CHAPTER - 1

FEMINISM : A TERMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

I am sick of being the victim
of trends I reflect
but don’t even understand.
(Qtd. Jaidev, Singh (ed.) Feminism 48).

The term ‘feminism’ was first used by the French dramatist Alexander Dumas, the younger, in 1872 in a pamphlet ‘L’ HommeFemme to designate the then emerging movement for women’s rights. Then it gradually grew into a world-wide cultural movement to secure the complete equality of women with men in the enjoyment of all human rights—moral, religious, social, political, educational, legal, economic and so on. The movement for women’s rights is never a ‘paradise regained’. Neither is it a ‘midsummer night’s dream’. Women are now more free to exercise their choice and will than were they in the past. No longer are they slaves to men, their master. No longer are women what the noted feminist and litterateur Mahashweta Devi says: “A woman’s life is that of a tortoise, her heart breaks, yet she remains silent” (Qtd. by Sanjukta Dasgupta, Literary Voice 8). The centuries old, mutely flowing relationship is now challenged. This challenge, the very cornerstone of feminism is taken up as a theme by both the Indian and the continental writers.
Human experience has chiefly been a masculine one. It may be called a malist experience. Hence the cumulative image that humanity offers is a tilted, biased and a lopsided one with the female voice denied an equal force. Women in the contemporary society often are pushed to the margins, the periphery of existence. Hence their struggle to erase the margins. From Christine de’ Pisan to Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen and beyond, women have been demanding and fighting for their rights in an androcentric world. Feminism is thus a protest movement launched by women of the West for equal social, political, legal, moral, cultural rights with men. It is a movement by fist-shaking, foot-stamping, rights demanding women at war with a male-dominated world. Feminism is the sentiment that differentiates a female from the doormat. It is an antimasculinist movement of the women, by the women and for the women. It is also called Aphraism after Aphra Behn, a seventeenth century feminist, political activist and abolitionist. It is a progressive movement, which recognises “the inadequacy of male created ideologies” (Rich 207). However, the roots of feminism may be traced to the late eighteenth century, the period of the French Revolution, though there were feminist writings, notably by Mary Astell, the first English feminist, almost a century earlier. It was an era of questioning, of demands for a revolutionary restructuring of society, of awareness of social injustice. This
movement aimed at bringing about spiritual, racial, economic and social equality to the sexually colonized, the historically neglected and the biologically subjugated women. It was grounded on the belief that our making of culture and meaning, like our consumption of culture and meaning influences our gender systems and in turn sex/gender systems influence our production and consumption of culture and meaning.

The rise of feminism in Europe's seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries is related to the economic prosperity of the new bourgeois resulting in the use of servants to perform the domestic work. In the nineteenth century, Feminism remained a protest movement against the suppression of women’s rights, against what may be called an ‘ego-testicle world view’. At the outset of the modern age (twentieth century), it manifested itself in the Suffrage Movement and represented one of the most important social, economic, and aesthetic revolutions of modern times.

What exactly do we mean by the term ‘feminism’? Does it merely mean female-ism or femaleness, the traits, which all women possess? Or, feminism means a sense of personal courage. Or, feminism is a kind of social revolt against convention, like living outside marriage. In the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) lived outside marriage. Would it be right to
call them feminists since they opted out from the institution of marriage? Rebecca West, the noted British author and critic has rightly said:

I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is. I only know that other people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or prostitute (The Young Rebecca, (Ed.) Marcus 219).

Adrienne Rich, a contemporary American Poet, describes feminism as “place wherein the most natural, organic way subjectivity and politics have come together” (Gelpi and Gelpi (ed.), Adrienne Rich’s Poetry: 114).

The early editions of The Oxford English Dictionary defined feminism as a state of being feminine or womanly, as did the 1901 edition of The Dictionary of Philosophy. By 1906, however, the Dictionaire de Philosophie defined feminism as a position favourable to the rights of women. Ellen Du Bois found in her research on feminism and suffrage that the term “feminism was in general use around 1910 to describe the political movement, and that the usage originated in France. Linda Kealey, writing about Canadian and American Feminism, found the term used by 1890’s to refer to the New Woman. She also notes that the recent women’s history has defined the term, distinguishing between the different strands of feminism, all of which take into account the right of woman to a
public role and also "her right to define herself autonomously" (Kealey 1979: 6-8). The Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (Revised Edn.) defines the term 'feminism' as: (a) the doctrine advocating social and political rights of women equal to those of men; (b) an organized movement for the attainment of such rights for women; (c) feminine character (523). The Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary defines the term as: (a) an idiom or expression characteristic of woman; (b) addiction to feminine ways (481). But Toril Moi says: "... the words 'feminist' or 'feminism' are political labels indicating support for the aims of the new woman's movement which emerged in the late 1960s" (Sexual/Textual Politics 20). Simone de Beauvoir maintains:

The terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of 'man' to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity (The Second Sex 15).

Feminism is a global and revolutionary ideology and calls for a set of exacting attitudes, a definite stance. The ideology is political because it is concerned with the most crucial and vital question i.e power. It is against status quo and hence revolutionary in spirit. It is usually viewed as a treat by forces which have an interest in the status quo. These forces are not only Sexist, but go beyond the boundaries of
gender and may include economic, political, religious, racist power plays. Feminism has all-pervasive links and bonds and these connections stop nowhere. “A feminist, rather than staying naïve, would be considered paranoiac a la the unnamed heroine of Atwood’s *Surfacing*. There cannot be a significant feminist gain without the entire system registering tremors and taking steps either to absorb the shock or else neutralize it” (Jaidev, “Problemating Feminism”, in Sushila Sing (ed) *Feminism* 49). But these system-preserving forces can also be draconian in their endeavours to contain recalcitrant tendencies. They too can be very inventive and innovative and can generate a feminine ideal, an ‘imitation feminism’ to counter the genuine one. They can also corrupt and taint it from within. Of the variegated approaches used by the system “to contain or counter feminism, the two most significant are: the strategy of trivializing and fetishizing feminism, and the strategy of making feminism too involved, jargon-ridden, and abstractified” (ibid.). The first strategy reduces feminism to a mere trend, a consumer item or fashion. The second strategy has been in use against Marxism in America. This strategy is now being applied against feminism as well. Feminist research is turning into an industry. One is now in danger of forgetting that feminism is meant to address itself to real people, real problems etc.
Feminist consciousness is the consciousness of victimization. As a philosophy of life, it seeks to discover and change the more subtle and deep-seated causes of women's oppression. An emancipator theory; challenge to all forms of patriarchal and sexist exploitation. But theoretically it becomes an impossibility. As soon as the oppressional and victimizing tendencies are expelled, it ceases to exist. The present-day feminism encompasses a moral vision and emerges as a holistic, anti-militaristic and life-asserting philosophy.

Toril Moi has used the term 'Post-Feminism' to cover the different configurations of feminism and post-modernism present today. Present-day feminist theorists consider feminism to be an impossible position. The agnostic definition of feminism sees it as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist oppression. Such an oppressional definition posits feminism as an inevitable resistance to patriarchal power/male domination. But if society is non-sexist and non-patriarchal, then feminism becomes an undertaking in futility. Hence it is a relational concept. Relational feminism is very widely accepted at present, as it shuns all the negativisms associated with extremities of the individualist theories.
The post-modern feminists are very wary of labels or definitions of any kind. Hence Alice Jardine is upset by the word 'feminism':

Who and what, then do we mean by ‘feminism’? That word... poses some serious problems. Not that we would want to end up by demanding a definition of what feminism is, and therefore, of what one must do, say, and be, if one is to acquire the epithet; dictionary meanings are suffocating, to say the least (Gynesis: Configurations of Women and Modernity 20).

To Jardine ‘feminism’ is generally understood as “ a movement from the point of view of, by, and for women” (Ibid, 15). By locating feminist criticism within very well-marked and brief political struggles and practices, Jardine endeavours to attribute some specifying to this general position. He views feminism as a movement by women, which takes on different and very specific forms in different contexts. This definition has a prejudice, a lopsidedness of much Parisian feminism in the 1970’s with emphasis on des femmes en movements.

Gynesis occupies a key place in Jardine’s neologism. It is the label for a textual process, which she describes as follows:

The putting into discourse of “women” as that process diagnosed in France as intrinsic to the condition of modernity; indeed, the valorization of the feminine, women, and her obligatory, that is historical connotations, as somehow intrinsic to new and necessary models of thinking, writing, speaking (Ibid, 25).

Gynesis, thus, is the process of putting woman or the feminine into discourse as the unknown other of every text. Traditionally, this has
been represented as a negative process, a process of patriarchal impression of the feminine. But Jardine is not concerned with 'negative gynesis'. On the other hand, he speaks of 'positive gynesis', the deliberate valorization of repressed femininity. Toril Moi is not at one with Jardine's theory of gynesis. He raises several questions. Is gynesis possible within an explicitly feminist discourse? Or should we rather look for the silent exclusion or explicit circulation of the masculine in such texts. Is there not the danger of repeating the patriarchal exclusion of woman?

Present-day feminism is a historically specific movement, rooted in French Enlightenment thought (Mary Wollstonecraft) and in British liberalism (John Stuart Mill). It is called post-feminism. It is wedded to notions of truth, justice, freedom, and equality. Toril Moi offers a critique of post-feminism on the pretext that it dodges all sorts of prejudices. In its eagerness to satisfy the votaries of post-structuralism and post-modernism, post-feminism takes little account of other forms of feminism, and thus enacts a spectacle of exclusion and delimitation. Gayatri Spivak has made an admirable endeavour to develop a materialist anti-imperialist feminism, which draws on the insights of recent post-structuralist and post-modern theory. She takes up a new textual strategy where we find different discourses critically
'interrupt' each other in order to bring each other to crisis. She takes over high theory for her own feminist and anti-imperialist purposes.

