Feminism

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Chapter II

Feminism

Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant, she prevades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

In this section, an analysis of some of the tenets of feminist criticism and an introduction to contemporary feminist criticism are attempted. The terms such as feminism, female, feminine and feminist are defined. The several schools of feminist thought, such as liberal, Marxist, radical, socialist and modern are mentioned and their views are tried to elucidate. The feminist movements in the West and in the Indian context are discussed.

Direct experiences, critical observations and focused analysis have established that from time immemorial women were forced to occupy a secondary place in the society. Such a secondary status is thrust upon women by several forces like culture, environment, education, society and tradition which were generated or controlled by men. Our civilization is a masculine civilization. All the sciences, religions, laws, and patterns of thinking are the creation of men. Cumulatively all these have created a sense of inferiority in women. Though in every field we speak of "humanity" in general, in reality it is masculine that is emphasized throughout.
The words "feminine" and "masculine" have become culturally heavily loaded and created a context in which as Horney rightly observes, "We observe that men are evidently under a greater necessity to deprecate women than conversely" (Feminine Psychology 62). Our culture is a male culture, and therefore by and large not favourable to the unfolding of woman and her individuality. Our traditional conception of the truly feminine woman is the one who has no other aim in life than to lavish devotion upon a man. It is well said:

Men need her, worship her, and write about her but they do so in relation to their own selves. The desires and aspects of a woman's life which do not relate to them ordinarily do not interest them. Women's writing struggling against internalisation of role models thrust on woman has learnt to express the untold narrative of being a woman. (Jasbir Jain 1)

Simone de Beauvoir says, "They are women in virtue of their anatomy and physiology. Throughout history they have always been subordinated to men . . . They have gained only what men have been willing to grant; they have taken nothing, they have only received" (18-19).

In ancient times women might have worshipped men as heroes. Men fought wars, and women wept. But today women are fighting their battle for equality. They want to find out a hero within themselves and thus raise the
slogan of women's emancipation. Women are fighting to free themselves from male oppression, which is both conceptual and practical. Throughout history and in all civilizations there existed feminists protesting against legal, economic and social restrictions on the basic rights of women. Hodgson Wright opines:

When we look backwards into the history of Women's struggle against oppression, we are able to identify instances of resistance which we can legitimately identify as feminist in nature, without judging those instances unfavourably against the organised feminism of the twentieth century. (3)

Quite naturally the principles of feminism were articulated long ago. The early feminists did not use the term feminism. Now we live in a time that is marked by women's empowerment of every kind.

Feminism is generally thought of as a phenomenon of the 19th and 20th centuries. In *Women, History and Theory* (1984), Joan Kelly demonstrates a solid four-hundred-year-old tradition of women thinking about women and sexual politics in European society before the French Revolution (67-82). During the period 1550-1700, there was no legislated improvement in the position of women, but they fought their battles in cultural and social roles. In the 1630s and 1650s, many of the radical English sects supported religious equality for women. They sought to control their own conscience, to preach
and to improve women's educational and economic opportunities. Modern feminism starts with Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) which aroused wide and violent response. Her whole life and works were forms of protest against the institution that denied women any other identity except the one they acquired through men. John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) also played a significant role in the emancipation of women, and *The Subjection of Women* (1869) was the most controversial of all his works. "The 1850s generally saw a major resurgence of feminist activity, and was perhaps the most important decade of the nineteenth century for Victorian women" (Sanders 22).

By the end of 19th century, feminist activity had stimulated theoretical reflection. 1970 is rich with feminist theoretical writings such as Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* and Robin Morgan's edited collection *Sisterhood is Powerful* (all published in the U.S.A.) and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (published in Britain). As Thornham observes, "to understand this wave of theoretical writing, we have to go back a little further, to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) . . ." (34).

According to Thornham, French feminism emerged out of the politicised climate which followed a period of student unrest. The first women's groups were formed in the summer of 1968, after the Paris student
revolt of May 1968. The major theoreticians Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva used psychoanalytic theory as an explanatory tool and they "followed De Beauvoir's analysis of woman's construction as the 'Other' by seeking to explore the ways in which language and culture construct sexual difference . . ." (40).

