer during the first wave of feminism who was a liberal feminist was Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She played a major role in orchestrating the Seneca Falls Convention, which was the first women’s rights convention held in Seneca Falls, New York in July 1848.

Stanton was involved in many women’s movements not only limited to the suffragist movement but also the ones including employment and income rights, women’s parental and custodial rights, birth control, and divorce laws. She also has an equally talented and influential partner with her, Susan B. Anthony. They fought for the linguistic shift in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments together to
include “female”. Moreover, in 1890 she founded the National American Women Suffrage Association and remained the president of the association for two years. She did not author any feminist text as such but have produced a large number of speeches, letters, calls, and petitions which helped in lighting the torch of the first wave. She even paved the way for the Married Women’s Property Act of 1848 by collecting a huge number of signatures.

Another important figure in the liberal feminism is John Stuart Mill. He believed that both men and women must have equal rights and that law must be equal for both the sexes. He argued that both the sexes must be allowed to develop and use their faculties freely. Mill often spoke about the “unselfishness” that men have while they provide necessities to their families. By this unselfishness he meant the one “that motivates people to take into account the good of society as well as the good of the individual person or small family unit.”

Apart from these feminist, some famous 20th century liberal feminists include Betty Friedan, Hillary Clinton, Rebecca Walker, Naomi Wolf, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) is the largest Liberal Feminist organisation in the United States. Currently their focus primarily is the Constitutional Equality Amendment but they also deals with the issues related to female reproductive rights and abortion access. They also focus on ending violence against women, racism, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender rights (LGBT).

In the United States, three years after the right to vote was introduced, the Equal Right Amendment (ERA) was also instigated. While the Amendment has been introduced after that into each session of the United States Congress, it has been facing opposition from the initial stages. It was approved after a lot of pondering and voting over the Amendment. Though, in 1970s when the Congress passed the Amendment to the states, the text of the ERA was 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 sex.”
However, in 2008, the ERA was stopped three states short of ratification. The National Organization of Women holds the view that gender and racial imbalance in the legislature is the main problem for this result.

In 1995, American women’s organisations introduced the Constitutional Equity Amendment (CEA). It contains all the vital issues covered by the two year study of NOW and other groups including ERA. But there were a few points that ERA missed and CEA emphasised. They were:

- Women and men shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place and entity subject to its jurisdiction.
- It guarantees rights without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, sexual orientation, marital status, ethnicity, national origin, colour or indigence.
- It prohibits pregnancy discrimination and guarantees the absolute right of a woman to make her own reproductive decisions including the termination of pregnancy.

Though like all the theories, Liberal Feminism has also been criticised by other feminists and scholars. One of the major criticisms it faced was that Liberal Feminism focuses on the individual which clearly disregards the importance of a community as a whole. According to another critique, it somehow focuses into the metamorphosis of a woman into a man where the significance of the traditional role of the woman is lost.

A Radical Feminist, Catherine A. MacKinnon, argues that liberalism and feminism were not compatible at all because liberalism offers women a “piece of the pie currently and poisonously baked.” Other critics, including the post-colonial feminists and black feminists claimed that liberal feminism mainly reflects the values of the middle-class white women ignoring the women of other races, ethnicity, and class.

**Radical Feminism**

Radical feminism is basically the breeding ground of most of the ideas that feminism holds today. However, today it is not accepted as the term to define feminism and it has just become a branch of feminism.
As the name suggests, radical feminists were quite radical in nature. They challenge everything and everyone in the name of discrimination. They were the first to introduce the terms ‘gender’ and ‘patriarchy’. They condemn patriarchy and explain the need to show respect towards individual feelings and sentiments without discriminating on the basis of sex alone. According to radical feminism, women’s oppression was the main issue behind all other kinds of oppressions. Radical feminists want to end women oppression to make a better and healthier society for the human beings. Radical feminists want to imbibe the thought of change in women. This will help in paving the way for equality amongst women all over the world.

Many ideas arose from radical feminism which were later on been shaped and pounded out in many other branches of feminism. Basically this was a feminist movement that started during the civil rights and peace movements in 1967-68. The label of “radical” to this group was given for its main focus on the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of oppression. It is the kind of oppression that ignore the boundaries of race, culture, and class.

It was developed in the United States during the women’s liberation movement in the 1960s. it is mainly seen in the context of the second wave of feminism that was started in the early 60s. Some of the pioneers of the second wave of feminism included Shulamith Firestone, Kathie Sarachild, TiGrace Atkinson, Carol Hanisch, and Judith Brown.

Radical feminism developed in the United States as a response to the failings of some political organisations and feminists organisations including Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and National Organization for Women (NOW). Initially radical feminists concentrated in big cities like New York, Chicago, Boston, and Washington DC but later on it spread across the country during 1968 to 1972.

Ellen Willis characterised the New York Radical Women as “the first women’s liberation group in New York City”. Radical feminists were the ones who declared that “personal is political” and “sisterhood is powerful”.

Soon after in 1969, New York Radical Women fell apart in what was known to be the “politico-feminist split”. Here the “politicos” saw capitalism as the main source
of women subjugation while “feminists” saw patriarchy as the reason for the oppression of women worldwide. The feminist side of the split soon emerged with a new organisation, Redstockings. By the same time a second organisation was formed when Ti-Grace Atkinson made a “radical split-off from NOW” and emerged with a new organisation, The Feminists.