Karen Offen, in her perceptive and erudite assay to define feminism, has grouped the different strands of feminism into two arguments: 'Relational' and 'Individualist' (Signs 119). The relational feminist thought proposed a gender based but equalitarian vision of social organization. It chiefly featured the primacy of companionate, non-hierarchical, male-female couple as the basic unity of society. On the other hand, individualist arguments emphasized the individual, irrespective of sex or gender, as the basic unit. Relational feminism stressed women's rights 'as women' in terms of their child-bearing and/or nurturing capacities in relation to men. It insisted on women's distinctive contributions to these roles in the broader society. By contrast, individualist, feminist thought emphasized abstract concepts of individual human rights and celebrated the quest for personal independence, dismissing all socially defined roles. Basically different may be these two feminist discourses, yet they are discernible as intertwined in feminist utterances. The interplay of these two strands can be seen in the later eighteenthcentury British writers on women's rights like Mary Wollstonecraft, and their nineteenthcentury American Suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Wollstonecraft in Vindication of
the Rights of Women (1972) evinced a lucid sense of women's role and responsibilities as mothers.

The Anglo-American feminist tradition advocated the individualist thought as the only 'politically correct' form till the 1970's. This strand placed political priority on enactment of the Equal Rights Amendment, and on demolishing the gender stratified educational system and economy that disadvantaged women through occupational segregation. But the situation has undergone a change with the passage of time and as a result, this thought has been subjected to severe criticism. The demands of uncompromising self-realisation has steered the current resistance to feminism, especially among women who have opted for marriage and motherhood.

In France, relational feminism led to the apparently ambivalent, rather paradoxical doctrine of 'equality in difference'. The French theorists argued showing that equity is distinct from equality. The basic tenets were that there were both biological and cultural distinctions between the sexes, a concept of womanly or manly nature, of a sharply defined sexual division of labour, or roles in the family and throughout society following from that 'difference' and that 'nature' and of the centrality of the complementary couple and/or the mother/child dyad to social analysis. It combined a case for moral equality of women and men with an explicit acknowledgement of differences in women and men's
biological functions in society. Catherine Mackinnon has rightly used the phrase "difference difference makes" (Qtd. by Offen in "Defining Feminism...", *Signs* 130). This 'bivalent' argument constitutes the core of the present-day French feminist argument (Wolgast 1980: 16). Temma Kaplan adds that the historical roots of both the models of argument are discernible in "female consciousness" or "consciousness of the rights of gender" (*Signs* 545).

In post-1968 French movement *pour la liberation des femmes*, the groups known as *Psyche et Po* (Psychoanalyze et Politique) emphasized the centrality of biological *differences* between the sexes. Drawing heavily on Lacanian psychoanalytic postulates, this group argues that the 'women's *difference*' which lies essentially in a sexuality that has been "repressed by patriarchal culture", is the source of women's "potential liberation" (Kaufmann-McCall, "Politics of Difference", *Signs* 9: 2, 285). The group, *Psyche et Po* defies the existing language and culture through exploration of 'women's language' and thereby it seeks to overthrow the western patriarchal culture by the emergence of feminist discourse. But Simone de Beauvoir, an existentialist feminist and environmentalist disowned, rather denied 'the feminine' as a purely cultural construct. She rejected the social role implications of women's psychological difference. Her views were more in harmony with the tradition of
individualist feminism. By posing for women, the transcendent act of ‘becoming’ against the imminent stance of ‘being’, Beauvoir set up a *de facto* trap whereby women are constantly faced with the threat of *demission*, or back-sliding in ‘being’ of female passivity (Helene Eisenberg “The theme of demission in the Works of Simone de Beauvoir”, *Ph.D. Dissertation* Univ, of California, 1978). The *avant-garde* French feminists consider Beauvoir’s type of feminism as male identified whereas some others consider it as androcentric.

Feminism now is viewed as a rapidly growing major critical ideology. It is a system of concepts in its own right. Finally, it has emerged as a concept “that can encompass both an ideology and movement for socio-political change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women’s subordination within any given society” (Offen, op. cit., 151). Feminism today has become a way, rather a philosophy of life. It opposes women’s subordination to men both within the family and outside it, i.e. in the society. It has become a frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social matrix and regulatory mechanism. Images of women have been destabilized, deconstructed and reconstructed. The present-day feminist thought seeks to subvert masculinist hierarchy but not sexual dualism. It is pro-woman but not anti-man. It is viewed as a humanistic philosophy. In the final analysis, we may call it ‘transformational’. A transformation brought about through
defiance. D.H.Lawrence calls it a revolution: “perhaps the greatest revolution of modern times is the emancipation of women; and perhaps the deepest fight for two thousand years and more has been the fight for women’s independence or freedom, call it what you will. The fight was deeply bitter and, it seems to me, it was won” (in Ostricker 08). Therefore, the challenge it offers to male authority and hierarchy is a transformational one—which seeks to bring about a change in man-woman relationship through revolution but not to revolutionize the tie.

Despite several objections to Offen’s use of the term ‘feminism’ including ‘relational feminism’, she stands by her definition because there seems to be no viable or equally effective alternative term for the issues and problems of feminism. Offen says that the term ‘feminism’ lives on because:

... it is the most powerful term we have at your disposal and that we should use it knowledgeably, taking into account its transnational historical provenance and its varied implications across time and place. It allows us to get a better fix on the overall picture of sexual difference and sexual domination and, possibly, to design a better contemporary politics (Offen, op. cit., 164).

The values that women cherish differ very often from the values, which have been made by the other sex. There seems to be a moral vision inherent in the feminist thought. Theorists like Susan Sontag believe that there is a congruence between women’s subjective
experience of oppression and other objective realities of war, imperialism, and the technological rape of the environment. Contemporary theorists maintain that this situation prevails because "masculine destructiveness correlates to a denial of the female" (Donovan 172). Susan Sontag firmly felt that "Virginia Woolf was altogether correct when she declared that the fight to liberate women is the fight against fascism" (Ibid., 171).

Kathryn Allen Tabuzzi in her monumental work finds that women's fundamental experience in the domestic sphere is one of repetition and waiting. Unlike the traditional male experience of linear historical time through the quest, the homebound woman experiences time as a stasis—either as perpetual repetition or 'eternal return' or a pattern of passive waiting. Rabuzzi urges that a woman's 'static waiting pattern' may be seen as 'another made of being' and out of this made emerges a typical feminine sensibility that is a positive alternative to the masculine mode of questing and conquering. Like Rabuzzi, Sara Ruddick in her crucial and highly relevant article 'Maternal Thinking' focuses on the positive modes that emerge from the maternal role; these modes, she suggests, ought to become the foundation of a "new public ethic" (Feminist Studies 348). But Ruddick does not restrict 'mothering' to biological parenting but to all the manifestations of maternal roles. 'Maternal thinking' emerges out of 'maternal practice'
which demands responding to the reality of the child, an ‘other’ who needs preservation and growth. But maternal care and control must be reduced to the minimum since excessive control may impede the growth, both physical and mental, of the child and it may also hamper its communicative learning. Hence a mother ought to adopt a relatively passive attitude, which is described as a ‘waiting mode’, or a ‘holding attitude’. This attitude is governed by the traits of ‘keeping’ and ‘conserving’. Ruddick contrasts this attitude to that of scientific thought which is similar to Rabuzzi’s distinction between ‘feminine waiting’ and ‘masculine questing’. Robin Morgan proposes that the new feminist moral vision is in many ways analogous to the vision of reality offered by the new Physics. She sees feminism as crucial to the continuation of sentient life on this planet. It is the passport to our survival and transformation. The reason she offers is that women have over the centuries developed an ethic that is in tune with the Weltanschauung i.e emerging out of the new Physics; they see in terms of relationships, in terms of environmental contexts and ecological consciousness, an ability to enter into reciprocity with the other to acknowledge the validity of the other’s ‘thouness’, i.e. his being (The Anatomy of Freedom: Feminism, Physics and Global Politics 282-284).
Feminist thought is "humanist" thought. Virginia Woolf in *Three Guineas* speaks of "a pacifist society", and of "establishing a society dedicated to helping women to enter the professions" (*Three Guineas* 06). She avers that women have never made war, "scarcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman's rifle; the vast majority of birds and beasts" says she "have been killed by you, not us" (Ibid). Virginia Woolf's feminist thought is grounded on women's ethic that is holistic, life affirming. Thus in the 1980's, feminism emerged as a thought pattern, a point-of-view to reorganize the mundane realities. It became a positivist approach to life and a means to the establishment of sanity and harmony in human relationship. In fine, it aimed at the preservation of human existence on the planet.

The diversity revealed by a diachronic survey of feminisms would be shown also in a synchronic account of the different activities, which constitute current feminism, each of which is capable of generating a different programme for English studies. There are socio-feminists whose interest in the roles assigned to women in our society prompts studies of the way in which women are represented in literary texts; there are semiofeminists whose point of departure is semiotics, The Science of signs, and who study the signifying practices by means of which females are coded and classified as women in order to be assigned their social roles; there are psycho-feminists who forage in
Freud and Lacan for a theory of feminine sexuality unconstrained by male norms and categories, and who examine literary texts for unconscious articulation of feminine desire; there are Marxist feminists more interested in oppression than repression, and who process literary texts in a recognizably Marxist manner, infiltrating woman into their discourse at precisely those points where in a non-feminist Marxist analysis you would expect to encounter 'the working class'; and there are socio-semio-psycho-Marxist feminists who do a little bit of everything as the occasion arises. There are lesbian feminists who promulgate a somatic theory of writing, exploring the connection between sexuality and textuality by looking to the labia as the source of a distinctively feminine writing (écriture féminine), thus countering that dominantly phallocentric myth of writing as an erectile and ejaculatory activity. And there are black feminists, who feel themselves to be doubly if not triply oppressed: as blacks in a white supremacist society, as women in a patriarchy, and as workers under capitalism. Their indictment of recent feminism for concentrating almost exclusively on the problems of middle-class white women in technologically advanced societies is set out memorably in the writings of Angela Davis, and forms the hinterland to the resentment expressed by Gloria T. Hull who, finding herself the token black contributor to a collection of feminist literary essays
called *Shakespeare's Sisters* (1979), began by saying, "Black women poets are not Shakespeare’s sisters" (*Gilbert and Gubar* 165).