In Routledge Companion to Feminism and Post Feminism, Sanders says that in America, feminist activism started with the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. It was a meeting attended by 300 people (including 40 men) demanding an end to all discrimination based on sex. As it had been in Britain, feminism had been developing slowly over the preceding decades. But it was connected with anti-slavery activism (23). Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the most important American feminist who campaigned for modification of the divorce laws and married women's property rights. The important theorists were Sarah Grinke (Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, 1838) and Margaret Fuller (Woman in the Nineteenth Century, 1848). Betty Friedan's first book The Feminine Mystique (1963) made an immediate impact on the growing feminist movement in America. Her subsequent work The Second Stage (1983) also contributed much to the same cause.

As Kamla Bhasin remarks, though the term feminism is foreign, the concept stands for a transformational process and it started in South Asia in the nineteenth century. She records:
Feminism and feminist struggles arose in Asia when a consciousness developed about democratic rights and the injustice of depriving half the population of its basic rights. In fact, feminist consciousness arose in Asia during certain historic periods of heightened political consciousness, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during struggles against foreign rule and against local despotism of feudal monarchs. (7)

The nineteenth century reform movement for improving women's status started in India primarily by men like Raja Rammohan Roy, Govinda Ranade, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Kesha Chandra Sen and Malabari. Abolishing the practice of Sati (1829), the Widow Remarriage Act (1856) and the Civil Marriage Act (1873) are some of the reforms for women which the century witnessed.

Tharu and Lalitha remark that women who were quiet on the political front, after independence emerged in great numbers and formed separate women's organisations. According to these writers, women's movements in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase is represented by the 19th century reform movements; the second by the national struggle for independence and the third and last coinciding with the social struggles of the 1970s (48). In the 19th century, many thinkers in India rose against the evil
practices and customs leading to exploiting women. Women's organisations and many individual women emerged in the scene. Prominent among them were Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi, Pandita Rama Bai, Rama Bai Ranade and Toru Dutt. Woman's emergence in society was linked with the freedom struggle also, which attracted women to participate in the movement. Woodmall observes, "It is an established fact that the position of women in Indian society has changed considerably in the last 50 years. The modern Indian woman now has rights that couldn't even be imagined by her grandmother whose life ran on very narrow and severely limited patterns" (247).

The Indian women's movement was a collection of several smaller movements which arose as a series of organised or unorganised reactions of women all over the country against injustices of which they have been victims through the centuries (Alka Kurian 77). Kurian goes on to say that, women were subjected to stereotypical roles because of patriarchy and the system of caste, class and religion. Women's struggle for freedom started with the nationalist struggle for independence. During the seventies, there was the onset of the second wave of the movement which was marked by massive women's participation from the lower strata of society (78). Due to the spread of education more and more women became aware of their roles, positions and power. They raised voice for political participation and social empowerment.
In her essay "Feminism and the Developing World," Kurian gives a very detailed analysis of feminist movements in India. According to her, the advent in the 1970s of the second wave of Indian feminism was due to several factors. The United Nations' declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year and later of 1975-85 as the International Women's Decade gave women in India a motivation to do something to lift their subordinate position in India. She observes:

The publication in 1975, at the behest of the United Nations of Towards Equality, a seminal report on the status of women in India, proved to be a watershed in the history of the Indian Women's Movement. This report, which for the first time tackled the issues of the average Indian woman's existence such as female infant mortality, child marriages, illiteracy and dowry, came up with certain startling revelations. (71)

As Kurian points out, the Anti-Price Rise Movement in Maharashtra in 1972, formation of women's organisations such as Saheli in Delhi and the Forum Against Oppression of Women in Mumbai against Mathura rape case, Anti-Dowry Consciousness-Raising Platform against dowry death and the anti-Sati women's campaign are some of the women's movements in India.