During this time, many feminists’ works were being published including Anne Koedt’s essay *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm* (1970) and Kate Millet’s book *Sexual Politics* (1970).

Radical feminists believe that patriarchal values must be condemned and oppression of women could diminish through this way. They believe in a movement of social change that has to be quite revolutionary in nature.

Radical feminism questions gender stereotypes and its impact on the society. This theory wants to free males and females from the bondage of the characteristics and attributes imposed on them on the basis of their genders. This theory tries to differentiate between biologically adopted behaviour and cultural adopted behaviour. It shows how different we could be biologically but how we are made different culturally by labelling us under masculine and feminine.

It wants to show how narrow gendered roles are and how vast the possibilities are for us to break free from these roles and explore the things we want. The status quo has always been important in the society but what if we do not want it? We are not given a choice because we are labelled as males and females and we are supposed to act in a particular manner whether we like it or not.

Radical feminists want to put an end to gender stereotypes and choose our own way to behave without any kind of imposition from the society. They believe that equality is all in the way we want to behave but fear the society to judge us in a negative manner.

Radical feminists basically wants a radical reordering of the hierarchy in the society. They want to eliminate the male supremacy from political, economic, and social contexts altogether.

It is a philosophy that emphasised the subjugation of women by men from time immemorial. It focuses on the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and
women and how women have always been exploited by men. This theory argues that patriarchy has always divided rights, privileges, and power according to gender favouring males over females. Hence, females have always been a target of biasness by the males of the society.

Providing privileges to men have always resulted into oppression of women. Radical feminism wants to eradicate such division on the basis of gender. Radical feminists have always been impulsive and rude in nature than that of the other kinds of feminists.

This branch of feminism basically opposes the existing political and social institutions as they believe that these are inherently related to patriarchy. These feminists are sceptical of political action of the current system and demand a cultural change within the society that favours patriarchy and hierarchal structures.

But it has to be clear that radical feminists oppose patriarchy not men in general. To say that radical feminism is all about ‘man-hating’ will be a wrong interpretation of this branch. One must not make the assumption that patriarchy and men are philosophically or politically inseparable.

Radical feminists wants to equate men and female in a political and cultural scenario without any difference. They want equality for all on the basis of their potential and not on the basis of their gendered roles in the society.

They believe that male supremacy is the root cause of the subordination of women. They want to eliminate this idea of male as a superior being than females from the context of politics, culture, or philosophy.

**Marxist Feminism**

This branch of Feminism mainly focuses on the investigation and explanation of the ways in which women subordination takes place through system of capitalism and private property. It was a movement that was started in the late 19th century. The foundation of the earliest discourse relating the capitalist system and oppression was initiated by the influential works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels through *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859).
In 1859, Marx developed ‘Historical Materialism’, a theory that recognises various ways in which the economic and social structure of the society forms the base of any society. This base determines a range of systems which favours a few people who in turn are in power and oppress the other weaker sections of the society. According to Marx, these people in power try to maintain their power in order to increase the class conflict through which they could continue ruling over the low classes and remain in power.

Marxist Feminism have risen from the doctrines of Karl Marx. The theory does not focus on the material aspects of life but on the social aspects. The division of labour is one of the central issues in this theory that is evident from the capitalist systems. Hence, the Marxists oppose any social or political action that encourage enslavement or oppression on the basis of work division.

The Marxist Feminism explains that the current capitalist economy do not appreciate or compensate women’s labour. They attribute the oppression of women to the capitalist/private property system. Moreover, they insist that the only way to end this kind of oppression is to overthrow the capitalist system from the society. It is a movement that was meant to liberate women by improving their material condition. The capitalist drive for profits is responsible for the second-class status of women in the society. It is also responsible for other kinds of oppression such as racism and homophobia. Women workers are exploited at workplace more than male workers, and coloured women face even higher level of exploitation than other women.

One of the earliest works in this field was that of Friedrich Engels when he published ‘The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State’ in 1884. It deals with the issues of class, women subjugation and private property. According to Engels, patriarchy created a capitalistic society where women have very less or sometimes even no share at all. Because of no property of her own, she has to be dependent upon the male pillars of her family which in return results in her subordination.

Engels argues that social relations are the major causes of women subordination and it has nothing to do with the biological disposition of a woman. He further states that gender oppression is closely related to class oppression. In a society, the
relationship between a man and a woman is similar to the relations between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Men have always oppressed women and have maintained the practice because it is useful for their power and they remain in the ruling class. It clearly divides men and women where men are provided with all the privileges and women are deprived of any kind of monetary help for their domestic labour assigned.

Many Marxist feminists argue that female oppression originated from being forced into the private sphere. They proposed that conditions of women could improve only if their work was recognised and valued in the public sphere. Charlotte Perkins Gilman was a socialist writer who worked on this issue and wanted to end women subordination by influencing people to appreciate female housework and promoted his message in academic and public domains.

Another important issue that the Marxist feminists raised was that of sharing the responsibility of reproductive labour. They wanted to liberate women from their forced connection to reproductive labour. Women have always been responsible to take care of the private sphere including their children. Even when women moved out to the public sphere to compete with men, they still have the responsibility for maintaining equilibrium with their private sphere, whereas, men have no such obligation. They are responsible for only one sphere, i.e., public sphere.

