

FEMINISM AND EDUCATION : Towards An Alternative Paradigm

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D E C L A R A T I O N

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "Feminism and Education:- towards an alternative paradigm" submitted by SHARDA BHARADWAJ in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, has not been previously submitted for any such degree of this or any other university and is her own work.

We/I recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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CHAPTER - I

THE FEMINIST THEORIES

Feminism in simple terms can be defined as the advocacy of women's rights on grounds of equality of sexes¹. According to Rhoda Reddock it refers to an "awareness of women's oppression and exploitation within the family, at work and in society and conscious action by women and men to change this situation".²

Feminism as a movement is different from other movements for equality and emancipation. While all movements agitate for equal rights and legislative reforms to bring about equality, the former alone tackles the basic issues of women's subordination in the family, economy or the political arena.

To quote Charlotte Bunch - "Feminism is and must be a transformational politics which addresses every aspect of life. It is not a simply^a laundry list of so called women's issues such as childcare and equal pay. While these issues are important, feminism is not a new ghetto where women are

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1. Alice Rossi (ed), The feminist papers: from Adams to Beauvoir, New York, 1973.
 2. Rhoda Reddock in Kumari Jayawardene (ed) Feminism and Nationalism in the third world Part-II, Institute of social studies, The Hague, Netherlands, 1982, p.6

confined to be concerned about only a select list of topics separated from the overall social and economic context of our lives. Similarly feminism is not just "add women and stir" into existing institutions, ideologies or political parties as they are"³.

The feminist movement has two long term goals (according to a seminar on feminist ideology held in Bangkok in 1979). They are :- 1. freedom from oppression involving not only equity but also the right of women to freedom of choice and the power to control their own lives within and outside the home. 2. the second goal of feminism is the removal of all forms of inequality and oppression through the creation of a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

It is necessary to point out that the women's movement like all other social movements is heterogeneous. There is however one overriding similarity in that - they all seek changes in our society which give women a choice of life styles and help them to realize their potential as individuals.

Delving into history we find that there have been two important social movements that have attempted to change the traditional social and legal roles of women in the united states. "The nineteenth century movement is referred to^{as} the women's movement, the women's rights movement, social feminism or suffrage.

3. Quoted in Balai Asia Journal, Vol. II, No.4, "Women in Asia".

The modern movement is called women's movement, women's liberation or feminism"⁴.

No one speak with certainty of the reasons why women emerged in the early nineteenth century as a distinct interest group. Few areas of human experience have been more neglected by historians than domestic life, and at this stage we can only speculate about it".⁵

Some argue that the victorian era was the most highly developed expression of peaceful domestic life but with the advent of enlightenment and the French and American revolutions, women began to demand Independence. This urge for personal freedom, they opine, got further intensified due to Industrial Revolution. This line of thought however ignores certain vital questions pertaining to the temporal dimension. Firstly why did it take three quarters of a century for the women to organize themselves after the declaration of Independence? It also raises the question as to how middle class women (generally the back bone of feminism everywhere) who were least affected by Industrial Revolution form the bed-rock of feminism everywhere.

Thus "simply because certain developments take place at approximately the same time, it does not

4. Marcia J. Lipetz and Catherine White Berherdie, Women Today - Brooks / Cole Publishing Company - 1980, p. 11.

5. William L. O'Neil - The Women Movement - Feminism in the United States and England. George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1969, p.15.

follow that they are casually related".⁶

Another explanation for the origin of feminism is provided by Philippe Aries who argues that the medieval family was large, loose and undemanding but this started changing in the sixteenth century when domesticity and privacy became more important with the result that domestic life became more demanding and confining for women. This led women to launch a revolution to meet their rising expectations.

Whatever be the reasons for the origin of feminism it was only in 1792 that women started manifesting conscious political feminism. A landmark in this field was - "A vindication of the rights of women" a book by Mary Wollstonecraft. From then on many women like Judith Sargent Murray, Lucy Stone and Grimke sisters wrote eloquently on women's servitude. As in most social movements their goals changed significantly as the movement persisted through time and became concentrated on a single issue "VOTE". As women agitated for the abolition of slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these feminists realized that basic legal protection was necessary.

By the second half of the nineteenth century the women's movement was gradually gaining in maturity and two distinct groups emerged. 1. The American women suffrage association which focussed solely on the issue of suffrage and 2. The National Suffrage association which concerned itself with other social

6. Ibid. p.16.

issues concerning women. Their similarity in terms of goals and tactics soon led to their merger and the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA) continued to be the main organization till 1914. It had a conservative approach to the suffrage issue while the younger and more militant suffragists headed by Alice Paul disagreed with it and hence broke off to form the congressional union for women's suffrage in 1914. The prolonged struggle of the "women's Movement" ended in 1920 with the ratification of the Anthony Amendment which guaranteed women the right to vote.

In spite of its limited implications the accomplishment of the first movement was by no means inconsiderable. Great advances in the social and economic status of women were made and issues of concern to women were kept alive by writers such as Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan.