The late seventies and eighties saw the coming into being of several feminist publishing and research organisations such as
Manushi and Kali for Women (the first Indian feminist journal and publishing house respectively) and several Women's Studies Centres in universities and non-governmental organisations. (78)

The present-day "third wave" of the Indian Women's Movement is a part of women's struggle to assert personal, social and cultural implications of a feminist consciousness. Kurian concludes the essay:

The women's movement in twentieth century India has moved from participation in liberal nationalist political struggles and social reform to a wider populist, even if at times reactionary, agenda which has helped in the eighties and nineties to highlight the tensions between the requirements of modern life and traditional conceptions of womanhood. This is increasingly leading to a healthy and often acrimonious debate about the impact of women's economic, cultural and social empowerment and marginalisation within gender relations, the structure of families and communities. (79)

But even after independence, women's condition is not fully satisfactory. It is evident from the report on the Status of Women in India. The report says, "Society has failed to frame new norms and institutions to enable women to fulfil the multiple roles expected of them in India today. The
majority do not enjoy the rights and the opportunities guaranteed by the constitution" (35). Still there were changes and the results of these changes were seen everywhere. The changes are clearly reflected in modern Indian literature, Indian English literature, especially in fiction. A large number of women writers have emerged in the Indian English fiction. They are themselves concerned with women's issues.

Dictionaries usually define feminism as the advocacy of women's rights based on a belief in the equality of the sexes. In its broadest sense, it refers to an intense awareness of identity as a woman, and interest in feminine problems. A feminist is one who is aware of and trying to end women's subordination in any way and for any reason. In other words, feminism is a rebellion against the hostile environment in which women are forced to live.

The term feminism comes from the Latin word *femina* which means "woman." Sree Rashmi Talwar writes, "It was Alice Rossi an American who discussed its usage in a book review published in The Athenaum on April 27, 1895. Ever since, the word and the subject have been widely used" (63). Rowbotham writes:

The word feminist was invented by a French socialist Charles Fourier, in the early 19th century. He imagined a new woman who would both transform and be herself transformed by a society based on association and mutuality rather than on
competition and profits. His views influenced many women and combined self-emancipation and social emancipation. Changing oneself was part of changing the world. (8)

According to Rowbotham, the word "feminist" appeared for the first time in English to describe women campaigning for the right to vote in the 1890s.

The famous feminist journalist, Rebecca West, when she was asked what feminism precisely means, said, "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is, I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute" (119). This shows that any action, thought and even statement that is in favour of female cause may safely assume the name feminism. The cardinal issue of feminism is the belief that women have been oppressed only on the excuse that they are women. The theory of feminism and its influence have spread so rapidly in the latter half of the 20th century that it is now almost impossible to define it in a few words. Contemporary feminist thought has branched and spread into a wide variety of approaches and attitudes. As Shulman observes, "Feminism is not a monolith: there are many different, even at times contradictory positions which may spring from good feminist motives" (32-33).

The term feminism is an ideology in the making. It is an ideology of women's liberation. The meaning of the term has been gradually evolving and
getting transformed and now it means a theory of political, economic and social qualities of the series. Sasika Wieringa in *Women's Struggles and Strategies* analyses this movement in this way: "Feminism is not a one dimensional social theory and practice, but has arisen out of the varied responses of women to their specific form of subordination which in turn is determined by the interaction of gender and production relations" (73). Several distinct ideologies can be discerned within feminism, and all of them stem from one fact that social justice requires freedom and equality for women.

Various books on feminism say that feminism is a sense of personal courage, and the feminist consciousness is the consciousness of being victimized. "Feminism, as a philosophy of life, seeks to discover and change the more subtle and deep seated causes of women's oppression" (Sushila Singh 32). It is a concept of "raising of the consciousness" of an entire culture. Feminism must be viewed as a rapidly developing major critical ideology or system of ideas in its own.

"Feminism emerges as a concept that can encompass both an ideology and a movement for socio-political change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society" (Offen 151). It is a global and revolutionary ideology and as such calls for a definite stance, a set of firm and exacting attitudes. The ideology is political because it
is concerned with the question of power, it is revolutionary because it is against status quo.

As mentioned by Chris Weedon in *Feminist Practice and Post Structuralist Theory*,

Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. These power relations structure all ideas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become. (1)

Apart from certain separatist ideologies and social feminist ideology, Alison M. Jaggar has outlined four main ideologies within the feminist thought (5-21). They are the conservative, the liberal, the Marxist and the radical.