Marxist feminists proposed a solution to gain equality amongst men and women that there has to be sharing of responsibilities within the spheres. The Marxist feminists argue that now when women are working in the public sphere as well, they still have to bear the burden of unwaged labour which is in the private sphere. Silvia Federici explains that such a condition results in a “double day” for women where she has to take care of both the spheres.

Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai are not in favour of the kind of feminism which reinforce class status. They argue that there is no possibility that women are united on the basis of economic inequality. They think it is difficult for an upper class woman to understand the struggle of a lower working class.

Dora B. Montefiore was a British feminist who after becoming conscious about the conditions of women around her became a radical socialist and fought for women’s rights. As a warrior for women’s rights, she soon became a warrior against
capitalism and opposed all its inequalities. Marxism was making a new start in Great Britain and Montefiore took advantage of the same by campaigning for the equality of women when it comes to capitalist wage slavery.

George Bernard Shaw has written political works and most of his literary works had political themes. His works mostly dealt with women’s issues or other social ones. He was one of the influential figures dealing with Marxist Feminism through his works.

The commodification of women have been seen from ancient times when women have no say in any major or minor decision making process. Women have often being seen as a property by the husband. Domestic violence is also one of the causes that originate from such a case. When a husband stops seeing his wife as a human and starts treating her as his property, he does not feel any wrong in misbehaving with her. He feels it to be his right to scold, mock, beat, or even rape his wife. There have been instances where husbands trade their wives in order to earn money.

**Socialist Feminism**

In the Socialist feminism, the points that have been left out in the Radical and Marxist feminist theories were being dealt. According to the socialist feminists, the root cause of women subjugation lies deep within the societal rules and norms. The social structure is responsible for this distinction amongst men and women. It approves certain tenets of Marxist feminism and believes that the economy of the society cultivates class distinctions that in return allow a particular class or classes of people to overpower and dominate over others. This domination of one class over the others generates corruption in the society.

During the 1970s, a new wave of writing began to circulate. It was the emergence of the socialist feminism which came about without any affiliation from a national organisation but from the grassroots of the society. One of the most important things in these writings were the debates that were later on came to be known as dual systems theory. Several socialist feminists argue that there are two interlocking and interdependent systems of oppression, one being patriarchy and other being
capitalism. They also made analysis which addresses Marxism’s class analysis and feminism’s class analysis of the patriarchal oppression.

The debate often points out that Marxism’s class analysis does not address women’s oppression under capitalism satisfactorily. They argue that there are various facets of women’s lives and theories related to only class analysis could not explain them fully, for instance, domestic violence, rape, objectification of women’s bodies, and the power dynamics of gender and sexuality. They further discuss that capitalism and patriarchy are the two kinds of social systems which are neither identical nor are they autonomous.

Socialist feminism is somehow influenced by the radical feminism as well where the subordination of women by men is seen as an overarching reality in the women’s history. While radical feminism focuses on the patriarchal oppression of women, socialist feminism emphasised on the importance of class inequalities while they also use class as a concept in a different way. They admit that they have gained enlightenment from Marxist’s way of explaining class and many a time use its way to explain social relations in that term as well. But more often than not social feminists tries to focus on the relation of class analysis to gender inequality. They see class as an adjunct to gender inequality and often refer this term to describe the differences between men and women.

Still the concept of women being the oppressed and men being the oppressors has seen many criticisms as one cannot be sure that all women share a common oppression. Feminists have been arguing over this problem since the 1980s. There has been an increased attention to women’s diversity since, and they are unable to identify how capitalism plays an important role in such a diversity. They are unable to provide a common ground for all the women to unite them to fight for social justice.

Several such debates that have been prominent during the past three decades in socialist feminism have now been diminished but such complex dimensions are evident in the social analysis that has become an important part of women’s studies.
According to Rosemarie Tong, socialist feminism ‘seeks to explain the ways in which capitalism interacts with patriarchy to oppress women more egregiously than men’.

The term ‘class’ that is used in this theory describes the relation of classes as the oppressive social practices which is similar to that of sex and race oppressions. Here class is a kind of cultural system and a set of status distinction where distribution of resources marks the ‘privileged ones’.

Several socialist feminists argue that household labourers are not considered to be ‘productive’ in a sense but when they are working on wage-purchased goods, their labour becomes a part of the concealed labour included under the labour power. Hence, socialist feminists even initiated campaigns for wages for housework. They further explain that women as housewife labourers are a part of capitalistic class as their work is also contributing to the labour power.

For socialist feminists, class is one of the vital dimension of patriarchal forms of oppression. They analyse theories of Marxist ideology and subjectivity to theorise women’s subjectivity in a better way. Socialist feminists in the initial second wave feminism look at women as an oppressed ‘class’ that is being exploited by the structures of the capitalist patriarchy. After several analysis, the most acceptable model of subjectivity the feminists made available was that of false consciousness. It is an effect of the capitalist ideology according to the Marxist theory where the working class is prevented from perceiving and challenging the exploitative nature of the capitalist society. When look at it through the lens of feminism, false consciousness is seen as the effect of patriarchal society.

However, in the 1970s, the socialist feminists soon moved on beyond the false consciousness and developed more complex theories of subjectivity through the works of Althusser, Freud, and Lacan. Though the Althusserian model of subjectivity explained in his essay On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation (1971) was highly influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis.