The second wave of feminism or the new feminist movement emerged in the middle of the nineteen sixties, as women began to reexamine their status, roles and self-perceptions. The women's movement of the nineteen sixties was by no means unified and uni-directional with a distinct set of goals. Different feminist writers have labelled and dealt with social issues concerning women's role and status according to their ideologically based approach to social change. In recent times women's studies need a new "unifying framework" to give it functional integrity within the academy as Devra Lee Davis points out. At the

same time such a framework must be grounded in feminist action research which necessitates discarding the pretext of "value-free" objectivity. The social creation of gender has been analysed differently by various feminists such as Shulamith Firestone who in 1972 delineated three basic groups of feminists such as - 1. conservatives, 2. politicians 3. radicals.⁷

Elaborating on this classification she defines the conservative feminists as those concerned with "the more superficial symptoms of sexism". Her second group the "politicos" are basically women whose chief loyalty is to the left. "For them feminism is a tangent or 'secondary' in the order of political priorities and must be tailored to fit into a pre-existent (male-created) political framework"⁸. She herself being a radical feminist defines the radical feminists more favourably, when she says that they see feminist issues not only as women's first priority, but as central to any larger revolutionary analysis.

In contrast Hole and Levine (1971) and Carden (1974) identified only two branches within the movement -

1. groups focussing on womens rights who concentrate on changing laws, employment policies and schools and
2. groups focussing on women's liberation who concentrate on changing socialization patterns, attitudes

7. Robyn Rowland - Women who do and women who don't join the women's Movement, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, p.7.

8. Ibid. p.8.

towards women and women's self-perception. Freeman however objects to such a categorization on the ground that both classifications considerably overlap and hence she prefers to distinguish between an older branch which has used traditional forms of political action such as NOW while the younger branch in her opinion has been experimental.

Sandra Acker while talking of two approaches to gender 1. fundamental and 2. implementary⁹ refers to various shades of political opinion regarding women's issues as well as traditional political concerns. We thus have 1. Liberal feminists 2. Marxist feminists and 3. radical feminists. It is however pertinent to point out that while dealing with various categorizations based on certain ideological assumptions none of these orientations are clear-cut. Thus we have socialist feminism which uses the marxist premise to raise feminist questions. We shall however deal with this school of thought in the concluding chapter, for reasons which will become clear as we proceed.

The liberal feminists offer no causal explanation for women's sub-ordination but merely opine that a non-sexist society has to be created within the existing frame-work by means of re-inforcing equality of opportunity. The over-riding goal of liberal feminism has been the application of liberal principles

9. Sandra Acker (etal) Women and education- World year of Education 1984 - kogan page London/ Nichols Publishing Company. New York - 1984, p.66.

in analyzing the social structure . Till the nineteenth century, women were denied the capacity to reason and it was only with Mary Wollstonecrafts "A vindication of human rights" (1792) that women were accepted as capable of reasoning. The liberal functionalists argue that even if it is assumed that women were not capable of reasoning this was due to sex-role conditioning and not something innate as thought of earlier. Betty Friedan also refers to 'sex directed education' in this context. Just as height and weight are considered irrelevant to an individual's essential humanity so are sex and race. The liberal feminists hence state that women are capable of full rationality and sex is an irrelevant factor. Since all human beings are created equal, women too should have a fair share of power like men. Their opposition is not to the sexual division of labour or power relations but to their unjust results. It is 'equality of opportunity' which they seek to promote.

There is, in their opinion no such thing as female or male nature but only one human nature which is sexless. Equality, liberty and justice are the cardinal principles of liberalism but the treatment of women in contemporary societies violated this principles. Women are discriminated on the basis of sex which is unjust for it negates individual rights, wishes, interests and merit. Sex is only accidental and a non-essential feature of human nature and reason, which is equally endowed in both man and woman. Women's liberation is a civil rights issue as it is seen as the unfinished business of equality. These feminists

then, work for womens civil rights, particularly in the legal and economic spheres. They tend to address specific social and legal problems of women in society and concentrate on concrete issues which can be dealt within a short range political action framework. Participation in current political life is central to the programme of these feminists who feel that only when women have substantial political power can their goals be achieved. Male domination has brought untold miseries upon mankind and the only way to ameliorate this condition is through institutional reforms for which women have to weild power. This would automatically lead to a redefining of national and international priorities. Laws, books, media coverage and institutional treatment of women have all been attacked by liberal feminists and they justify their need for change through factual information, employment statistics and outdated laws. This school of thought believes that a non-sexist society can be created without radically re-structuring the present society and by providing equality of opportunity to all which is denied very often due to the tradition of male domination. Sexual division of labour if freely chosen is not objectionable to liberal feminists, but in reality this is not so.

The goal of liberal feminists is to incorporate women fully into the mainstream of contemporary society. Whatever sphere of activity women choose, has to be regulated by rationality and not by emotions. Merit should be the only criterion and women should be free to pursue their own interests. Increased freedom of choice would automatically lead to break-down of sex barriers. A flattening out of social life and human subjects is thus advocated, which would lead to the disappearance of gendered psychological inequalities.

The liberal feminists have heavily borrowed from the liberal theorists and hence been subject to the same criticisms as the latter . By advocating normative dualism in which men are associated with the abstract, intellectual activity and women are associated with the concrete bodily and manual jobs one is led into political solipsism and scepticism wherein men and male jobs are viewed as superior and women's jobs are seen as inferior. They thus do not challenge the contemporary structuring of work by accepting the mental/manual distinction.