The conservative view is that the differential treatment of women, as a group, is not unjust. They admit that some individual women do suffer hardships. But this suffering is not a part of the systematic social oppression. Rousseau, Nietzsche, Freud and Steven Goldberg are some of the writers who advance such a view (Jaggar 19).
The liberal does not believe that it is necessary to change the whole social structure and the present political system in order to effect women's liberation. Liberal feminism aims at equality of opportunity in all spheres of life by transforming the sexual division of labour and the contemporary norms of femininity and masculinity. Liberal feminist theory is a traditional theory which has evolved from liberalism, a school of political thought. It applies the liberal principles of justice, liberty "to women, without questioning male power" (21). This perspective originates from Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, Harriet Taylor's *Enfranchisement of Women* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* belong to this school. According to this school, women will be liberated only when they are given equal educational opportunities and civil rights.

The Marxist feminist views the oppression of women as historically and currently a direct result of the institution of private property. It can only be ended, therefore, by the abolition of that institution. Consequently, feminism must be seen as a part of a broader struggle to achieve a communist society. Engels (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* 1845) and Naomi Wolf (*Fire with Fire* 1993) belong to this school (Gamble 269).
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. Ti Grace Atkinson (*Amazon Odyssey* 1974), Shulamith Firestone (*The Dialectic of Sex* 1972) and Kate Millett (*Sexual Politics* 1970) are some of the writers who formulated this theory (Gamble 302). For them, women's liberation requires a biological revolution.

As Weedon says, "Liberal, radical and socialist feminism are all critical of the family to varying degrees, but none of them can really account for its appeal. In order to understand why women so willingly take on the role of wife and mother, we need a theory . . . "(18). Poststructuralism can contribute much in this context as it offers a way of conceptualizing the relationship between language, social institutions and individual consciousness which focuses on how power is exercised and on the possibilities of change.

"The term poststructuralist does not have one fixed meaning but is generally applied to a range of theoretical positions developed in and from the works of Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, Althusser and Foucault" (19). As Weedon puts it:

Feminist poststructuralism suggests that the textual strategies employed in women's writing are determined by the constraints and possibilities of the class and racially specific patriarchal
societies within which writers and their access to aesthetic discourse are located. Only wider detailed discursive analysis of the period can show the extent to which they are specific to women and why this should be the case. (156)

The feminist literary criticism has developed as a component of the women's movement, and its impact has brought about a revolution in literary studies. In this context the three terms feminist, female and feminine are to be distinguished. Toril Moi defines "feminism" as a political position, "femaleness" as a matter of biology and "femininity" as a set of culturally determined characteristics ("Feminist Literary Criticism" 204-221).

Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* traces three major phases of historical development which she claims to be common to all literary movements. She says:

First, there is a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and internalization of its standards of art and its views on social roles. Second, there is a phase of protest against these standards and values, including a demand for autonomy. Finally, there is a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity. An appropriate terminology
for women writers is to call these stages, feminine, feminist and female. (13)

Showalter divides feminist criticism into two distinct varieties. The first is feminist critique concerned with woman as reader–woman as the consumer of male produced literature. The second is gynocritics. It is concerned with woman as writer–with woman as the producer of textual meaning, and with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women. Showalter observes:

In its earliest years, feminist criticism concentrated on exposing, the misogyny of literary practice: the stereotyped images of women in literature as angels or monsters, the literary abuse or textual harassments of women in classic and popular male literature and the exclusion of women from literary history. (The New Feminist Criticism 5)

Since the early 1970s, three strains of feminist criticism have emerged. They are French, American and British. "English feminist criticism, essentially Marxist, stresses oppression; French feminist criticism, essentially psychoanalytic stresses repression; American feminist criticism, essentially textual stresses expression. All have become gynocentric" (336).

The Anglo-American feminist critics see the close reading and explication of individual literary texts as the major business of feminist
criticism. They maintain a great interest in traditional critical concepts like theme, motif and characterisation. They treat literature as a series of representations of women's lives and experience which can be measured and evaluated against reality.

Guillaumin, a French feminist, in *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology* says, "A woman is never anything but a woman, an interchangeable object with no other characteristic than her femininity, whose fundamental characteristic is belonging to the class of women" (178). She is right in her belief that the specific nature of the oppression of women is caused by the "appropriation" of the class of women by the class of men (178). The relationship between women and men is a kind of power relationship. Guillaumin's theory of appropriation well explains that women in general are discriminated on the grounds of gender. Marriage is the enforcement as well as the legalisation of the power relation between the sexes. She goes to the extent of saying that "marriage is only the institutional (contractual) surface of a generalised relationship: the appropriation of one sex class by the other" (193).