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1 Tong, 1998:119
Some of the famous social feminists include Johanna Brenner, Barbara Ehrenreich, Clara Fraser, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emma Goldman, Silvia Federici, Donna Haraway, Selma James, Sylvia Walby, and Nellie Wong.

Barbara Ehrenreich was a prominent figure in the Democratic Socialists of America during the 1980s and early 1990s. She was also the honorary co-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America during the 2010 onwards. She is an acclaimed columnist, essayist, and have written about 21 books.

While socialist feminists were developing Marxist theory according to their concepts in order to understand patriarchy in a better way, other feminists were trying to develop different forms of radical and revolutionary feminism concepts where patriarchy was seen as the power of the privileged ones and women’s subjugation was its primary purpose.

Socialist feminism focuses on both the public as well as the private spheres of a woman’s life. Socialist feminists argue that women can only be liberated if they work to terminate the economic and the cultural sources of women’s subordination. Socialist feminism includes the vital concepts of both the Marxist and Radical feminism. It explains the role of capitalism as a factor for women’s oppression and also argues that gender and patriarchy are the reason for the subordination of women from time immemorial.

It is one of the main theories of Western feminism where they believe that women are second-class citizens in the patriarchal society that depends on the exploitation of working people for its survival.

**Amazon Feminism**

This kind of feminism is to give an image of a female hero in fact and fiction. It is mainly expressed in art in literature in physiques and feats of female athletes, and in sexual values and practices. In Amazon feminism, the focus is given to the equality of physical attributes of men and women. It oppose to the idea of gender role stereotypes and discrimination of women on the basis of their looks which are assumed to be weak, passive, and physically helpless.
The first time this concept of Amazon feminism was brought up by the writings of Ayn Rand. Her philosophy was highly influenced by the Greek knowledge and her concepts had a number of intriguing historical connections from the Greek mythology as well. Rand once compared her female protagonist to a Valkyrie who was a powerful Amazon feminist symbol.

But it was Thomas Gramstad who coined this term in his essay *The Female Hero, a Randian Feminist Synthesis*. He tried to bring together the concept introduced by Rand and the modern concept of female heroism.

Thomas Gramstad define Amazon feminism as a branch of feminism that is “concerned about physical equality and is opposed to gender role stereotypes and discrimination against women based on assumptions that women are supposed to be, look or behave as if they are passive, weak and physically helpless.”

Although it was Gramstad who coined the term but it was Gloria Steinem who was the first to draw attention to a character that would become iconic in Amazon Feminism when in 1972 in her Ms. Magazine she introduced “Wonder Woman”. Wonder Woman was also sometimes referred to as the “Amazing Amazon” in pop culture.

Moreover, the inception of the character dates back to the 1940s when Dr. William Moulton Marston, who was a psychologist and a feminist, wrote in *The American Scholar* about the negative impacts of gender stereotyping on youth, “Not even girls want to be girls so long as our feminine archetype lacks force, strength, and power… Women’s strong qualities have become despised because of their weakness. The obvious remedy is to create a character with all the strength of Superman plus all the allure of a good and beautiful woman.”

Amazon feminism rejects the idea of women being physically weak and the assumptions that certain traits are inherently masculine or feminine. It shows a whole new perspective to the heroic womanhood to the society.

It emphasised on the female physical prowess as a solution to achieve gender equality. Several members of the suffrage movement used violent forms to protest in the political scenario and many newspapers and books referred to them as ‘Amazons’.
Amazons were basically female warriors according to the Greek mythology. There has been several queens of the Amazons that participated in Trojan War and other such mythological wars. The Amazons were since then became associated with such females that were physically strong and powerful. Hence, Amazons were a race of female warriors as told in myths and legends.

Amazon feminism deals with the image of a woman who is physically strong shown in literature and arts. She is seen strong in physiques and feats and in sexual values and practices as well. This branch of feminism deals with the physical equality of females and shuns the idea of women being passive, weak, and submissive. Amazon feminism breaks down the prejudiced idea about women being physically helpless and timid.

Amazon feminists does not accept the idea that certain traits and characteristics are inherently masculine and are instinctively in males. They believe that females are strong as well but are stereotyped by the patriarchal society. Amazon feminism celebrates the vision of heroic womanhood and supports female physical strength, athletes, martial artists, soldiers, and powerlifters.

Amazon feminism believes in the principle of heroism conceived and expressed in a female form. It refers to a strong and powerful woman, mostly in terms of physical strength.

To sum it up, Amazon feminism is about the ability of a woman to view herself as the captain of her own ship who could not only face the hurdles of the life but also could resolve them. It means that a woman refuses to view herself as a victim of the patriarchal society. The woman separates herself from the common people and seems like a warrior who is willing to face and overcome all the conflicts along her way.

**Eco Feminism**

The term ‘Ecofeminism’ was basically used for the first time by a French feminist philosopher, Francoise d’Eaubonne in her book *Le feminisme ou la mort* (1976). She explained that balance between the environments is closely related to the end of patriarchy. She even linked in a critical manner the degradation of environment and
the population growth with the patriarchal view of women as mere reproductive bodies.

Though the term was introduced by d’Eaubonne, it became popular after a number of protests against the environmental destruction because of the ecological disasters during the 1980s.

It was the meltdown at Three Mile Island that provoked a huge number of women in the United States to organise the first ever ecofeminist conference in March 1980 at Amherst – ‘Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Eco-Feminism in the Eighties’. This was the conference where several links of feminism and militarisation in context to the ecology were explored.