**Liberal Feminism:**

Liberal feminism is an offshoot of liberalism, the School of Political Thought. It is quite difficult to determine the status of liberal feminist thought. Susan Wendell says that liberal feminism has largely outgrown its original political base (*Hypatia* 2, No.2: 65-94). Alisan Jagger, in *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (1983) observed that liberal political thought holds a conception of human nature that locates our uniqueness as human persons in our capacity for rationality. The statement that reason distinguishes us from other creatures is relatively uninformative, so liberals have attempted to define reason in various ways, stressing either its ‘moral’ aspects or its ‘prudential’ aspects. Liberals, irrespective of their definition of reason, concur that a just society allows individuals to exercise their autonomy and to fulfil themselves. The ‘right’, liberals assert, must be given priority over the ‘good’ (*Sandel* 04).

Rosmarie Tong speaks of two kinds of liberals— (1) Classical and (2) Welfare. For classical liberals, the ideal state protects civil liberties like property rights, voting rights, freedom of speech etc. Instead of
interfering with the free market, it simply provides all individuals with an equal opportunity to determine their own accumulations within that market. For welfare liberals, in contrast, the ideal state focuses on economic justice rather than on civil liberties. Although many nineteenth-century liberal feminists fit the classical or libertarian, mold, most twentieth-century liberal feminists fit the welfare, or egalitarian, mould. In fact when Susan Wendell (not a liberal feminist) describe contemporary liberal feminists, she wrote:

I can safely say that liberal feminism is not committed to socialism, or it would be socialist feminism. Liberal feminists usually are, however, committed to major economic reorganization and considerable redistribution of wealth, since one of the modern political goals most closely associated with liberal feminism is equality of opportunity, which would undoubtedly require and lead to both (Wendell, op.cit., 66).

An egalitarianism that worries about all women’s basic needs is probably more feminist than a libertarianism that is concerned only about a few women’s rights. Liberal feminism, however, is not truly feminist but is simply a wishful thinking on the part of those feminists who wish to assert all schools of feminist thought, including those schools that have at times come close to celebrating male paradigms as human paradigms.

In The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism, Zillah Einstein reminds us that Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1799) was writing at a time when the economic and social position of European women was in decline.
Till the eighteenth century, productive work (work that generated an income from which a family could live) had been done in and around the family home by women as well as men. But the process of industrialization moved slowly and unevenly, leaving its strongest impact on married, bourgeois women. These women were the first to find themselves left at home with little productive, or income-generating, work to do. Married to relatively wealthy professional and entrepreneurial men, these women had no incentive to work productively outside the home or, in those cases where they had several servants, even ‘non-productively’ inside it. In reading A Vindication of the Rights of Women, we see how affluence worked against eighteenth-century married, bourgeois women. Wollstonecraft compared these ‘previleged’ women to members of ‘the feathered race’, birds confined to cages who have nothing to do but plume themselves and ‘stalk’ with mock majesty from perch to perch (Wollstonecraft 56). To be a middleclass lady is, according to Wollstonecraft, to sacrifice health, liberty and virtue for whatever prestige, pleasure, and power a husband can provide. Kept woman are enervated woman. Because they are not allowed to exercise outdoors lest they tan their lily-white skin, they lack healthy bodies. Since they are not permitted to make their own decisions, they lack liberty. Wollstonecraft presents us with “an ideal of female education that
gives pride of place to traits traditionally associated with—males” (Martin 76). *A Vindication* was not so much a plea for political and economic liberty for women as an argument that women share the same rational human nature as men do. Wollstonecraft recognized that it is in women’s interest to be economically independent of men. In order to liberate herself from the oppressive roles of an emotional cripple, petty shrew, and narcissistic sex object, a woman must, Wollstonecraft believed, obey the commands of reason and discharge her wifely and motherly duties faithfully.

What Wollstonecraft most wanted for woman is *personhood*. Woman is not, she asserted, the “toy of man, his rattle”, which “must jingle in his ears, whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused” (*A Vindication* 34). In other words, woman is not what the philosopher Kant called a “mere means”, or instrument, to someone else’s happiness or perfection. Rather woman is what Kant called an “end”, a rational agent whose dignity consists in “having the capacity for self determination” (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 96). To treat someone as a mere means is to treat her as less than a person, as someone who exists not for herself but as an appendage to someone else. If a woman lets herself be so treated, she lets herself be treated in a way that do not accord with her status as a full human person.
Writing approximately one hundred years later, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill joined Wollstonecraft in celebrating rationality. But they conceived of rationality both morally—as autonomous decision-making—and prudentially—as self-fulfillment, or using your head to get what you want.

Harriet Tailor and Mill separately and/or jointly, authored several essays on sexual equality. Both collaborated on the 1832 “Early Essays on Marriage and Divorce”, Harriet Tailor was the primary author of the *Enfranchisement of Women* (1851), and John Stuart Mill was the primary author of *The Subjection of Women* (1869). Taylor’s views tended to be more explicitly feminist than Mill’s. She insisted that when a couple divorces, the mother should assume responsibility for the childcare. Mill contested Tailor’s view that in order to be fully liberated, a woman actually needs to work outside the home. As he saw it, so long as a woman is permitted to enter and leave the labor market at will, she is already fully liberated (*Essays on Sex Equality* 86). Albeit Taylor, like Mill, adhered to many traditional assumptions about women’s maternal nature and role, she nonetheless disagreed with his contention that the liberated woman’s occupation is to “adorn and beautify” rather than to “support” life (Ibid., 75). In the *Enfranchisement of Women*, Taylor argued that sexual inequality is the result not of nature’s decrees but of society’s customs and
traditions. His analysis of women’s oppression was more clearly woman centered than was Mill’s. Like Wollstonecraft, Mill was quick to see that society has set up an ethical double standard that hurts women. Most of the ‘virtues’ extolled in women are, in fact, negative character traits that impede women’s progress towards personhood.

Anyone who has read Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication*, Taylor’s *Enfranchisement* and Mill’s *Subjection* can not help but acquiesce with Zillah Einstein that Betty Friedan’s 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique* was in some ways less radical than Wollstonecraft’s, Taylor’s or Mill’s. Despite Friedan’s implicit understanding of woman as a powerless sex class, she often wrote as if individual women can, through sheer effort, advance to the ranks of the powerful sex class known as “man” (Einstein, op. cit., 179). According to Friedan, the ‘feminine mystique’—that is the idea that women can find satisfaction exclusively in the traditional role of wife and mother—has left women, at least middle-class, suburban, white, heterosexual housewives, feeling empty and miserable. Deprived of meaningful goals, these women dust and polish their furniture as if, they were Sisyphus rolling an enormous boulder up a steep hill only to have it roll down again. What these women fail to realize is that their desire for sex is not really their own. Rather, it has been ‘manufactured by the media not only as an opiate to dull their consciousness—to make
them content with a boring existence—but also as a poison to spoil whatever meaningful relations they could have with their husband and children’ (Friedan 1974: 69). Obviously Friedan was not asking women to sacrifice marriage and motherhood for a high-powered career. The error in the ‘feminine mystique’ was its claim that women, if they wish to be normal as well as moral, ought to choose marriage and motherhood over career. But to think, as Mill and over Wollstonecraft did, that a woman who is a wife and mother and mother has no time for a career is to limit her development as a full human person. Being a wife and mother, suggested Friedan, need make very few claims on a woman’s time. Like Wollstonecraft, Taylor, and Mill before her, Friedan sent women out into the public realm without summoning men into the private domain.

In *The Second Stage*, Written nearly a quarter century after the *Feminine Mystique*, Friedan did consider the difficulty of combining marriage and career. If women in the 1960s were the victims of the ‘feminine mystique’, said Friedan, then women in the 1980s were the victims of the ‘feminist mystique’:

... And in our reaction against the feminine mystique, which defined women solely in terms of their relation to men as wives, mothers, and homemakers, we sometimes, seemed to fall into a ‘feminine’ mystique which denied that core of women's personhood that is fulfilled through love, nurture, home (*The Second Stage* 27).
What diverted women from their dreams in the 1960s and 1970s was, according to Friedan, ‘Sexual politics’. In her estimation, not only do many men like and love women; many women like and love men. She claimed that it is counter productive for women to insist that all men are misogynistic pornographers, pimps, sexual harassers, rapists and women batterers. Such ‘man hating’ is unwarranted. Any feminism that fails to recognize these facts will, of necessity, fail.

In many ways, the difference between the Betty Friedan of *The Feminine Mystique* and the Betty Friedan of *The Second Stage* is the difference between a classical liberal on the one hand and a welfare liberal on the other. Whereas *The Feminine Mystique* pushed women to become like men, *The Second Stage* fostered society to recognize the difference between the sexes until that day when men and women become androgynous human beings. Throughout *The Second Stage*, Friedan came close to replacing feminism with humanism. She repeatedly urged women to work ‘with’ men and ‘for’ men if that will produce a truly human society. In a recent article about getting the women’s movement ‘moving’ again, she even urged women to move beyond “women’s issues” in order “to redeem our democratic tradition and turn our nation’s power to the interests of life” (“How to get the women’s Movement moving Again” in *New York Times Magazine* 108). But can feminism move beyond ‘Women’s issues’
and remain feminism? Is it not premature to instruct women to become humanists when the very notion of 'human being' is still contested as male defined? These questions Friedan neither articulated nor addressed.

What liberal feminists wish to do is to free women from oppressive gender roles. They argue that patriarchal society thinks women are ideally suited only for certain occupations—teaching, nursing, and clerking,—and are largely incapable of other tasks—ruling, preaching, and investing. Liberal feminists believe that gender stereotyping (associating women's occupation and jobs with the feminine personality) is terribly unjust and unfair and must be remedied if the goals for liberalism are to be realized for men as well as for women.

Liberal feminists agree that a person's biological sex should in no way determine his or her psychological or social gender. Alison Jaggar in *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (1983) criticized liberal feminists for being too eager to adopt male values. However, for main criticism of liberal feminism was aimed at its conception of the self as a rational, autonomous agent. According to Jaggar, this is fundamentally a male conception.

Liberal feminism is by no means passe; it may even have the radical future. Liberal feminists have championed the cause of the suppressed and the oppressed and it is due to their endeavours, so many women
now have attained their newfound professional and occupational stature.