A central concept in modern critical thinking, particularly in feminist criticism, is patriarchy. So it would be quite appropriate to explain the term in this context. A simple definition of patriarchy is that it is a rule or government by a man, with authority passing through the male line from father to son. The
political implication of patriarchy is that it is a social system of rule that ensures the dominance of men and the subservience of women.

What is central to most feminist criticism is the notion that Western culture and society are male-centred, and women are made subordinate in every area of life: family, State, law, society and religion. In all these fields, women are often defined only with reference to men, and usually in a negative manner: negative because women are implicitly defined as lacking male power. Feminists argue that patriarchy privileges masculine sexuality, especially the male phallus as the symbol of power. That is, patriarchy regards being masculine and possessing a penis as the norm and builds the social order around masculine sexuality.

Patriarchy is also a social process or conditioning whereby women come to accept in their thinking the idea of male superiority. Feminists are of the opinion that the concepts of gender more or less reflect the thinking and bias of patriarchy. Sex is a matter of biology, of anatomy, of being male or female; gender on the other hand—what is feminine or masculine—is a matter of culture. In Western society, it means patriarchal culture. Patriarchy defines the masculine as active, rational and brave, and the feminine as passive, quiet and emotional.

Some feminists connect patriarchy to male psychology. According to Mary O' Brien, it is men's psychological need to compensate for their inability
to bear children which made them construct institutions of dominance. For radical feminists, men and women belong to two separate classes because of their biology or psychology. The ruling class is men and they rule through the use of violence, which in time, becomes institutionalised (Jaggar 160).

Some radical feminists identify two systems of social classes: (i) The economic class system which is based on relations of production and (ii) the sex-class system which is based on relations of reproduction (qtd. in Beechy 3). The second system is responsible for the subordination of women. According to them, the concept of patriarchy refers to the second system of class. Women have become physically and psychologically dependent on men because of men's ownership and control of women's reproductive capacities.

For Hartmann, the material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power. She says:

As feminist socialists, we must organise a practice which addresses both the struggle against patriarchy and the struggle against capitalism. We must insist that the society we want to create is a society in which the recognition of interdependence is liberation rather than shame, in which nurturance is a universal, not an oppressive practice, and in which women do not continue to support the false as well as the concrete freedoms of men. (8-11)
Male domination is everywhere not only in family or society. Men have assumed control over all areas of knowledge such as philosophy, theology, law and literature. Women's knowledge and aspirations are marginalised because of this male dominance. Gerda Lerner rightly remarks:

We have seen how men appropriated and then transformed the major symbols of female power: the power of the Mother Goddesses and the fertility goddesses. We have seen how men constructed theologies based on the counter factual metaphor of male procreativity and redefined female existence in a narrow and sexually dependent way. We have seen finally how the very metaphors for gender have expressed the male as norm and the female as deviant; the male as whole and powerful, the female as unfinished, mutilated and lacking in autonomy. On the basis of such symbolic constructs . . . men have explained the world in their own terms and defined the important questions so as to make themselves the centre of discourse. (219)

Woman's efforts to achieve independence and expansion of her interested fields and domains are often discouraged by the male society, for they think that such efforts should be made only in the face of economic necessity. As Horney observes:
This attitude towards woman, whatever its basis and however it may be assessed, represents the patriarchal ideal of womanhood, of woman as one whose only longing is to love a man and be loved by him, to admire him and serve him, and even to pattern herself after him. Those who maintain this point of view mistakenly infer from external behaviour the existence of an innate instinctual disposition thereto; whereas, in reality, the latter cannot be recognized as such, for the reason that biological factors never manifest themselves in pure and undisguised form, but always as modified by tradition and environment. (182)

Feminist critical theory is considered to be a political, literary and theoretical commitment to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism and not merely a gender study in literature. In fact, feminist critical perspective and theory became pertinent to the study and analysis of the social, institutional and personal power relations between the sexes. Kate Millett, the main theoretician of the new feminism, presents an analysis of the political relationship between men and women in *Sexual Politics* (1970).