A feminist economist Professor Mary Mellor define ecofeminism as a “movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. It emerged in the mid-1970s alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement. Ecofeminism brings together elements of the feminist and green movements, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement a concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit, and oppress women.”

A feminist writer, Lynn Wenzel, wrote “Ecofeminists say ‘no more waiting’,” in one of her essays *Genesis II – An Ecofeminist Reclamation Project*. She further added “We are in a state of emergency and must do something about it now… around the world, economics, cultures and natural resources are plundered, so that 20 percent of the world’s population (privileged North Americans and Europeans) can continue to consume 80 percent of its resources in the name of progress.”

Ecological feminists or Eco feminists argue that there is a close link between ‘the unjustified domination of women, children, people of colour, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature.’

Karen Warren in *Ecofeminist Philosophy* (2000) pointed out several connections between women and nature. She explains certain existing dualisms in western philosophy as a source of conceptual and practical domination.

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2 Introduction to “Feminism & Ecology” by Mary Mellor, New York University Press, 1997, p.1
This kind of feminism is more of a spiritual type rather than a political or theoretical one. It argues that a patriarchal society will exploit its resources without giving a thought to the long term consequences of the exploitation. It directly emphasised on the attitude portrayed by the patriarchal or hierarchical society of the world.

Moreover, there are parallels drawn from the exploitation by society of environment, animals, and resources with that of its women. The patriarchal society is treating women in a negative way without regarding the future consequences of such subordination.

This theory of feminism argues that the patriarchal philosophies are harmful not only for women but also for children, animals, and environment as a whole. Eco feminists believes that patriarchal society dominate the unruly females and the unruly wilderness. They view patriarchal society as a structure that has developed over the past 5,000 years.

The Introduction to Ecofeminism by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (1993) clearly says that “Wherever women acted against ecological destruction or/and the threat of atomic annihilation, they immediately became aware of the connection between patriarchal violence against women, other people and nature, and that: In defying this patriarchy we are loyal to future generations and to life and this planet itself. We have a deep and particular understanding of this both through our natures and our experience as women.”

**Cultural Feminism**

Cultural feminism is a theory that eulogises the differences between men and women. It was developed from Radical feminism but has many opposing views. It holds an ideology that tries to revalidate the underrated female characteristics.

It is also said to be a feminist theory of difference where positive traits of a woman is praised and appreciated. Cultural Feminism glorifies and applauds what seems to be the positive attributes of a female.

Josephine Donovan says that Margaret Fuller, who was the nineteenth century journalist, critic, and women’s rights activist, has highly contributed to the Cultural feminism. According to her, Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) was
the book that initiated this tradition of Cultural feminism. The book shows an emotional and intuitive side of knowledge that defines a world which is quite different from the mechanistic view of the rational people.

Once the movement of Radical feminism phased out Cultural feminism came into being. Although many of the feminist who were in the former moved to the latter. But still the ideology of both the movements were quite distinctively different where radical feminism wanted to transform the society, cultural feminism was more like vanguardism that wanted to build a women’s culture.

As many of the movements for social change were unsuccessful, many feminists found it difficult to change the society as a whole. Hence, they started to build alternatives for the same which was why this transformation from radical to cultural feminism came into being.

This theory believes that there are fundamental differences between men and women and that those differences must be celebrated by women. They believe that there are certain biological differences between these two races and instead of trying to gain equality we must celebrate these differences. Cultural feminism supports the differences that make a woman unlike a man and wants to highlight the special traits that women have against men.

They believe in the popular notion that women are kinder and gentle than men. They want to overcome sexism by celebrating these qualities a woman has and believe that women are better than men in many ways.

Cultural feminists want to give equal value to the jobs a female does including taking care of children and home, cooking food for the family, so that people could learn to respect females just as they respect males. Feminists use a phrase “essential differences” in this kind of feminism in order to refer to the belief that gender differences are an essential part of males and females and it cannot be disregarded in any way. Such differences are a part of a person’s life and one should learn to accept and appreciate these differences.

Hence, cultural feminism is seen as an ‘essentialist’ where differences between a man and a woman cannot be overlooked and the essential nature of women is unique to the female sex. Many a time cultural feminist were being criticised for
being ‘separatists’ when they tried to make a separate lane for women’s music, women’s art, and women’s studies from the mainstream culture.

Cultural feminists were unhappy with the way the society kept encouraging masculine traits. They started a movement to encourage feminine traits instead for the betterment of the society.

**FILM THEORIES**

Film studies is an academic discipline where we use film theories to explore the essence of a cinema. Film theories are used for conceptualizing frameworks to understand a particular film’s relationship to reality or other arts, to individual viewers, and to society at large. Many people interchange the term film theory with film criticism or film history. Though these three are quite similar to each other still they are not to be confused by being the same thing.

If we look into the history of cinema, French philosopher Henri Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* (1896) was the work which anticipated the development of the film theory. Bergson argued about the new ways people would look at films and cinema. To him, this could become a great movement to which he gave terms like “the movement-image” and “the time-image”.

However, a few decades later a philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, took *Matter and Memory* as the basis of his analysis of film theory through *Cinema I and Cinema II* (1983-1985) and keenly observed Bergson’s philosophies and concepts.