**Marxist Feminism:**

Marxist Feminists think it impossible for anyone, especially women, to obtain genuine equal opportunity in a class society where the wealth produced by the powerless many, ends up in the hands of the powerful few. With Frederick Engels, they claim that women's oppression originated in the introduction of private property, an institution that obliterated whatever equality the human community had previously enjoyed. Private ownership of the means of production by relatively few persons, originally all male, inaugurated a class system whose contemporary manifestations are corporate capitalism and imperialism. Reflection on this state of affairs suggests that capitalism itself, not just the larger social rules under which men are privileged over women, is the cause of women's oppression. If all women—not just the relatively privileged or exceptional ones—are ever to be liberated, the capitalist system must be replaced by a socialist system in which the means of production belong to one and all. Because, under socialism, no one would be economically
dependent on anyone else, women would be economically freed from men and therefore equal to them.

Marxist feminists have remained committed to the core teaching of Engel’s *Origin*. To a greater or lesser degree, they still urge women to enter public industry, and they still press for the full socialization of housework and childcare. What is more, they remain attracted to programs that aim to destroy the family as an *economic* unit—as a structure that serves to bolster the capitalist system. Finally, Marxist feminists, more than any other group of feminists—have made women’s economic well-being and independence their primary concern and have focused on the intersection between women’s experience as workers and their position in the family.

Alison Jagger’s critique of Marxist feminism is written from the perspective of a Socialist feminist, who worries that Marxist feminists have said too little about women’s oppression by men. When Marxist feminists speak about women’s oppression, they argue that capital is the primary oppressor of women as women. But one wonders as to what is specifically feminist about a Marxist feminist analysis and whether it is true that men are merely the secondary, or indirect, oppressors of women. Alison Jagger doubts if there is adequate room in Marxist feminist analysis to express dissatisfaction about those women’s issues that are unrelated to the nature and function of
women's work. It concerns Jagger that Marxist feminists rarely discuss issues related to sex; and that when they do so, they tend to compare sex to work—for instance, by comparing not only the pimp-prostitute relation but also the husband-wife relation to the bourgeoisie-proletariat relation, as if male-female relations in marriage and prostitution were exploitative and alienating in precisely the same way as those in employer-employee relationships.

In describing bourgeois marriage as a form of prostitution, Marx and Engels implicitly accepted that the services that can be prostituted are not limited to sexual services. Housework, childcare, and emotional support are also services sold by the prostitute-wife. The Marxist view of Prostitution affirms that, prostitution, like wage labor, is a class phenomenon. The economic situation of the unemployed or underemployed women explains why they, like laborers, sell themselves to others. Second it points out that prostitutes are alienated. Just as wage-laborers are estranged from their work, from themselves, and from humanity itself, so, too, are prostitutes. So under capitalism, a woman's sexuality becomes a commodity. This is true for both the wife-prostitute and the prostitute proper. For both women, an essential human capacity is alienating. Like wage laborers, the wife-prostitute and the prostitute proper become dehumanized, and their value as persons is reduced to their market value. Marxist
feminists see women’s oppression as a function of the larger socio-economic system.

Marxist feminists are in a position first to develop workingwomen’s revolutionary consciousness and then to lead them to revolutionary action. There feminists hold out the hope that if woman’s status and function(s) truly change in the workplace, her status and function(s) in the household will also change, if not today, then tomorrow.

**Radical Feminism:**

Radical feminism is a recent attempt to create a new conceptual model for understanding many different forms of social oppression in terms of the basic concept of sexual oppression. It is formulated by such writers as TiGrace Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone. These feminists deny the liberal claim that the basis of women’s oppression consists in their lack of political or civil rights. They reject the classical Marxist belief that basically women are oppressed because they live in a class society.

Radical feminists hold that the roots of women’s oppression are biological. The origin of women’s subjection lies in the fact that as a result of the weakness caused by childbearing, women become dependent on men for physical survival. The radical feminist believe
that the physical subjection of women by men was historically the basic form of oppression, prior to the institution of private property and its corollary, class oppression. Radical feminists believe that women were, historically, the first oppressed group.

In *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), Shulamith Firestone claimed that patriarchy—the systematic subordination of women—is rooted in the biological inequality of the sexes. Firestone’s reflections on women’s reproductive role led her to a feminist revision of the materialist theory of history offered by Marx and Engels. Although Marx and Engels “correctly focused upon class struggle as the driving forces of history”, said Firestone, “they paid scant attention to what she termed sex class” (*The Dialectic of Sex* 01-12). Firestone’s argument is bound to trouble the orthodox Marxist, for she considered relations of reproduction rather than of production to be the driving force in history. She believed that the roots of women’s oppression are biological, and thus concluded by saying that women’s liberation requires a biological revolution, in much the same way that Marx concluded that the essentially economic oppression of workers required an economic revolution.

Radical feminists maintain that women’s liberation requires a biological revolution. They believe that now, only through technology women can be liberated from the basic inequalities of the bearing and
rearing of children. Firestone opines that all sexual roles—like female's reproductive role and male's productive role can be eliminated through technology. She was convinced that these roles have been imposed upon people in order to share up the biological family. When technology is able to perfect 'artificial' ways to people to reproduce, the need for the biological family will disappear. The family's consequent disappearance will abolish the prototype of the social 'role system', the most important form, both historically and conceptually, of oppressive and authoritarian relationships. The radical feminism conception of human nature is neo-Freudian. Firestone believes with Freud that "the crucial problem of modern life is sexuality" (*Dialectic of Sex* 209). Radical Feminism is the only feminist theory, which argues explicitly that women's liberation also necessitates children's liberation. This is because—

the heart of women's oppression is her childbearing and childrearing roles. And in turn children are defined in relation to this role and are psychologically formed by it; what they become as adults and the sorts of relationships they are able to form determine the society they will ultimately built (*Ibid. 72*).

The feminist consciousness can be understood with reference to the existence of what Marxists call 'contradictions' in our society and to the presence of specific conditions, which bring about a significant alternation in the status of women. When the position of woman within the social frame is altered, new conceptions of self and society
come directly into conflict with older and orthodox notions about a woman's role, her destiny, and even her nature. Sandra Lee Bartky says, "feminist consciousness is the experience in a certain way of certain specific contradictions in the social order. This means that the feminist apprehends certain features of social reality as intolerable. ... Feminist consciousness turns a 'fact' into 'contradiction', from the vantage point of a radical project of transformation" (*Feminism and Philosophy* 23-24).

Thus the radical feminists believe that 'feminist consciousness' is the 'consciousness of victimization'. To apprehend oneself as victim is to be aware of an alien and hostile force which is responsible for the blatantly unjust treatment of women and for a stifling and oppressive system of sex roles. This hostile power is, for some feminists, 'society' or the 'system'; for others, it is simply, 'men'. This consciousness also brings a sense of solidarity with other victims. In fine, feminist consciousness is the consciousness of being radically alienated from her world and often divided against herself. It perceives woman as a being who sees herself as victim and whose victimization determines her being-in-the-world as resistance, wariness, and suspicion. Woman is an outsider to her society, an alien even to the many of the people she loves, and to the still unemancipated elements in her own personality. She is not at the
centre of the societal wheel but often moves in the periphery. In other words she is a marginalized being.

Jaggar expressed concern that the radical feminist woman culture movement pays scant attention to issues of race and class and may simply be a location for the relatively privileged women to celebrate themselves. Mary Daly identifies woman culture with a kind of lesbian community, which is further identified as an institution (i.e. lesbianism) for a woman to control her own body, as a symbol of female power play against the institution of heterosexuality.

John Cocks, in the essay "Some Critical Reflections on Radical Feminism" published in Politics and Society (1984), says that Radical Feminism prides itself on existing in opposition to patriarchy, on affirming the very thing 'the fathers' devalue and degrade. Cocks was profoundly worried by radical feminism because, in its existence as a counterculture, it defines itself in opposition to male culture, thereby defining that culture as the norm from which to deviate. Although the radical feminists' rebellious reversal of patriarchal dualities has been useful in women's progression towards liberation, Cocks found fault with radical feminism for dooming itself forever to rebellion, for glorifying woman's otherness. He believes that "the dominant culture and the counter culture engage in a curious collusion, in which... a rebellious feminism takes up its assigned position at the negative
pole" (Politics and Society 34). He developed the example of one duality, that of reason/emotion, to demonstrate how the radical feminist use of duality may be more enslaving than liberating. Although he recognized that the split between reason and emotion "features as a central ideological constituent of the sex/gender system", with its role being to 'confine women within a small circle of thought and action", she did not think that this split is the "direct result of the sex/gender system" (Ibid., 35). Unlike the radical feminists who equate male/female with reason/emotion and make up the conglomerate duality a historical universal, Cocks traced the development of these two dualities separately. She concluded that 'male' did not always mean 'rational' and that 'female' did not always mean 'emotional'.

Although radical feminism is by no means a flawless feminist perspective, feminists owe much to it. The insight that sexuality is the root cause of women's oppression is vital to any woman seeking to understand her personal and political position in society. All movements need radicals, and the women's movement is no exception to this. Radical feminists have repeatedly shown us how women's bodies can be used by men against women and how they can be used by women for women. They have also taught us how to celebrate women's nature. What feminists owe to radical feminism is the
conviction that what women share is their sexuality and that even if this sexuality has been a source of danger for women in the past, it can become a locus pleasure and power for each and every woman in the future.

**Psychoanalytic Feminism:**

Freud's theories concerning sexuality generated considerable controversy among his contemporaries. The intensity of this controversy was not due merely to Freud having publicly addressed formerly taboo topics: homosexuality, sadism, masochism, oral, and anal sex. The intensity of the controversy arising out of his theories was due largely to his suggestion that all sexual "aberrations", "variations", and "perversions" can be and usually are stages in the development of what he (Freud) identified as "normal human sexuality" (*Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* 24).

Gender, according to the Psychoanalytic feminists, is the product of sexual maturation. Because they experience their sexuality differently (as a result of biology), girls and boys ultimately end up with contrasting gender roles. Psychoanalytic feminism deals with such themes as mothering, living within enclosures, doubling of characters and of the self, woman's diseases, and feminized landscapes. The
psychoanalytic feminists believe that the female writer often identify themselves with the literary characters they detest. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar examine female images in the works of Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, and George Eliot. They describe a feminine utopia in which wholeness rather than ‘otherness’ would prevail as a definition of identity.

The most innovative and far-reaching use of psychoanalytic theories for feminist criticism is among the French. Elaine Showalter has observed that “English feminist criticism, essentially Marxist, stresses oppression; French feminist criticism, essentially psychoanalytic, stresses repression; American feminist criticism, essentially textual, stresses expression”; all three, however, have become gynocentric, searching for terminology to rescue the feminine from being a synonym for inferiority (Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness 186).