On the one hand they argue in a self-contradictory manner that human nature is a pre-social system devoid of a social context and on the other hand they also argue that male-female differences are due to a social context in which women's subordination is legitimized. "A rejection of abstract individualism is a rejection of the whole aprioristic liberal approach to both human nature and political theory".¹⁰

While the liberal feminists portray human beings as rational they fail to explain how these rational beings get conditioned into sex roles. While arguing for rationality they also do not explain why women are

10. Alison. M. Jaggar Feminist politics and human nature , Harvester Press, Sussex 1983, p.39.

governed by emotions and self-sacrificing nature and hence the inconsistency with their over all philosophical outlook.

By identifying the human essence with the mental capacity for reason the liberal feminists are also subject to a number of 'somatophobic assumptions' (a word coined by E.V. Spelman). They have an abstract notion of equality and yet demand special preferences (such as pregnancy leave) and thus implicitly assume that the accidental biological fact of sex does have political relevance. The notion of "androgynous society" which they talk of is also fraught with distortions. By implicitly shunning physical work and accepting intellectual work as superior liberal feminists have an elite orientation. They also place enormous faith in legislations when in reality they believe in limited state intervention. Finally liberal feminists offer no historical account of women's subordination.

Just as the liberal feminists applied liberal principles to their study of women's issues, Marxist feminists also took the help of Marxism in analysing women's oppression. The notion of class is central to

the understanding of both Marxism and Marxist feminism. A good society is a classless society which can also lead to women's emancipation.

Karl Marx viewed human beings as conscious beings aiming not only at the fulfilment of their needs but also transforming the world according to their needs. Human activity according to Marxists is conscious and purposeful and this is called praxis. Human beings have a certain kind of biological constitution and hence have needs which are fulfilled through praxis. In fulfilling their needs they also modify and develop human nature. Human biology and human society are thus related dialectically. Unlike liberals who assume a universal standard of rationality Marxists define rational action within a historical setting. The mode of production in every age determines the human nature. Based on this, a certain form of class society emerges with its accompanying structures. The dominant ideology which includes certain beliefs and values is developed through the legal, religious, artistic, and cultural and educational institutions and is used to explain and justify social experience which the working class implicitly believes and accepts due to false-consciousness.

The state as perceived by the Marxists, is the means by

which the dominant class strengthens its legitimation over weaker classes unlike the liberals who view it as an impartial mediator.

It is only in the socialist society where everyone shares the same relation to the forces of production that cooperation and equality in the true sense will be fostered and full development of human nature can be made possible.

It is Engels rather than Marx who has dealt extensively with the question of women in "The Origin of the family, private property and the state". To understand women's position under capitalism he took up the notion of class as the point of departure. He opines that every society has been characterized by a sexual division of labour which was originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act".¹¹ In spite of this sexual division of labour neither sex was inferior, each being dominant and important in its own sphere, With the gradual emergence of surplus which gave men social dominance over women to control both wealth and women's sexuality, mother's right was overthrown. Thus began monogamy which was primarily economic rather than a sexual or social institution according to Engels. In order to liberate women, monogamy has to be

11. Karl Marx and Engels- The German Ideology - Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976. p.50

abolished which again entails the abolition of capitalism. While there are two classes in the capitalist society - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat both comprising of men and women, ironically it is the bourgeoisie women who are more oppressed than their proletarian counterparts since they control the forces of production only indirectly as they do not take part in the productive process unlike proletarian women. Engels thus argues in essence, that it is the capitalist system that oppresses women as a group and the working class as a whole. It is not men as a group who oppress women as radical feminists say, for the working class male has no more real power than any woman.

Women as a whole along with the working class men provide the bourgeoisie with the labour power which helps the capitalists in the maximization of profit. Women, particularly by providing labour both on the domestic front and the labour front, are the cheapest and unorganised source of labour. Women's subordination thus helps augment the profit of the capitalist class. In a socialist society alone, men and women could unite in a truly egalitarian sense based on "mutual affection".

Taking a look at the socialist countries such as USSR, China, Cuba and Poland, they, in keeping with the Marxist

feminist approach call for increased participation of women in 'social production' or wage labour outside home. With this end in view all communist countries virutually adopted identical policies. "Women were given equal civil and political rights. Special provisiens were enacted protecting women's health at work and outlawing work that might endanger their ability to reproduce or might seriously injure their health. Laws established daycare centres and gave women pregnancy leave. Party resolutions encouraged women to acquire even more than basic education. Quotas were established in vocational and other schools and women were urged to try men's jobs".¹²

Thus China, Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, East Germany and other socialist countries made far reaching changes in the socio-economic setup by inducting women into the labour force. While there was, the attempt to redefine the role and status of women in the public and domestic spheres traditional customs were assaulted simultaneously. In China anti-foot binding preclamations were made and so were slavery and concubinage sought to be abelished. Cuba did much to do away with the sexual division of labour. In the Soviet Union and China abortion

12. Naomi Black & Ann Baker Cortell Women and World Change equity issues in development, Sage Publishers Beverly Hills, London 1981, p.141.

was legalized immediately after communist victory. The practice of polygamy, bride price, ^{and} child marriage were divested of all legality. Organized religion also came under severe attack in all these countries and thus traditional values were severely assaulted.