The earliest film theories emerged in the silent era of the cinema where it was mainly concerned about the vital elements of the cinema. Film theories arose from the works of some famous French and Russian filmmakers including Germaine Dulac, Louis Delluc, Jean Epstein, Sergei Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov, and Dziga Vertov. It further evolved from the works of some famous German film theorists including Rudolf Arnheim, Bela Balazs, and Seigfried Kracauer. All of them emphasised on the fact that films are different from reality and they should be considered as an art form. However, the French film critic and theorist Andre Bazin disagreed with this statement as according to him film is basically a reproduction of reality and it cannot be separated from real life.
It was during the 1960s and 70s that film theory became a part in academia and it started importing concepts from some of the established disciplines like gender studies, linguistics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, anthropology, and literary theory. But it was not until the early 90s when film theory became an important discipline in the American universities where auteur theory and humanistic approaches were dominating the cinema studies.

In the early 1970s after the work of Laura Mulvey, the critics explored many other aspects related to the ‘gaze’ in the cinema identifying the viewer’s perspective with the camera vision.

**Auteur Film Theory**

Auteur film theory explains that the director is the author of the film and the film reflects his personal creative vision. The word ‘auteur’ is a French word for ‘author’. A French film director, Francois Truffaut, who was also a film critic and one of the founders of the French New Wave, said that, “There are no good or bad movies, only good and bad directors.” He wrote an essay *A Certain Tendency in French Cinema* in 1954 where he argued that films are a great platform for any director to showcase his/her personal ideas and hence, he could easily be regarded as an ‘auteur’.

However, this viewpoint was criticised by many still it was regarded as an important aspect while interpreting many movies. Later on it was associated with the French New Wave and many critics used to review films using this method in the French film review periodical *Cahiers du Cinema*. After a few years, auteur theory was developed in the United States by a critic Andrew Sarris.

The theory came into the fore when a group of film enthusiasts stressed on the fact that a director must reflect his/her own personal views in the movie. Alexandre Astruc was a film director and critic who further argued that a director must use the camera as a writer uses the pen while portraying his/her vision to the audience. This notion came to be known as ‘camera-stylo’ or “camera-pen”.
Andre Bazin, a film theoretician, further explained that by auteur theory one reflects one’s personal viewpoint in an artistic way to portray it through a movie to the audience. One set that as one’s standard of reference and it may continue or progress from one film to the other.

Though it was criticised and several controversy arose due to this theory when people argue over the fact that who would be called the ‘author’ of something which is a result of a team. When it comes to a painting or a book, one can easily point out to the author, but when it comes to a film it is difficult to identify whether it shows the personal vision of the director, the writer, or someone else’s. Even when it comes to a music the composer can be referred to the auteur but what about the music while performing with an orchestra?

Although a film needs an author if it has to qualify for an “art” but every director may not be the auteur of his/her film. Hence, there are many Indian filmmakers who uses this technique to portray their own visual perceptions through their movies. Some of them are Guru Dutt, Satyajit Ray, Raj Kapoor, Mani Ratnam, Mani Kaul, and Shyam Benegal. There are female directors as well like Mira Nair and Aparna Sen and some contemporary ones including Ram Gopal Varma, Nagesh Kukunoor, and Kiran Rao. Moreover, Yash Chopra is said to be an auteur producer and there are screenwriters as well who are included in this theory like K.A. Abbas, Salim Khan, and Javed Akhtar.

Alfred Hitchcock was an English filmmaker who popularised Auteur theory through his films. He mostly made suspense-thriller movies and used camera as his weapon. His innovative camera work was famous and that gave birth to the ‘Hitchcock zoom’ in his film Vertigo (1958). It is a dolly zoom where the subject is kept as the same size throughout the shot but the camera angle is put in such a way that the background changes its size.

Many parallel films are said to be following this trend of being the creative vision of the director himself. The director is without any doubt the creator of the film but many times during the production of the film, the director’s vision is blurred or mixed up with other points of views. Hence, all the films cannot be clubbed under this division. A director brings a movie to life by expressing his own personal views
and thoughts to it and by using different other methods of production like lighting, camerawork, cinematography, and editing. He uses all these techniques to add to his vision.

From the initial stage of its inception, this theory has faced a number of controversies and critical comments, perhaps that is the reason why this theory was readily accepted into the film journalism. Often it is taken for granted for the directors of serious cinema or popular films as well to be primarily responsible for the movie. It is also described by some that 1960s was the period where directors were the superstars of the films, not only in Hollywood or Europe but in cinema all over the world.

Perhaps that is why when in earlier movies it was said in the credits with a neutral “Directed by Satyajit Ray” gradually replaced by “A Film by Satyajit Ray” or “A Satyajit Ray Film” where the implications of authorship is clearly seen.

**Psychoanalytic Film Theory**

Psychoanalytical film theory analyses films from the perspective of psychoanalysis and is influenced by the works of Jacques Lacan. Earlier the critics of psychoanalysis focused on extracting the hidden meaning behind screen images and unmasking the meaning that were implied rather than described. Later on they considered film as a representation of fantasy.

As the digital revolution took place in the cinema after the 90s, many new aspects were introduced in film theory. One of the major concepts developed was the concept of “gaze”. It has been, since then, used in several contemporary film analysis.