While French critics who practice what they call L’écriture feminine uphold the power of the psychological category of the feminine, they dismiss the actual sex of an author as unimportant. The French feminists see feminism in its binary oppositions as a male cultural notion left over from the past.

In Freud’s view the development of the feminine character is shaped at the outset by one essential anatomical characteristic (Typically formulated in negative terms): the lack of a penis. The difference in
external genitals is conceived by psychoanalytical theory as a deficiency on the part of women. All feminine character-traits, interests, attitudes, emotions and wishes are reactions, in some form or other, to this basic 'defect'. It is an account of this that many women in our society have failed to develop 'normal femininity' and have acquired instead what is called a 'masculinity complex' manifesting in lesbianism. The relevance of Freud and Lacan for French feminism arises from their treatment of language. Femininity in these feminists is a language of the unconscious that destabilizes sexual categories. French feminists speak of 'exploding' the sign rather than interpreting signs.

Julia Kristeva furnishes the most psychoanalytically based version of French feminism in *Desire in Language* (1980) and other works. She describes a Mother-centered realm of expression as the 'semitic' as opposed to the 'symbolic' Law of the Father. Like Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, Kristeva opposes phallocentricism with images derived from women's corporeal experiences. Such psychoanalytic feminist theory thus attempts, as does Marxist feminist theory, to connect the personal with the social. But Kristeva's later work moves away from strictly psychoanalytic theorizing toward an embrace of motherhood as the model for psychic health.
Nancy Chodorow is studied under both psychoanalysis and feminism. In her two important works, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) and *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (1989), Chodorow combines the object relation theories of Melanie Klein with contemporary gender concerns. She argues that mothers experience their daughters as their ‘doubles’. This is what she calls ‘narcissistic object-attachment’. The mother sees the daughter simply as an extension of her own life. For Chodorow, the ‘core gender identity’ of women—narcissism, lack of self-control, weak ego-boundaries—proceeds from their inability to discover their separateness and form their own identities. Desperate, the daughter turns to the father—the symbol of the other and she becomes aware of the social privileges of the phallus. Though fathers represent the outside world for Chodorow, they have only nominal roles to play.

During the last two decades or so, at least four varieties of psychoanalytic feminism have evolved, each developing the Freudian corpus in feminist directions. A first variety attempts to cleanse Freudianism of any and all traces of biological determinism; a second pays scant attention to the overly discussed Oedipus Complex, analyzing instead the pre-oedipal stage during which the mother-infant relationship is most intense; a third focuses on the strengths rather than the much-discussed weaknesses of woman’s morality; and
a fourth reinterprets the Oedipus Complex, giving it nonpatriarchal meanings. Together these four varieties of psychoanalytic feminism have shown that Freudian thought may have liberating as well as enslaving potential for women.

Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, and Clara Thompson rejected Freud's 'Biological Determinism', emphasizing instead the experiential and cultural influences that shape woman's gender identity and behavior. All of them offered views that contended in some way that women's (and men's) experience of sexuality has been socially constructed. Thus, these feminists empowered women by insisting that 'biology is not destiny'.

Adler admitted of only one important biological fact in human development: the helplessness of the infant. The infantile experience of powerlessness, or 'inferiority', directs our life-long struggle against feelings of a overwhelming impotence. According to Adler, a person's biological contours and/or experiences does not lead logically and inevitably to certain psychological traits or future experiences. We are, according to Adler, a species shaped more by our visions of the future than by our roots in the past. In his philosophic assumptions about human nature, Adler is more optimistic than Freud, who viewed us as creatures driven by rather dark forces. According to Adler each of us has a 'creative self' that actively mediates the givens of biology
and finds in them goals for the future. Neurotic women, to Adler, are actually protesting their situation under patriarchy, a situation that Adler recognized:

All our institutions, our traditional attitudes, our laws, our morals, our customs, give evidence of the fact that they (women) are determined and maintained by privileged males for the glory of male domination (Understanding Human Nature 123).

Like Adler, Karen Horney emphasized the role of a person’s environment plays in his or her growth as persons. Horney believes that it is the society, which constricts and impedes women’s creative growth. She emphasized that women’s feelings of inferiority originate not in recognition of their ‘castration’ but in realization of their ‘social subordination’. Although Horney concedes that women are symbolically castrated, in that they have been denied the power the penis represents, she refused to accept that ordinary women are radically defective beings simply because they lack penises. She argued instead that patriarchal culture creates women as feminine (passive, masochistic, narcissistic), and then convinces them that ‘femininity’—actually a defensive adaptation to male domination—characterizes their true selves. She seems to reflect Helene Deutsch in her views about femininity. For Deutsch:

The feminine character has three components: passivity, masochism, and narcissism. Passivity is central and is modeled on women’s role in sexual intercourse and on their “attitude of receptive waiting and expectancy”. This passivity is closely linked
with women’s masochism, which Deutsch defined not as enjoyment of pain but as an attraction to experiences, such as intercourse and childbirth, that mix pain and pleasure (The Psychology of Women 327).

Karen Horney says that any woman who, understandably, undertakes what she calls the ‘flight from womanhood’ will reach for what has been considered valuable and privileged—masculinity. She believes that women do not want to be men because they are enamored of the penis; they want to be men because men are in control of society.

Clara Thompson sided with Adler and Horney in portraying development as a process of growth away from one’s biology and towards mastery of one’s environment. For her, female and male identities do not emanate from unchanging female and male biologies. Rather, they emerge from ever-changing social ideas about what it means to be male or female. Along with Adler and Horney, Thompson believed that women’s guilt, inferiority and self-hatred are grounded in culture and the cultural use of biology, not in biology itself. Thus, the transformation of the legal, political, economic, and social structures that contain culture is a necessary step in the transformation of women’s psychology.

In the process of reinterpreting Freud’s observations, Adler, Horney and Thompson effectively broke from him. All three of them conceived of the self as something that develops uniquely and
individually in each person and grows out of the interface between nature and culture. All three believed in the plurality of the self. For them there are as many selves as there are people, and not a male and a female self.

**Ecofeminism and Queer Ecofeminism:**

Ecofeminism or ecological feminism is a relatively new way of approaching nature, politics, and spirituality. The term 'ecofeminism' seems to imply that ecofeminists are mostly "concerned about the oppression of the earth" (Smith, "Ecofeminism", in Karen (ed), *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* 21). The ecofeminists believe that the domination of women over the years is directly connected to the environmental rape and pillage of our planet. Issues of power, domination and subordination are vital to ecofeminism. Paganism, women's spirituality, shamanism, and New Age ritual are so popular with ecofeminists because they believe that all spirituality was originally earth based and centred on oneness with nature. Ecofeminists usually express deep feelings for nature. They struggle the world over to save the environment and protect the rights of indigenous people and the flora and fauna of the region. Karen J Warren has rightly pointed out, "Nature is a feminist issue"
(Ecofeminism 04) to ecofeminists all over the world. She cites as an example, the Chipko Movement of Reni in Northern India where in 1974, a group of twenty seven women effectively put an end to tree-falling by threatening to embrace the trees if lumberjacks attempted to cut them down.

Ecofeminism believes that many forms of oppression spring from the same androcentric world view. So it aims at dismantling the structure itself. The fundamental idea of ecofeminism is that woman/nature relationship has been constructed by patriarchy as a tool of domination. Karen J Warren defines the logic of domination as a “structure of argumentation which leads to a justification of subordination” (Environmental Ethics 129).

Margaret Atwood has very lucidly brought out the salient traits of ecofeminism in her novel Surfacing. The nameless heroine of this novel is shocked by the abrupt change in her locality. She discovers that the whole place is mutilated and isolated. It has changed drastically during her long absence. She finds that people in power, the symbol of patriarchy, are destroying the earth. Her beloved native place has become diseased and rotten because of the power company, which has raised the lake’s water level, causing havoc to the local flora and fauna. She finds her home ground, an alien land, a “foreign territory” (08). She is highly critical of technological development and
deems it to be nothing but the destruction of the environment, and is quite exasperated to see a roadside crucifix with a wooden Christ, ribs sticking out, the mysterious, alien god. As she is a radical feminist, she is highly critical of the worship of a father god or transcendent god because such a god is linked, as has been observed by Dorceta E. Taylor, “to the rise of patriarchs, male dominance, wars and the devaluation and rape of nature” (“Women of color... ecofeminism” in Warren (ed) *Ecofeminism* 66). She has had a very dismal past. It haunts her persistently. She realizes that just as she has been violated and wronged, the sanctity and sacredness of the Mother Earth has also been violated and the ecological unity (the interdependence of all species), is upset. She understands that patriarchy is primarily responsible for the degradation of nature and hence expresses her deep concern for nature and helps us understand the women-nature bond. The noted ecofeminist Petra Kelly observes: “Women suffer both from structural oppression and individual men” (“Women and Power” in Karen (ed) *Ecofeminism* 113). But the heroine of *Surfacing* wouldn’t allow herself to be dominated by men. She is well aware that “the ultimate result of unchecked, terminal patriarchy will be ecological catastrophe” (Kelly 1984: 113). She does not want to overturn patriarchy but wants to transform, non-violently, the structures of male dominance and brings about a kind of harmony between man
and woman. So she becomes chummy with Joe, who to her is a pro-feminist man. Like a true ecologist, she makes the Mother Earth, her literal home and becomes one with her. She discards the stifling and suffocating garb of civilization, which is destroying the biosphere. She is totally free now, free to act and will in her own feminine way without any restrictive interference from the outside world. Thus we can safely say that Atwood’s *Surfacing* is an ideal example, rather a paradigm of ecofeminist values.