While it cannot be denied that the October Revolution of 1917 in USSR, the Chinese Revolution in 1949 and other socialist countries have helped women achieve de jure equality with men, de facto equality still seems remote. This is due to the fact that no communist regime has been able to provide the "infrastructure necessary to ease housework, women were working what is now known as the "double shift".¹³ "This double shift" of women according to which women enter wage-labour while continuing to perform household tasks has been extremely exploitative. To quote Sokolowska "women acquired four roles in communist society wife, mother, house-keeper and wage earner, only the last was paid". A second consequence of feminization of jobs' was that though women came to be better represented, the top socio-political and economic levels were still occupied by men.

13. Ibid. p.145.

Communist society with its emphasis on industrialization, capital and technology, relegated other objectives such as advancement of equality for women and merely viewed them as providing the much needed industrial labour. Women under this setup were caught between traditional home routines and new job identities. New drudgery merely supplemented the old and women, in consequence had to pay a heavy price for 'liberation'.

True to the Marxist ideology the human being is determined by his or her place in production process. It however does not take into consideration the fact that the same human being has a place in the reproductive process. This drawback has of course been eliminated by the domestic labour debate of the Marxist feminists but there is still no unanimous explanation of the social structure and the position of women under capitalism as we shall see later.

The Marxist feminists have very often tried to transpose on to the divisions of gender, a theoretical framework which has been conceived along class terms. Had they attempted to discuss the question of the relationship of the sexes to the class structure, their approach would have been more meaningful.

There are certain other criticisms which Marxist feminism is subjected to. Marxist feminists unlike liberal feminists see human nature as being biologically sexed. However, in their anxiety to deny the naturalness of women's subordination, they subscribe to a view of androgynous society while stressing the social phenomena of class at the same time which is contradictory. They also argue that the sexual division of labour within the family is natural which carries the alarming suggestion that women's capacity to enter public industry is limited both by biological and moral factors. Nor do they explain why women are exploited by men within the family unit.

Marxist feminists also believe in the sexual division of labour which implies that such a division of labour can never be abolished unless the division of labour itself is abolished which leads to the acceptance of homo-sexuality but, again they assume that the relation of man to woman is natural. One can thus conclude that "the specific character of women could only appear as non-essential or even non-existent to the totalizing and even totalitarian spirit of this ideology".¹⁴.

14. Keohanne.O Nannerl (etal.), Feminist Theory - A critique of ideology, The Harvester Press, 1982, p.39.

Radical feminism which is a contemporary phenomenon presents a fundamental challenge to both the liberal and Marxist ways of conceptualization of social reality. It does not have any systematic political theory but stress on feelings and emotions. For it "gender constitutes the spectacles whose influence on our vision goes unnoticed until they are removed".¹⁵

Radical feminism aims at removing these spectacles not only in obvious areas of law and politics but even in our most personal relationships such as the family. It calls for introspection. It assumes that "patriarchy" dominates every sphere perpetuating gender inequality and male values. The liberal and Marxist feminists accept this male picture and merely seek to change the social reality to include women. The radical feminists in contrast challenge this very male picture and do not want women to be like men. Women, they opine should have their own set of values. A change of consciousness and a shift in the very paradigm is advocated. For this end women need to gain control over their bodies by escaping from forced motherhood and sexual slavery. Patri-

15. Jaggar n.10, p.85.

-archy has to be dissolved in its socio-political and psychological forms. The liberal feminists who insist on gaining power to produce a more just society have a meaningless goal according to the radical feminists since, it is the institution of patriarchy with its built in forms of unjust dominance of others at the root of most unwarranted uses and conceptions of power. "Since patriarchy is the prototype of existing forms of social organization and psychological conditioning, the programs of feminism must be revolutionary in character and shape".¹⁶

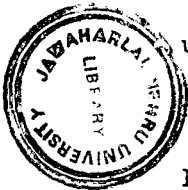
At this juncture it is necessary to define 'patriarchy' since this concept has been the focal point of radical feminists' analysis of women's oppression.

'Patriarchy' was defined as a particular form of household organization in which the father dominated the extended kinship network and also controlled the economic production of the household. For the radical feminists however patriarchy is treated as the "overarching category of male dominance". It preceeded capitalism and is all pervasive. It continues even after the overthrow of private

16. Helen Wortis and Clara Rabinowitz, - Women's Movement Halstead Press, 1972, p.19.



capital in the communist society. It is a system in which men are dominant and females subordinate. It is the striving of men for power and domination of men over women's sexuality and fertility. To quote Kate Millet "our society like all other civilizations, is a patriarchy in which the rule of women by men is more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring".¹⁷ She opines that the women in a capitalist society are dominated since there exist class differences between women and she argues that such differences are transitory and illusory, as in reality her economic dependency makes her affiliations with any class temporary. Women then in her opinion - are "a class across classes". Class differences in reality are relevant to men alone. There is one fundamental system of domination - patriarchy that is "analytically independent of the capitalist or any other mode of production".¹⁸



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The above analysis is similar to that of Shulamith Firestone's who stresses the analytic independence of male domination but unlike Millet who gives analytic primary

17. Kate Millet in Michelle Barrett, Women's oppression today - problems in Marxist feminist analysis, London 1980, p.11.