This concept was initially introduced by Laura Mulvey in one of her essays in 1975, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. She was a second-wave feminist who introduced this concept of the ‘male gaze’ highlighting the asymmetrical gender power shown in the films. Although this concept was already present in the early studies but it was Mulvey who threw light on it with reference to cinema. Mulvey
argued that women are objectified in movies because men are in control of the camera.

Psychoanalytic Film theory had occurred in two different waves, one in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the other during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Jacqueline Rose is associated with the second wave of psychoanalytic film criticism which gave emphasis to the missing object of desire from the spectators’ point of view. Elisabeth Cowie stated, “The pleasure of fantasy lies in the setting out, not in the having of the objects.”

Presently, Psychoanalytic film theory has become one of the most widely practiced film theories although it was developed in a relatively later years than most of the other film theories.

Though many films were incorporating psychoanalytic elements in the earlier films, this theory did not came to the fore before 1960s. Major reasons for this could be that film studies was not recognised as an academic discipline until recently and also that when film studies emerged as a discipline it coincided with the revival of the psychoanalysis, which was a new approach brought up by French cinema.

Henceforth, when the early cinema started to develop in a recognisable manner all over the world, psychoanalysis was rekindling its theory as a part of the film studies.

In psychoanalysis film theory, phenomenon of cinema and elements of a particular film are shaped by the unconscious. Critics have divided this ‘unconscious’ into four distinct categories; the filmmaker’s unconscious, the character’s unconscious, the audience’s unconscious, and the unconscious of the cinematic discourse.

1. The Filmmaker’s Unconscious: Just like a patient’s unconscious includes the manifestations of his/her mind combined with dreams, slips of tongue, and neurotic symptoms, films were considered to be the manifestation of the unconscious part of a filmmaker’s mind. Though it was used earlier quite a lot but now it is out of fashion.
2. The Character’s Unconscious: Another psychoanalysis that is still pertinent in the film theory is to analyse the behaviour of the characters of the movie. By noticing the nuances of the dialogues, body language, and attitude of the character, one could intercept a few traces of the character’s unconscious. However, once this approach was used a number of criticisms came in its way arguing that though the characters in a movie are fictional they are not supposed to be treated as real people having a mind of their own, hence, no issue of noticing their unconscious part of the mind.

3. The Audience’s Unconscious: Once the character’s consciousness was criticised by many sceptics, the new stage of development for the psychoanalytic film theory surfaced with the viewer’s unconscious. While the audience quietly sit and watch the movies, there are certain characters and scenes which may attract or distract the viewers. Such scenes or dialogues unconsciously identify with the audience. The audience unconsciously projects their own fantasies, fixations, and phobias with the film or parts of the film. Sometimes one may get too attached to a particular character of the film depending upon the unconscious attraction with the character while some characters could even act as an aversion for someone.

4. The Unconscious of the Cinematic Discourse: This is one of the most recent version of the psychoanalytic film theory. It involves the form of a film as to how through editing or cinematography it has developed a form to create an impact on the unconscious. There may be a case where the actual incident is not shown in the movie still its effect is resonating throughout the movie. Here the unconscious that is shown is not on the part of the filmmaker, the character, or the audience, but on the part of the discourse of the film itself.

There have been many films that have drawn upon the psychoanalytical concepts of unconscious, dream work, Oedipus complex, and psychoanalysis techniques itself. As Lacan would have said about the psychoanalytic film theory that its land has “shifted from the axis of the symbolic order and the imaginary to that of the symbolic order and the real.” The main source of both the waves of the psychoanalytic film theory has remained Jacques Lacan and to a certain extent Sigmund Freud.
Marxist Film Theory

Marxist film theory is said to be one of the oldest forms of film theory. There were many filmmakers who heighten the class consciousness and promote Marxist ideas. Many Soviet filmmakers including Sergei Eisenstein expressed ideas of Marxism through their films. The concept of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie can be seen in many films highlighting the ideas of Marxism. The themes and plots of the films were also showing the economic exploitation of people from a lower class. Gradually the development of Marxist film theory moved on from these precise beginnings and later on it was viewed in a much wider way to refer to any power relationships or structures within a moving image text.

A situation in Gauri Shinde’s *English Vinglish* (2012) shows the protagonist, Shashi, who used to make *laddoos* and sell them in the city from her house, was never appreciated by her husband. In fact, at many occasions he used to mock her publicly and degraded her work. Though this was not the main plot of the movie but in bits and pieces the movie clearly showed how women even nowadays and in high classes are also being treated as inferior to their male counterparts. Being a wage earner for the family, along with her husband, Shashi never got the respect which she deserved.

This was a Marxist approach the director took in order to portray the position of a female in her house. Even though she manages the responsibilities of her private sphere properly, when she tried to step out into the public sphere by selling home-made *laddoos*, her husband instead of applauding her work for balancing the two spheres all by herself, never appreciated or acknowledged her hard work.

Another issue regarding the Marxist theory is the sharing of responsibilities by both the spouses to maintain an equilibrium between the two spheres – public and private. In Mansoor Khan’s movie *Akele hum Akele Tum* (1995) it was shown how a husband puts his own desires before his wife’s. Tolerating such an attitude for several years, the wife finally left her husband’s home and told him to take care of their only child too, leaving everything behind. It was a bold step taken by a woman to go into the public sphere without taking any responsibility of the private sphere.
This clearly shows how the two spheres were contrasted and how a woman was not able to balance both of them. Instead, she shook off the burden of responsibility from her shoulders and gave it to her husband who took a lot of pain to make a harmonious balance within the spheres.