What is now popularly known as modern feminism or the second phase of women's movement is the worldwide awareness of the oppression of women and subsequent protest triggered by the early writings of Simone de
Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Germain Greer and others. The prominent concern of the first phase of feminist movement was the political rights of women. The concern of the second phase is the cultural, socio-political, economic and psychic aspects of women's freedom. Modern feminism is built on the foundation laid by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949). De Beauvoir's analysis of women's subordination proceeded from the assumption that men viewed women as fundamentally different from themselves. She speaks of the emancipated modern woman:

The emancipated woman wants to be an active taker and refuses the passivity man wants to impose on her. The modern woman accepts masculine values, she prides herself on thinking, taking action, working, creating on the same terms as men; instead of seeking to disparage them, she declares herself their equal. (28)

She makes powerful primary inquiries which can be considered the basis of modern feminism. In a critical venture where a woman tries to seek her identity, she tries to define herself by saying "I am a woman"(15).

*The Second Sex* is De Beauvoir's exploration of the nature of women's life and status in society. It is one of the most significant feminist texts written so far and "it lays down a basis for women's questioning of knowledge and the validity of feminist study" (Gupta 135). It attempts, De Beauvoir says, to "clarify and understand" woman's life, rather than ask for more rights
and privileges. In the introduction, she emphasizes the importance of feminist knowledge. A woman should not be merged into the universal terms "human" or "mankind," for she says, "We know the feminine world more intimately than do the men because we have our roots in it, we grasp more immediately than do men what it means to a human being to be feminine; and we are more concerned with such knowledge" (27).

In recent years a great deal of research has been done on women's writing. The pioneers in this field are Elizabeth Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. All women's writing need not necessarily be feminist. Women when they write "think back through their mothers" (Woolf 91). "Their writing has its own characteristics and qualities" (Jain 7).

As in the other parts of the world, in India women have faced a lot of oppressive forces. It is believed that India is a country where women are worshipped. The advocates of India's glorious tradition are ready with a few popular quotes. But reality is far removed from this. Indian women are worshipped in books only. R.K. Narayan was himself well aware of the oppressed stature of the Indian woman. He says in *My Days*:

I was some how obsessed with a philosophy of woman as opposed to Man, her constant oppressor. This must have been an early testament of the "Woman's Lib" movement. Man assigned her secondary place and kept her there with such
subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notions of her independence, individuality, stature and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. (119)

Even in the democratic India, though they are equals in theory, in reality women are second class citizens.

Women are always treated as a means to an end of the other sex rather than as ends in their own rights. Society still hold the view that women are creatures created for the domestic pleasures of men, and their entry into a world outside their kingdom of kitchen will spoil familial happiness. "A woman cannot be herself in the society of today, which is exclusively a masculine society, with laws written by men, and with accusers and judges who judge feminine conduct from the masculine standpoint" (Archer 4). In this context there is a dire need for women to rise to the full stature of being fully human, though age-old traditions and outdated customs block their way.

The concept of viewing women as child-bearers and liability to the society should be changed and women should be treated as assets to the world. Fuller stresses woman's service to life: "The special genius of woman, I believe to be electrical in movement, intuitive in function, spiritual in tendency . . ." (qtd. in David Robinson 83). Havelock Ellis says:
The great wave of emancipation which is now sweeping across the civilized world means nominally nothing more than that women should have the right to education, freedom to work, and political enfranchisement—nothing in short but the bare ordinary rights of an adult human creature in a civilized state.

(The New Spirit 9)

As Irigaray proclaims:

Let's hurry and invent our own phrases so that everywhere and always we can continue to embrace. We are so subtle that nothing can stand in our way, nothing can stop us reaching each other, even fleetingly . . . Our strength lies in the very weakness of our resistance . . . . Don't cry. One day we'll manage to say ourselves. And what we say will be even lovelier than our tears . . . . (This Sex Which Is Not One 216)

As Irigaray says, we are always one and the other, at the same time.

We can do without models, standards, or examples. Let's never give ourselves orders, commands or prohibitions. Let our imperatives be only appeals to move, to be moved, together. Let's never lay down the law to each other, or moralize or make war. Let's not claim to be right, or claim the right to criticize
one another. If one of us sits in judgement, our existence comes to an end. (217)

So woman is not at all inferior to anything and anybody, but only different. She is deeply rooted in the personal and emotional spheres. The difference is often interpreted as inferiority.