18. Ibid. p.11.

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to it, Firestone resorts to root her theory in "biological reproduction", her aim being "to take class analysis one step further to its roots in the biological division of sexes. Firestone's theoretical goal is to substitute sex for class".¹⁹ The thrust is then on the "psychological oppression of women". The aim is to destroy the sex class system by organizing themselves politically.

Firestone's biologicistic argument that stress males' control over women's fertility does not discuss how and why men acquired this control and is hence reductionist.

It has, however, been possible to provide an account of patriarchy from the social view point a task which was undertaken by Christine Delphy. She argues that men appropriate unpaid labour from women who constitute the domestic mode of production and patriarchal mode of exploitation. The material basis of women's oppression, she argues, thus lies in the patriarchal and not capitalist relations of production. Patriarchy is thus given

19. Ibid. p.11.

analytic independence, but she provides a trans-historical approach which is unacceptable to the Marxist feminists who see male domination as located within a historical perspective. This point has been considered by certain other social scientists like Gayle Rubin, Antonietta Macciocchi, and Virginia Woolf who restrict their analysis of patriarchy to particular societies.

Zillah Eisenstein tries to reconcile this problem but is unsuccessful as she vacillates between the assertion of patriarchy as lying outside capitalism and at the same time insists on its usefulness in the capitalist structure.

"Róisín Mc Donough and Rachel Harrison regard patriarchy as requiring a two fold definition -

1. The control of women's fertility and sexuality in monogamous marriage.
2. The economic subordination of women through property and sexual division of labour.

Their central thesis is that patriarchy as a concept can be historicized through the argument that in capitalism patriarchal relations assume a form which is dictated by the capitalist relations of production"²⁰ and

20 Ibid. p.17.

women are oppressed depending upon their social class.

Annette Kuhn in a bid to resolve the contradictions demonstrates that the psychic and economic mechanisms of a family have autonomy from capitalist relations due to which the family gains its "autonomous effectivity". She argues that the family may be defined exactly as property relations in operation. She concludes that the family defined in this manner provides the necessary condition for psychic relations - for representation of relations of patriarchy and capital and thus tries to marry a psycho-analytic account of gendered subject construction with an account of family viewed in terms of a labour contract between the spouses.

The radical feminists in pursuing an anti-male approach have separated themselves from the mainstream of society. In trying to gain control of their bodies they have ignored the other half of the population.

Radical feminists have also concentrated merely on the practical aspect of providing an alternative to the status quo without a firm grounding in theory. Their view of the patriarchal set up is also ahistorical. The assumption that women are "a class across classes" is also questionable.

What we have attempted in the above discussion is a description of the feminist world view. This will help put the substantive issues in perspective.

Liberalism, Marxism and Feminism are all theories of power and its distribution, the thrust being on inequality. They provide accounts of how social arrangements of patterned disparity can be internally rational and yet unjust, but their specificity is not incidental. In liberalism to be deprived of one's rights, in Marxism of one's work and in feminism of one's sexuality defines each one's conception of lack of power *per se*.

These three approaches have a common goal i.e. the elimination of all the inequalities and sources of exploitation and oppression but each of these theories argues in different ways that, the relations in which some enjoy and others do not (liberals), many work and few gain (Marxists), some are sexually exploited and others exploit (radical feminists) is what women's oppression is all about.

Can all these three social processes be basic at once? Can all three ways of looking at the lack of power among women be reconciled by eliminating their limitations? Can a common programme of political action

and social change which meets not only the needs of oppressed classes but also of women and races emerge? This would require a strategy based on the insights and experiences of each movement. We shall try to answer the various questions raised by these schools of thought and attempt at a holistic perspective but before this can be done one should first of all analyse the processes and practices perpetuating women's subordination to men.

Women's inequality as all these theories point out has been justified through various institutions especially the educational system. Education is one of the most important ideological state apparatuses (to borrow ^a term of Althusser) for perpetuating sex stereotypes. At the ^{same} time it is said that education has liberating potential by freeing the individual mind from the existing modes of culture and helps change the self-perceptions.

Proceeding to the next chapter we shall explore the role of education from the feminist view point while using the theoretical frame-work and debates which have emerged in the present chapter.

THE STUDY

"Incomplete and one-sided understanding is distorted understanding. By ignoring women as social actors who contribute to continuity and change in society the social sciences have seriously impaired their understanding of the total social reality".¹ Women were thus marginalized and commonly misrepresented in every sphere of human action though they form more than one half of the world's population.

The U.N. decade for women (1975-85) did much to bring into focus the unequal distribution of power. The women's question has begun to be viewed within the "broader framework of class inequality rather than merely gender inequality".²

Much of the discussion still revolves around theories of domination and sub-ordination, apart from a number of policy strategies which have been aiming at the reformation of women. A lot of hue and cry has been raised about the relationship between research and theori-

1. Leela Dube in Leela Dube (etal), Visibility and power-essays on women in society and development, Oxford University Press, 1986 p.xi.