The fundamental idea of ecofeminism is that woman/nature relationship has been constructed by patriarchy as a tool of domination. Ecofeminists believe that many forms of oppression spring from the same androcentric worldview, and so it aims at dismantling the structure itself. Queer ecofeminism seeks to liberate the homosexuals, lesbians, transvestites and many other so-called sexual aberrations. But it is more of a stand, a position—a position against heterosexuality. It defies heterosexual master identity, its logic of domination, its demonization of other sexual practices, and its rejection of sexual diversity. The category “queer” also includes, according to Sedgwick, “fantasists”, “feminist men”, “masturbators”, and “people able to relish, learn from, or identify with such” (*Tendencies* 08). Queers are excluded from the heterosexual intercourse.
Greta Gaard’s seminal essay, “Toward a Queer ecofeminism” throws much light on the relation between heterosexuality and colonialism in America. She shows how the expansionist mission of White Europeans came to suppress the so-called sexual deviations and promiscuity in the name of religion and civilization. She also connects the oppression of nature and the oppression of queers:

The critical point to remember is that each of the oppressed identity groups, each characteristic of the other, is seen as ‘closer to nature’ in the dualisms and ideology of Western culture. Yet queer sexualities are frequently devalued for being ‘against nature’ (Hypatia 118).

Like the Orient, queers are outside representation. They are believed to be incapable of representing themselves, and the society grabs the opportunity to represent them and ends in misrepresenting them deliberately.

Ecofeminism aims at a society without a power structure; a society that recognizes difference; a society that values sexual diversity.

The work of Donna Harraway, Greta Gaard, Carolyn Merchant, Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Sandra Harding and several others come under ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is basically a movement and it has several strains: Socialist ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, radical ecofeminism, and ‘Third World’ ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism calls for an end to all oppression. Ecofeminists link the oppression of women with that of the oppression of nature. The
nature/culture dualism is inherently patriarchal, for it links woman with nature. Thinkers like Linda Vance argue that ecofeminism must reconceptualise the relationship of woman and nature as 'sisters' based on the shared oppression of the woman and the non-human world.

Ecofeminists divide the world into two groups—the privileged and the oppressed. The privileged group includes the upper or middle class, human, technologically developed, male. The oppressed group includes poor, working class, non-human animal, 'underdeveloped' nature and female. They maintain that men focus on rights, and women on responsibilities. This makes the women a more ecologically conscious human, for her attitude towards 'utilization' of nature is more responsible. They argue that technological and industrial disasters first affect women (especially their reproductive systems), children and nature. Sandra Harding, Donna Harraway and Vandana Shiva suggest that science is anti-nature and masculine. Vandana Shiva points out that in medieval times, one way of controlling woman's knowledge and the woman knower was to brand and burn her as a 'witch'.

Ecocriticism and ecofeminism promises to be one of the most radical and ethical of critical theories yet. It seeks to re-orient cultural and
literary theory into addressing the most immediate concern of contemporaneity.

**Feminist Writing:**

Feminist writing, whether radical, socialist or liberal forges new directions in thought and expression. So Helene Cixous states in her seminal essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa":

> By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display—the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time, write yourself. Your body must be heard (Qtd. in C.W.E. Bigsby's *Modern American Drama*, 1992: 307).

Such discourses expose gender inequality, sexual/textual politics and marginalisation, fostering in women the confidence and courage to speak out in their authentic voices of powerplay regarding self and the other.

In the past two and a half decades, literature in general and fiction in particular has reflected the rejection of certain 'malestream' traditions and stereotypes summarily: "The influence of feminism has meant that women no longer have to see motherhood, heterosexuality and marriage as the only possible lifestyle, and myths portraying women's
happiness as being confined within these parameters have now being exploded” (Introducing Women’s Studies 222).

In the novels and short stories of Joyce Johnson, Marilyn French, Fay Weldon, Margaret Atwood, Amy Tan, Bharati Mukherjee, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison among others, feminist issues are prioritized and problematized. Hence in Toni Morrison’s *Sula*, racist and sexist issues are delineated with all candour and ingenuousness. Alice Walker’s *Meridian* (1976) illustrates the manner in which childbearing makes women vulnerable to male control and manipulation. Through her reflexive protagonist Meridian, Alice Walker introduces certain positive perceptions. Walker affirms woman’s ability to defy the maternal role and attain independence by breaking the patriarchal circumscriptions and restrictions. Meridian’s mother harbours a sense of frustration for having sacrificed her career in order to raise and rear her child. For Meridian too, motherhood turns into a biological trap. The efficacy of the institution of marriage and family life idealized by patriarchy and identified as the woman’s source of contentment has been exposed by post-modern woman writers as a patriarch myth. Engels observes: “The over throw of the mother right was the historic defeat of the female sex. The man seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the
slave of man’s lust, a mere instrument for breeding children” (*The Origin of the Family* 57).

Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, which is modelled upon the *Book of Genesis* looks at the status of women as breeders. The novel provides an ironic and parodie portrayal of maternity, sex and childbearing. The protagonist Offred possessing viable ovaries is regarded as a national resource in the Republic of Gilead where the birth rate has become alarmingly low. Offred, the handmade is assigned to a commander to breed as his wife is barren. In such a society love seems to have lost its meaning and has become quite irrelevant. Offred says, “We are for breeding purposes... We are two-legged wombs, that’s all, sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices” (Atwood, 1986:146).

Right from Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* onwards the question of woman’s identity and place in the society has always been investigated by utopian writers; both male and female, but where men are more traditional in their approach, women themselves are more radical, concentrating on theories of power and power equation in the family and community rather than on the position of women per se. As Marxism examined the ‘woman question’ in its critique of class and society, the women’s utopian novel, moved from an analysis of the position of women in contemporary society to a creation of a
position for women in the future that often in the end proved to be no less oppressive and paternalistic than the patriarchy of the present. This is explicitly so in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. It is also obliquely indicated in Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Atwood and Piercy belong to different traditions of feminism. Piercy belongs to a socialist feminist tradition in American Women’s writing that stretches back to the nineteenth century. This tradition questions capitalistic social institutions and advocates sweeping social and political changes, particularly in matters relating to sexuality, reproduction and motherhood. Radical feminists believe that patriarchy, which was the first class system in history, was the model for later social oppressions such as slavery and colonialism; that male domination originated not in biology but in the gender roles reinforced by society, and that female exploitation is not so much economic as psychological. Like the cultural feminists, radical feminists maintain that much of traditional family life, including child-rearing, needs to be modified, and that the so-called womanly virtues such as nurturing and sensitivity are not just feminine attributes but marks of humanity that must prevail in all relationships if the world is to survive. Piercy’s chief concern in her fiction and her poetry is about the need to develop non-exploitative relationships, the human damage caused by male patterns of rationality and order, the destruction of the
environment and the impoverishment of urban life. Her Woman on the 
Edge of Time corroborates to these ideas.

Taslima Nasreen, the feminist writer from Bangladesh is even more 
strident in her exposures of the oppression of women in her texts such 
as Nashta Meyer Nashta Gadya (The Corrupt Girl's Corrupt Tale) 
and Lajjya (shame) among others. In Nirbachita Column (Selected 
Columns 1992), Ms Nasreen expresses her commitment towards 
consciousness-raising and emancipation of women:

If you are a woman, you must traverse beyond living death to 
live... If you step into the evil traps of false education, they will 
kiss you, lifting you in their arms, they will dance with frenzy, 
they will give you four walls, golden chains, they will offer you 
food as they do to their pet parrot. If you are a human being, then 
brake off your chains and stand up (Nirbachitta Column 128).

In a more caustic and sarcastic vein, Tasleema Nasreen further 
oberves: “In our country a woman is like a disposable sanitary 
napkin. If she is used by a single male, she becomes an entirely 
untouchable object henceforth” (Ibid., 123).

In the postmodern fiction since the 1970’s, feminist issues and images 
of women are represented from two distinct points of view. The first 
point of view lays stress on feminine subjectivity, on the Lacanian 
fractured self, the role of the unconscious and the mother-daughter 
links in the pre-oedipal state. The second approach is of feminine 
objectivity, the focus of attention being the unitary self. The first is the
psychoanalytical approach while the second is the political approach with the specific purpose of motivating a collective socio-cultural movement. Among women writers in the post-modern era, Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison present an aesthetic fusion of the psychoanalytic and the political. Such feminist writing may aptly be termed as the fiction of ideas. The linking of the personal and the political in fiction is now an ideological conviction for many women writers. Women's issues, themes and views are now expressed in fiction without inhibition or fear. Emphasis on the appearance of women has been identified as a patriarchal conspiracy as is fashion, which is being described as an orchestrated violence against women:

Fashion divides us into angels, whores, dolly-birds and hags. This is important in the maintenance of male power. It prevents us from seeing each other as allies, but sets us as enemies always in competition (Palmer 1989: 33).

To Susie Orbach, the present day women "are expected to be petite, demure, giving, passive, receptive, in the home and above all attractive. Women are discouraged from being active, assertive, competitive, large and above all unattractive. To be unattractive is not to be a woman" (Fat is a Feminist Issue 168). Fay Weldon successfully fictionalizes this disturbing issue in her novels, The Fat Woman's Joke (1963) and The Life and Loves of a She Devil (1983). The second novel is essentially an elaboration of the theme of the first
one. Weldon portrays how the unattractive woman Ruth Patchet seething with rage, wins back her husband from the petite and pretty Mary Fisher by undergoing painful plastic surgery. Other fictional texts of significance are Marge Piercy's *Braided Lives* (1982), Nancy Toder's *Choices* (1980) and Gillian Hanscombe's *Between Friends* (1982), which treat different aspects of the problematisation of heterosexuality. Also, lesbian novels such as Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985) and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* prioritize, interrogate and debate feminist concerns such as women as biological sex (female) and women as culturally constructed gender (feminine).

Among the diverse voices of feminist protest and power that are heard in fiction since the 1970's, the voice of Anne Tyler strikes a dissimilar note. In her novels one finds a serious traditional concern for the disintegrating American family life. Tyler does not problematise the orthodox concept of the family like Kate Millet who sees the family as a patriarchal unit in a patriarchal society. She expresses her confidence and trust in the institution of marriage, discourages divorce and abortion is dismayed by single parenthood and teenage marriages. Anna Tyler's approach shows a penchant for androgyny rather than radical feminism.
In *Breathing Lessons* for which he received the Pulitzer prize, Ann Tyler portrays a middle aged married woman with greater positive merits than Mrs. Dalloway or Mrs. Ramsay whose problems of adjustment are essentially interiorized. Mrs. Maggie Moran is neither Dorris Lessing’s Martha quest nor Sylvia Plath’s Esther Greenwood but more experienced and mellower, a more integrated woman. She is not a self-obsessed feminist, enemic towards a complacent phallocentric society. In Maggie, we witness no protests, no longing for autonomy, and no eagerness for striking out a new path. Though not a radical feminist or a cultural materialist, through the delineation of Maggie Moran, Ann Tyler has proved that she is veritably a committed crusader for harmony and order, accommodation and adjustment, the pre-requisites for a happy and blissful family.