Commodification of women is also one of the results of capitalism. Many filmmakers have shown this aspect in Hindi cinema. One of the examples is of Madhur Bhandarkar’s Chandni Bar (2001). In the movie a young girl, Mumtaz has lost her parents in communal riots and moves to Mumbai with her paternal uncle who had forced her to dance in a bar until he gets a job. One day he was drunk and raped Mumtaz, showing the ultimate subjugation of a woman in the hands of a male.

On a similar note, Pradeep Sarkar’s Laaga Chunari Mein Daag (2007) showed how a girl came to find a job in a metro city and ends up being a call girl. It all started because of the dominance of a male in a workplace showing that a woman is less powerful when it comes to the public sphere.

The absence of having a share in the property makes a woman helpless in several ways. An example of such a case is Nagesh Kukunoor’s Dor (2006) where Meera is a widow who is trapped in the meaningless traditions of the society. She does not have any share in her deceased husband’s property. She lives with her husband’s parents who treat her as their property. She even loses her value when her father-in-law sells her to a man in return to keep their haveli with them. This clearly shows how down trodden women can be in the hands of patriarchy when they do not have any share in capital or private property.

B.R. Chopra’s Nikaah (1982) also shows how women are mistreated before men. It is disheartening to see how no explanation or clarification is needed from a woman when major decisions are concerned. The movie shows how a man divorces his wife in his fury and after realising his mistake how he again wants to bring her back into his life. However, in the movie the woman questions the man on treating her like a property rather than as a human. Traces of Marxist feminism can be seen in certain situations in this movie.
The ideology of Marxist feminism can be seen in several women oriented Hindi movies. The subjugation of women is due to many reasons and the Marxist feminists argue that the main reason for that is the capitalistic society of the patriarchal dominance.

Many other filmmakers have also expressed ideas of Marxism through their movies. And not only in Indian film industry but also in Russian, American, British, and French film industries we can find episodes or complete movies based on this ideology.

However, in the Hindi film industry, Marxist feminism is shown not only in the commercial movies but also in the parallel ones as well. In fact, the parallel movies mostly portray the real-life situations.

**Feminist Film Theory**

It is a kind of film theory that has emerged from the feminist theory and the feminist politics. The development of this theory began during the second wave of feminism and with the emergence of women’s studies during the 1960s. Feminist scholars started to analyse films with a feministic point of view and pointed out certain distinct features that has been playing major role in supporting the patriarchal society all along.

Films were criticised on the basis of trivial roles given to the women, stereotyping of the female characters, and giving less camera space and screen time to them as well. Marjorie Rosen’s *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies, and the American Dream* (1973) and Molly Haskell’s *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies* (1974) helped in analysis of the female characters of the cinema whether they were active or passive in the films and what kinds of stereotyping was done to them.

While analysing through this theory the focus was on “the production of meaning in a film text, the way a text constructs a viewing subject, and the ways in which the
very mechanisms of cinematic production affect the representation of women and reinforce sexism.”

Laura Mulvey’s famous essay *Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema* clearly describes how women are depicted as passive characters in films mainly providing the visual pleasures through voyeurism. She further adds that females in the movie are objectified in a way that they are put at exhibit for the viewers with a strong visual and erotic impact which results in women being the “bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” in the film.

Though Laura Mulvey has certain strong feministic points in her essay, she also included certain elements of psychoanalytic film theory influenced by Lacan while defining the spectatorship through a psychoanalytic point of view.

Mulvey defines the ‘gaze’ towards the female character of the film in three different ways – one is the look of the male character in a way how he perceives his female character, the other is the look of the audience towards the female character portrayed on the screen, and the third is the combination of these two where the male viewers look at the female character through the eyes of the male character as they can identify with him.

Mulvey wanted to free women from this objectification in the films by destruction of the modern film structure. She argued to remove the voyeurism that creates a distance between the male audience and the female character of the movie. She also emphasises the fact that man needs woman to showcase his supremacy over her and that is one of the major reasons why female characters are shown in a low light in front of the male characters. According to her, females are the reason for the patriarchal order of the society.

During the second wave of feminism where equality was being demanded by the feminists, Mulvey demanded equality of females at workplace and, hence, her work reflects the major points of the arguments of the second wave of feminism. She wanted to eliminate women objectification in order to give them a space beside the male characters of the films where males are free of objectification.

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Feminist film theory was started to motivate people to portray women in a more realistic manner in films and documentaries. The growing female presence in the film industries was seen as a positive effect towards this issue. This could eventually help in giving females strong roles and better projections.

Although in Hindi cinema there is no assurance that female filmmaker will result in a strong female character in the film. Farah Khan’s Om Shanti Om (2007) was a huge hit at the box office and was one of the most successful films of 2007. Though the title of the movie was taken from a song of the 1980 film Karz, still it clearly suggests how the male protagonist is stealing the limelight by having his name twice in the title, that is, “Om”. The movie showed how a successful Hindi film actress was weak and submissive when it comes to her married life. Though she was a confident and professional woman but when in distress Om, a man, helped her out. The movie though directed by a woman, shows the age old concept of portraying a damsel in distress rescued by a dauntless hero.

The main problem of the cinema and its portrayal of women was that the narrative of a cinema is constructed by men and that is why the representation of women is always from a male point of view.