2. Nina Rao, "The Woman Question: Perspectives for today in social scientist", Vol.13, No.10-11, 1985, p.3.

zing and feminist practice aimed at bringing about change in women. It should be noted that theoretical sophistication is definitely desirable in order to locate issues and seek explanations. Knowledge cannot be divorced from action and what we are attempting here is to go beyond the existing theoretical analysis. This analysis will be of necessity exploratory.

We argue that a feminist theory is satisfactory if it has the ability to improve the lives of women and reflect social reality as seen by women. Our fundamental objective is to review the various theories of feminism and study their relevance to the general as well as the Indian context taking education as the point of departure.

The present analysis will try to study the process of biased gender construction which is rampant in the educational system while at the same time acknowledging its existence in the wider social structure. It is our contention that a feminist theory claiming to represent the women's view point must take note of the importance of the reproduction of gender and class differences in schools, and the relevance of sexual division of labour and patriarchal relations must be realized while formulating a theory. We also believe that classical critiques of schooling have weighted theories of education towards class analysis thereby ignoring the gender di-

Since different theories of women's subordination have been put forward we shall take up the liberal, Marxist and radical feminists' view point and argue that all of them offer a partial views of women's oppression and consequently approach the educational system with the same outlook. It is opined that a holistic perspective has to be evolved which recognises both, gender and class inequalities in the wider social structure (pertaining to women) as well as in the educational system and this has to be viewed in a socio-historical context.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTION:

1. What do feminists have to say on the nature of women's subjugation in general?
2. What do the feminists say on the role of education for women?
3. Is their approach to education different from the view of education held by earlier sociologists?
4. In what way does their approach to education make a departure from the earlier views of education.
5. Has education contributed to the growth of women's consciousness in India?
6. Can an integrated approach attempting at a holistic view of reality be evolved which takes into account class and gender inequalities among women?

These are the questions that we will try to answer through the present study. We realize that many more aspects of the problem have to be studied and we hope that this exploratory study will offer sufficient insights to formulate a proposal for doctoral work. The materials used in this dissertation are based entirely on the writings of feminists (primary sources) or writings on feminists (secondary sources).

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS:

The first chapter draws on the three feminist theories which offer an explanation of women's subordination. The moderate or the liberal feminists held prejudice and unequal opportunities for women as the problem; Marxist feminists hold that division of labour and capitalist mode of production as the problem while radical feminists hold patriarchy to be the problem.

The second chapter argues that the educational system shapes and reinforces sex-segregations thus perpetuating the statusquo. It makes an attempt to portray the feminists' world view of education thereby condemning the classical views of education which have not included gender.

The third chapter attempts an indepth analysis of the importance of women's education in order to determine the progress of women's movement in the Indian context. It points out the marginalization of women in the educational system which is reflected in women's literacy, widening gap between boys' and girls' education, rural-urban differences and concentration of women in a few faculties such as arts, education etc. It concludes by underlining the importance of education (in an underdeveloped country like India) for raising women's consciousness and organising themselves to eliminate social evils.

The fourth chapter proceeds in the direction of presenting a holistic view of reality by moving beyond the fragments presented by the three schools mentioned in the first chapter. It then tries to explore the educational system from this perspective. In doing so it discusses the domestic labour debate and the call for socialist feminism which argue for a new conceptual clarity. This necessitates a more rigorous analysis of the patriarchal and capitalist interrelations. It also argues for a sexist and historically periodized analysis of the division of labour. Thus we move towards an alternative view of women's reality.

CHAPTER - II

FEMINISM AND EDUCATION

Raymond Williams once remarked - "Education is not a product like cars and bread, but a selection and organization from the available knowledge at a particular time which involves conscious and unconscious desires".¹

Any theme on education should then, relate to the principles of organization and selection of the same in their institutional and interactional setting in the educational institutions and the wide social structure. It would be no exaggeration to say that until recently the functionalist, conflict or ethnographic approaches have all, glossed over gender and focussed exclusively on class. In the process, gender was assumed to be of minor importance. To quote Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden - "This question is not addressed theoretically and, indeed it is hard to see how it could be given that many of the now classic studies in this field are literally, studies of the education of boys".² Hence an analysis of women's education relating the form and content of schooling to

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1. Jane Greenwald and Ruth West (ed) - Curriculum design education Michael Golby, An Open University set book, p.106.
 2. Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden, Education and the working class, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.52.

women's position in the social structure has to be evolved. This is attempted by feminist theorists who argue for achievement of equality between sexes through changing various institutions, the educational system being one such system. The education system equips pupils with the skills necessary for achievement in the occupational sphere not only in terms of income but status also. Hence if girls are to achieve as well as boys, non-sexist education is a must. However, schooling moulds, shapes and reinforces sex segregation and discrimination within and across class boundaries when it should be trying to alleviate them. It is our purpose in this chapter to rectify the existing theoretical approaches on class differences and reformulate them to include the dimension of gender. At the same time, a probing survey will be made to examine both, the structure and content of education in schools to see how male and female stereotypes are reinforced. We shall also examine in brief the opinions and strategies of the various feminist theorists for ending Women's oppression.

Education has often been regarded as an extension of primary socialization for it provides both formal and informal training to children outside the private confines of family life. It has also been regarded as instrumental

in promoting equality of opportunity by disregarding all forms of social inequality but, just as the socialization process within the family has certain ideological implications, the activities of educating and getting educated are equally socially constructed in ways which have political consequences.