Ann Tyler’s attitude is indubitably unique and exceptional. She fuses in her texts tradition and individual talent and is simultaneously aware of the need for universal sisterhood. It is this need for a transcontinental and international sisterhood that makes the African feminist scholar Felly Nkweto Simmonds observe:

Feminine is about challenging ourselves as women, as black women and as white women. In this way we will develop the ability to work with differences and commonalities in our many struggles (Hillary et al (ed.) *New Directions for women’s Studies* 59).
Despite the euphoria and optimism among women writers, Gilbert and Gubar's advice of caution and alarm seems quite pertinent if women resolve to write with sincerity and ingenuousness:

Before the woman writer can journey through the looking glass towards literary autonomy, she must come to terms with the images on the surface of the glass, with, that is, those mythic masks male artists have fastened over her human face both to lessen their dread of her 'inconstancy' and by identifying her with the 'eternal types' they have themselves invented—to possess her more thoroughly (The Madwoman in the Attic 16).

Feminist literary criticism is linked to the political struggle for equality of the sexes and to the discrimination against women. It is an endeavour to unveil the ideology of patriarchal society in works of art. It interprets literary texts for their representations of women, and contends, that these representations are simply a means to disguise and camouflage socio-political oppression of women by rationalizing this oppression and naturalizing it. For feminists, the text is a battleground where actual power relations between men and women are played out.

**Women and Globalisation:**

Women are deeply affected by and also involved in profound economic, political and cultural changes taking place in different countries of the world. This is what we mean by globalisation. The
media whether print or electronic has deeply affected the feminine character. Popular women's magazine have taken up issues that feminist struggles have forced upon the public agenda—women's self-consciousness and assertion, right to work, right to education, and freedom of career choice, to name a few—but presented them as a consequence and/or a characteristic of 'modernity'.

By providing information and strategies to negotiate changes and changing circumstances, they have propagated what may best be called 'lifestyle' feminism, or even a modern 'consumerist' feminism. Is it then worthwhile, to discard the products of the popular media entirely as patriarchal plays to keep women in thrall. Women should first rethink their positions as feminists on certain issues, in the light of the phenomenon of globalisation. The questions that crop up in our mind are—Does the feminist agenda for practice require re-orientation? What will connote 'equality' in the changed circumstances arising out of globalisation? What is the nature of 'exploitation', given the changed nature of global consumer capital and the structure of patriarchy that support and are supported by the global version of capital? Does not this change necessitate the inclusion of larger numbers of men and women within the struggle for equality? Representation of women, particularly in media, and more analytical engagement with the interface between 'globalisation' and
‘modernity’, however is warranted. The impact of globalisation on women’s work in India has been somewhat misdirected since it has mainly focussed on the possibilities of women entering export industries under particularly disadvantageous conditions.

Feminism in the 1980s and 1990s move beyond the essentialising tendencies of early feminism by delineating local, racial and region specific gender oppression. While the early feminists sought a common platform for all women irrespective of racial or regional differences (based on the common denominator of oppression), the later feminists argued for different approaches to suit these specific conditions. Here feminism moves away from the Eurocentric and heterosexual biases of early feminism, and develops into Black feminism, ‘Third World’ or postcolonial feminism, and lesbian critical theory.

LESBIANISM:

Lesbian studies and gay studies began as ‘liberation movements’— in parallel with the movements for African-American and feminine liberation—during the anti-Vietnam war, anti-establishment, and counter-cultural ferment of the late 1960s and 1970s. Since that time these studies have maintained a relation to the political activities to achieve, for gays and lesbians, political, legal, and economic rights
equal to those of the heterosexual majority. Through the 1970s, the two movements were primarily separatist: gays often thought of themselves as quintessentially male, while many lesbians, aligning themselves with the feminist movement, characterised the gay movement as sharing the anti-female attitudes of the reigning patriarchal culture. Of late, there has been a marked recognition (signalized by the adoption of the joint term ‘queer’) of the degree to which the two groups share a history as a despised and suppressed minority and possess common political and social objectives. And politically, the community of gays and lesbians was marginalized. Socially, they were mocked, harassed and victimized. Politically, the ‘coming out’ of the gay/lesbian has helped launch movements and organizations like the Gay Liberation Movement (GLF), Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) and the Mattachine Society. In terms of academics, there is now an M.A. programme on “Sexual Dissidence and Cultural Change” at the University of Sussex (run by Alan Sinfield), and centers like the Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the SUNY.

In feminism, the radical feminists formed a new category, the radicalesbians. They argued that feminism was inherently heterosexual and never spoke of or even acknowledged the status of the lesbian woman. Thus (argue the radicalesbians) even feminist
women suffer from homophobia. The radicalesbians collectively suggested that lesbianism was the true reversal of patriarchy with its 'woman identified woman' (also the title of their 1970 manifesto). The radicalesbians thus suggested a separatism. The work of Adrienne Rich, Judy Grahn, and theorists like Bonnie Zimmerman, Teresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler became important moments in the development of lesbian studies. A revaluation of earlier writers like Emily Dickinson, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, the explicitly lesbian work of Radclyffe Hall combined with the race-sexuality issue in lesbian theory. The radicalesbians refused to be identified in terms of a man. They thus refuse to accept identities that are conceived only in terms of a man's 'power', 'ego' or 'status'. They believe that a woman must develop her own identity, with reference to herself, and not in relation to man. The lesbian is thus a 'woman identified'. She is, the truly independent woman, and lesbianism is 'a sign of mental health'. Indeed many radical feminists argue that in order to make a complete commitment to feminism, a woman has to be or become a lesbian. Unlike Liberal and Marxist feminists, radical feminists view lesbianism more than a purely personal decision. They see it as an outward sign of an internal rejection of patriarchal sexuality. Lesbian feminism emerged with the recognition of the fact that classic feminism treated the sexual experience of all women as inevitably
heterosexual. Thus there was no scope for female-female relations (sexual or otherwise) in this feminism. There was also no reference to the non-white woman’s experiences. The stress on difference marks the rise of both black feminism and lesbian theory. Lesbianism looks at the relations among/between women.

Adrienne Rich suggests the idea of the ‘lesbian continuum’. According to him, the lesbian continuum includes a range of woman identified experience; not simply that a woman has had or consciously desired genital experience with another woman. The lesbian continuum thus refers to a whole range of female relations—of mutual help groups, friendships and institutions and sexual relations.

Like black feminists, lesbian feminists attempt to show how criticism can be redefined to work in a positive manner for all feminists, but especially for lesbians. Lesbianism has been a stumbling block for many other feminists, and lesbian feminists have at times attempted to exclude heterosexual women. Some lesbians define lesbianism as the norm of female experience, seeing heterosexuality as abnormal for women. Others even go further and argue that only lesbians can offer an adequate feminist analysis. Such views can lead other feminists to reject lesbian feminism. But for the most part, lesbian feminists have tried to be inclusive and have offered other feminists new techniques, such as, for example, the rejection of the traditional critical essay form.
in favour of a more creative and unbounded style. Bonnie Zimmerman believes that an overly inclusive definition of lesbians will only blur the distinctions between lesbian relationships and non-lesbian female friendships. She describes ‘lesbianism’ as a kind of relationships in which two women’s strongest feelings and affections are directed towards each other. There may be sexual contact or it may be entirely absent, but the preference of the women is to spend their time together and to share most aspects of their lives with each other. She focuses upon Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Worley Montagu, Sarah Orne Jewett, Emily Dickinson, and others who have long been heroines of lesbian writers ("What Never Has Been" 34, 38-39).

Charlotte Bunch explained that it is the male society that defines lesbianism as a personal choice because it is not in the interest of men to recognise lesbianism as having any political implications: “For the Lesbian-Feminist, it (sex) is not private; it is a political matter of oppression, domination, and power” (Women and Values 129). The implications of lesbianism extend beyond the sexual realm, as “lesbianism is a threat to the ideological, political, and economic basis of male supremacy” (Ibid., 130). With these beliefs about the nature of heterosexuality and the impact of lesbianism, it follows that Bunch believed that only lesbians can be serious feminists and that
lesbianism is best understood as a revolutionary rejection of all male-defined institutions.

Despite uncompromising voices such as Bunch’s, not all radical lesbian feminists dismiss heterosexual feminists as pseudo-feminists. Indeed, many radical lesbian feminists point out that despite sporadic outbreaks of recrimination, there is actually beneficial conversation between lesbianism and feminism. What lesbianism and feminism share is an affirmation of women’s community and a desire to see each woman actualise her capacities to like, feel affection for, and love other women. Because women preferring the companionship of women to that of men is a thing unheard of or unspoken of in patriarchy, an insistence on strong relationships between and among women is what puts lesbians and feminists in alliance against the ‘patriarchs’.

Albeit feminism and lesbianism are linked together in many ways, their relationship is not necessarily binding. Many lesbians do not label themselves ‘feminists’. Particularly when a lesbian has a liberal political orientation and/or is not an active critic of the institutions of career, family, religion, she is likely to assert that ‘the person I sleep with just happens to be a woman’ or that ‘my sex life is my private business’. If success in a woman’s public life depends upon discretion about her private life, it makes no sense for her to be vocal about her
lesbianism. When public life and private life are disconnected, as they are supposed to be in our society, they can be and are often most easily pursued separately. This state of affairs depends, of course, upon liberal tolerance of lesbianism as an alternative sexual preference. The frequent absence of this tolerance in reality pressures lesbian women to be political, to struggle for gay rights, to 'come out of the closet'. Harassment of lesbians and hostility toward public displays of affection between women can have two effects: the suppression of lesbianism or the growth of lesbian identity and community.