The feminists' contention is that these consequences are of particular significance for women as participants in the educational system. It is not disadvantage but prejudice and discrimination as well which affects women's access to education. Schooling thus - "not only reproduces disadvantages but also provides a context for the legitimation of sexist ideologies and practices".³ Although super-ordination is present in every sphere of society it is subtly and continuously displayed via the construction and reproduction of knowledge. For example domestic science and pure science use language and examples which clearly demonstrate that they are directed to pupils of one sex. Kelly and Welpe point to such stereotyping which divides the curriculum into 'boy' and 'girl' subjects and perpetuates the myth that such a division is natural and fair.

3. Arthur Brittan and Mary Maynard - Sexism, racism and oppression - Basil Blackwell Publications - 1984. pp. 155-156.

Most of the curriculum takes 'maleness' as the norm and therefore it is likely that there is an assumed superiority of male forms of knowledge. Sexist interpretations become the received truth because they are transmitted in the context of authority in the educational institutions. Educational systems are produced by men and hence they suit typically male patterns of education and working life quite well, while neglecting the educational requirements of women. Division of labour is constantly maintained even in socialist countries where powerful attitudinal barriers exist as pointed out by Mc Auley⁴ and Molyneux.⁵ Girls, for example internalize definitions of maturity which instil quietness, obedience and poise in them, both at the home and the school front.

An important question to be asked is who controls the curriculum? The two problems facing any society are 1. the distribution of knowledge in society and 2. the decision making involved as Denis Lawton⁶ rightly points

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4. Alastair McAuley, Women's education and employment in the Soviet Union- in Sandra Acker (etal) - World year book of education 1984, women and education, Kogan page, London/Nichols Publishing Company, New York, pp. 202-210.
 5. Maxine Molyneux, "Strategies for the emancipation of women in the third world socialist societies" in Sandra Acker (etal) World year book of education 1984, Women and education, Kogan page, London/Nichols Publishing Company, New York, pp. 268-278.
 6. Denis Lawton, The Politics of school curriculum, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1980. p.6.

out. It follows that the question of who shall be educated is intimately linked to the question of what are schools for? The decision to channelise girls into domestic science and boys into pure science is not incidental but involves conscious political decisions. Denis Lawton uses a triangle of power to point to different sources of influence affecting the curriculum process and remarks - "If power is measured in terms of length of each side of the triangle^l, it is clearly possible to have triangles of different shapes, in other words it would be a mistake to assume either that the triangle is equilateral or that angles do not change from time to time especially if we are concerned with the control of curriculum.⁷

The classical theorists such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Mead have concentrated on the relative advantage of different classes in access to education though they have had different thrust areas. Thus Durkheim viewed education as solving the problem of conflict in society through the school curriculum, selection and allocation. The Marxist perspective of education unlike Durkheim's underscores the element of conflict in every aspect of life and links this contradiction to the economic relations of

7. Ibid. pp. 7-8.

production which again entails domination of one class over another. Weber's chief concern was with the modern capitalist society and bureaucracy and this has helped us in viewing schools as organizations and teaching as a profession. Mead pointed out the importance of individual actors in the educational process through his symbolic interactionism.

Subsequent sociologists like Samuel Bowles and Gintis, Antonio Gramsci, Michael Young, Basil Bernstein and Louis Althusser have dealt with the educational system as an institution which has helped reproduce the status quo either ideologically, socially or culturally. Louis Althusser talks of the educational system being the ideological state apparatus which is non-repressive while at the same time helping in reproducing the relations of production existing in society. Bourdieu too talks of the educational system characterized by functional duplicity aimed at conservation of the status quo. Bowles, Gintis, Bernstein, Young and others too talk of social, cultural, ideological and even language reproduction by the educational system.

All the above mentioned theorists have marginalized women in their treatment and fail to take into account

the patriarchal structures operative at the educational level. As Madelaine MacDonald rightly points out "Any theory of education which seeks to account for the forms of schooling in terms of the mode of reproduction of the work force, I would argue, must recognize the structure of male female dominance relations as integral and not subsidiary organizing principles of the work process."⁸

Female educational participation is largely different from that of the male though it may appear as if the choice of subjects and even schooling is voluntary, based on 'achieved' rather than on 'ascribed' factors. Women and men thus travel through two separate paths in the educational system - one towards domesticity and the other towards the making of a skilled labour force. This differential acquisition of skills is rationalized and attributed to certain qualities which individuals possess internally. If women perform badly in the educational system and are subsequently marginalized in the labour force it is "natural", since they do not have the ability to compete with others. Gender differentiation is thus treated as irrelevant which contributes to further their margina-

8. Madelaine MacDonald in Rosemary Deem (ed), Schooling for women's work, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, p.15.

lization. Also, by treating economic activities alone, as productive and relevant, the household and consequently women are neglected. Women's status is also measured from the position of the male head ignoring the fact that women in the household may occupy superior or inferior positions by themselves.