Living as an avowed lesbian, can mean being in conflict with one's friends, family, and community and leading life of relative poverty because, with few exceptions, "a manless woman is, in this society, a poor woman" (Goodman et al 73). On the other hand, living as an avowed lesbian can lead to a feeling of integrity and wholeness. A political lesbian need not divide her life into public and private, with silence on one side and possible shame on the other. Freed of the need to conform to patriarchy's rules about what counts as 'good' or 'normal' sex for women, the political lesbian finds herself able to begin understanding her own oppression as well as oppression of other types of people whom patriarchy wishes to control.
If lesbianism shares so much with feminism and other political agendas, then why are some lesbians separatists? Why would lesbians isolate themselves instead of joining forces with other oppressed groups? One has to understand the difference between separatism and lesbian separatism in order to find solutions to these queries.

It may be useful to approach separatism as something that all people and particularly those concerned with social change practise. Every person participates in a multitude of social relations, some of them consciously, some of them not. To reject some relations—to resist paying income tax for nuclear weapons, to divest from South Africa, or to be a conscientious objector, for example, is to engage in non-cooperation, in non-participation, in *separatism*.

What distinguishes *feminist* separatism from separatism in general is, as Marilyn Frye wrote, that it is a separation “from men and from institutions, relationships, roles and activities which are male defined, male dominated and operating for the benefit of males and maintenance of male privilege—this separation being initiated or maintained at will, by women” (*The Politics of Reality* 96). Thus, simply by refusing to approve the status quo for women, feminists can be said to separate themselves from the patriarchal society endorsing this status quo. More deliberately, by creating women’s spaces-such as the consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s, rape crisis centers,
all women social events, battered women’s shelters, and women’s art galleries—feminists can be said to be engaging in acts of separatism. Of course, some feminists go further in their attempts to break down male supremacy and to restore to women the power of defining themselves and, even more importantly, of controlling access to themselves. They refuse to change their career plans simply because the men in their lives ask them to; they refuse to have sexual intercourse with their boyfriends or husbands on demand; they refuse to say ‘yes’ simply because the men in their lives wish they would.

Because the most vital goods and services that women have provided for men are immediately or ultimately sexual in nature, it is not surprising that a call for feminist separatism frequently leads to a call for lesbian separatism (nonparticipation in the institution of heterosexuality). But this call for nonparticipation in heterosexuality can be interpreted less absolutely, as it was by Adrienne Rich, who believed that all feminist women—including heterosexual women—are, to the extent that they desire to identify with other women, lesbian: “It is the lesbian in us who drives us to feel imaginatively, render in language, grasp the full connection between woman and woman. It is the lesbian in us who is creative, for the dutiful daughter of the fathers in us is only a hack” (On Lies, Secrets, and Silence 201). Thus, for Rich, lesbianism is a potential, a matter of degree.
Lesbian separatism is simply a further development of feminist separatism. Whether it is lesbian or not, a separate space for women represents a chance for women to withdraw from the demand of men in order to find, in the words of Mary Daly, “wholeness” (*Pure Lust* 366). Among radical feminist lesbians, Daly is not unique in portraying men as the fragmenters of female unity. She views patriarchy as squelching women’s true selves, which makes it imperative for women to destroy the “myths, names, ideologies, and social structures” (*Gyn/Ecology* 381) men have used to constrict the female body of imagination.

Whatever appeals the idea of total isolation and independence from men may have, most feminist separatists are less radical than Daly. They argue that absolute separatism from men is neither feasible nor ultimately desirable for women. It is not feasible because, “even if a group of lesbians builds a completely isolated self-supporting community deep in the country, the money to buy that land must still either be earned or inherited from the system, and the women are still subject to the laws of the state and the nation” (Goodman et al 83). On the other hand absolute separatism is not desirable because “women will destroy patriarchy by confronting it, not by isolating themselves from it” (Ibid.).
Whether in a woman’s public life or in her private life, Lesbianism has been the word doing the rounds. In social circuits, cocktail parties and campus discussions, the “L” word figures without fail. Titters and jokes apart, lesbianism has become a political issue, an addendum to the traditional values of India-Versus-Western decadence debate. So what is all the fuss about? Is it about two women indulging in a passionate ‘Kiss’? Or, about a full-blown romance between them after one is declined and turned down by her husband. Or, is all the brouhaha the consequence of lesbianism having finally come out of a dusty closet? One is reminded here of Deep Mehta’s *Fire* which deals with the theme of ‘closet lesbianism’, prevalent in the Indian society.

If one looks beyond the smokescreen, the film would mean a woman—identified experience prevailing in each woman’s life and throughout history. The theme purports a kind of primary intensity between and among women including a bonding against male tyranny. There is nothing unspeakable and obscene about the subject. Viewers should not identify the filmmaker as a part of the text. Shabana Azmi is not a lesbian in real life nor is Shakti Kapoor, a villain in real life. That is their reel life. *In Fire* the explicit visuals have bruised the Indian middle-class sensibility. Lack of male attention (which the movie portrays) leading to lesbianism is erroneous. Even to say that lesbianism stems out of frustration is a gross distortion. It is a matter
of choice albeit socialization and social pressures play a vital role in determining one's sexual preferences. Lesbianism is a deep-rooted condition and is governed by personality traits. The pre-disposition exists from childhood. Initially, it stems from an identification with the mother, the love object in our life but that is healthy. Later on, it develops heterosexual leaning. But if that flow is curbed, a woman opts for a female partner. In lesbianism women indulge in playing active and passive roles with one of them displaying certain male attributes (that of a butch). Nandita Das plays the role of an 'aggressor', a 'butch' in *Fire*. Lesbianism in films is acceptable provided the attitude is healthy, not vulgar. The flames of *Fire* are yet to die down and save cinema from the vulgarization of its utilitarian role.

**Queer Theory:**

Queer theory emerges from the alliance between gay and lesbian theories, and sociology. The rise of queer theory in the 1990s has helped a broader analysis of the cultural practices of gender roles, the construction of gay/lesbian activism. Queer theory suggests that twentieth century sociology has ignored the role of sexuality and sexual preferences. The sexual liberation of the 1950s and 60s was an
indicator of social change. But conventional sociology looked only at the heterosexual sexualities, rarely at homosexuality in their analysis of social change. Queer theory seeks to re-orient this approach. Steven Seidman's (ed.) *Queer Theory/Sociology* (1996) is the most significant intervention and summary of the major debates in this new area in critical theory. It calls for a transformation of existing conceptual frameworks and the acceptance of these transformations in other areas. Queer theory is a conceptualization of sexuality which sees sexual power embodied in different levels of sexual life. It is the problematisation of gender and sexual categories, and identities. The destabilization of identities is an important feature of queer theories. Thus queer theory is in a way postmodern and is influenced by poststructuralism. It advocates a rejection of civil rights strategies in favour of the carnival, transgression and parody. The theorists favour decentering, deconstruction and revisionism. It is a politics of provocation where the limits of liberal tolerance may be tested. Queer theorists also favour an approach where they practice queer readings of apparently non-sexualised or heterosexual texts. Queer theory is anti-assimilationist and rejects the inclusion-project of lesbian and gay politics. It is co-sexual, meaning, men and women are on equal footing. The term 'queer' is now used to mean both gays and lesbians. Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer in *Queer Theory Sociology*
offer three possible areas wherein queer theory may be assimilated into cultural and literary studies and sociology.

(a) **Reconsidering the Issues:** To analyse the system of social stratification keeping in mind the issues and aspects neglected so far. This includes: heterosexism, homophobia, and erotic hierarchies. Lesbians and gay men are not simply persons with sexual identities; they also are raced, classed and situated in a wide array of different life contexts'. Age, race, mobility, class, consumption, studies must include and be included in gay/lesbian studies.

(b) **Regarding the Classics:** Giddens, Habermas and Parsons need to be re-read, keeping in mind the heterosexual assumptions that inform these works. What is needed is a revision of these texts to incorporate queer concerns. The heterosexual centre must be dismantled using these same theories about society and culture. What is essential is to make theory queer and not just to have a theory about queers.

(c) **Rethinking Pedagogy:** Classrooms being heterosexualised, a queer pedagogy is necessary now. While refusing to organise classes around categories like gay/lesbian, the emphasis on the marginalized sexualities must inform teaching methods. From the aforesaid facts, it is evident that Gay and Lesbian studies have influenced literary and cultural studies to a great extent. The retrieval of gay texts,
anthologizing and publication of gay texts, and tracing the history of gay themes has been an important development in the area. In New Historicism and cultural Materialism, the work of Jonathan Goldberg, Alan Sinfield, among others, have focussed on homosexuality in Renaissance texts (as the title of Goldberg’s book suggests: *Queering the Renaissance*, 1994), the repression of the theme and a gay resistance (especially in the life and work of Oscar Wilde and Andre Gide). Debates over the discipline of English Literature itself as being heterosexual and homophobia have been common between scholars such as Eagleton and Sinfield-Goldberg. In Sociology, Queer Theory as popularized by the work of Lee Edelman, Steven Seidman, Ken Plummer and Judith Butler has made significant contribution to the socialization of homosexuality. In film studies and popular culture, Teresa de Lauretis, Michele Aina Barale, Rihard Meyer and others have made important contributions. Urban Sociology, architecture and demographic studies have also been influenced by gay/lesbian theory, as seen in the works like Daniel Bell and Gill Valentine’s *Mapping Desire* (1995). Nationalism and sexuality has also been explored, notably in volumes like *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (1992). Edelman’s work on AIDS and the effect on homosexual life, and the writings of Ellis Hanson, Thomas Yingling are explorations of the discourse of AIDS-health-homosexuality.
Feminism as a philosophy of life, seeks to discover, explore and transform the more subtle and deep seated causes of women's oppression. It is a 'raising of the consciousness' of an entire culture. As a philosophy of reform, feminism envisages profound changes, rather innovations in the traditional social structures such as the family, in the economic role and power of women (women empowerment), and finally in fundamental attitudes and personal relationships, leading to a just social order. Feminism had to be shorn of its obsession for structures, constructs, rigidity and monolithic views in order to avoid mistakes, for in modern times feminism has become more vigorous and militant and can boast of a large following. If it refuses to be self-critical, then there would be the certainty of pitfalls. It is not only true of feminism but it is so with any political ideology, culture, literature or critical theory. Preserving rigidly the old constructs would turn feminism into a fossil in the fast moving socio-cultural, socio-political process. In this context, in my view, Toni Morrison's novels become valuable feminist documents for exploration and research.
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