Hence all the above social scientists have been wrong in assuming that both sexes experience similar situations in the differential forms of schooling and even work processes. All such perspectives of schooling have tended to weigh theories of education towards class analysis. Many other researchers such as Acker, Graham and Liwellyn have tried to present a much more holistic analysis, by including the dimension of gender in the study of educational stratification. Turner⁹ adopts a different approach and calls for the analysis of women's orientation towards "ambition" which in turn determines their actions. Ambition among women being different from that of men, their orientation towards success is related not to work (extrinsic material rewards) but to domesticity (intrinsic non material rewards). Hence their disinterest in avail-

9. For a discussion of the view points put forward by Turner, King and Epstein, see the book by Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe - Feminism and Materialism, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

able educational opportunities is understandable, says he.
King aims at a model in which class and status are retained as analytical categories while including the dimension of gender. While arguing that women because of their orientations use equal opportunities offered by education in an unequal way he distinguishes between "symbolic" and "functional" status. The former refers to "social status" while the latter refers to access to desired occupations. Taking four basic pupil types he arrives at the following propositions.

Middle class boys have both, high symbolic value and high functional value

Middle class girls have ~~both~~, high symbolic value, but low functional value.

Working class boys have ~~both~~, low symbolic value but high functional value.

Working class girls have both, low symbolic value and low functional value.

Thus we find that both, middle class girls and working class girls have low functional value for education because of their orientation towards domesticity. He also observes that "at each level of education the sex gap is bigger for the working class than the middle class and the class gap is bigger for girls than the boys. As the level of education rises the sex gap widens for both classes, but

widens more for the working class. The class gap also widens for both sexes, but most for girls than for boys".¹⁰

Some researchers'also offer sociological accounts of low educational and occupational attainment among women and suggest that certain values acquired through socialization are found unsuitable for women. Epstein uses a structural type of analysis and argues that women have numerous roles to perform and as a result the possibility of role conflict increases. She feels that this role-conflict can be minimized if women have role-models to adhere to. However while arguing that women on the one hand are subject to ascribed factors outside their control, she also argues that they can alter their status through change in attitude and orientation.

It should be noted at this juncture that class and sex can only be analytically separated within specific historical conjectures but not in concrete terms as they are always interwoven whether in the family or the work place, the law or the educational system. MacDonald opines - "I

10. Ann Marie Wolpe, "Education and the sexual division of labour" in Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe - Feminism and Materialism, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p.171.

do not believe that one can dissociate the ideological forms of masculinity and femininity, in their historical specificity from either the material basis of patriarchy nor from the class structure".¹¹ Social and biological reproduction thus constantly reinforce one another. While biological reproduction is characterized by monogamy, patriarchal household, domestic sexual division of labour relegating women to an inferior status, social reproduction characterized by class and sex segregation is merely an extension of the domestic division of labour. Unfortunately, productive work or social reproduction with its masculine association is considered superior to reproductive work with its female association. To justify the superiority of social production the law of natural instincts and interests of human beings is frequently resorted to. This legitimation however, is not natural but social.

In keeping with this view women's education has largely been marginalized as pointed out by the feminists. We shall now proceed to specifically discuss the liberal, marxist and radical feminists's views on education while keeping in mind their overall theoretical framework which we have discussed earlier.

11. Ibid. p. 30.

The liberal feminists, drawing from the positive empiricist paradigm have as their goal - 'a just society'. This just society can be brought about only through institutional reforms. Intellectual talent is not the prerogative of a few males but a variable that can be expanded to include both males and females through social legislations. They believe in the "institutional redistribution" model of the welfare state.

Education is seen by them as an active engine of equality, humanitarianism and social justice and this "just society" can be brought about by the active intervention of the state in the educational field. They argue that "equalized opportunities" for education will mean that most women and many men will actualize their potential for rationality more fully than they do at present, so the differences between women and men in the development of their reason as well as other observed psychological differences between men and women will diminish and possibly disappear".¹²

The existing system of education was however a far cry from this ideal. It was socially unjust, extremely inefficient, and potentially divisive. It denied a fair

12. Alison. M. Jaggard, Feminist politics and human nature , Harvester Press, Sussex 1983, p.39.

share to women and was sexist, as all other feminists too opine. Legislations in the educational field would lead to the same educational opportunities for both sexes and attempts to forcibly impose masculine or feminine characteristics would have to be done away with. "There would not be the current extreme contrast between logical independent, aggressive, courageous, insensitive and emotionally inexpressive men and intuitive dependent compassionate, nurturant and emotional women.¹³ Instead every individual would be free to pursue any virtue. Gendered psychological inequalities would gradually disappear. To bring about such a situation education should aim at uncovering irrationality and discrimination against women which can be achieved by writing non-sexist books, seeking access to media, sitting on committees, investigating and improving status of women and finally pressing for legal reforms.

The liberal feminists as we have noted earlier have an abstract view of rationality: They see men and women as working together for the achievement of this just and rational society and thus presuppose existence of collective or shared norms orienting human beings to achieve their ends in society. This however is unthinkable in

13. Ibid. p.39.

in the light of existing facts. Conflict and social disturbance predominate, which Bernbaum rightly notes when he says that "new knowledge, changed paradigms are not to be judged by their relevance to an external reality and their accuracy in facilitating a description and an understanding of that reality, but in relation to the interests and power of those who create and use the knowledge."¹⁴ As we have already noted in the previous chapter the drawback of the liberal feminists is that they hold the existence of an external reality independent of human interpretation which is untrue. The education system is indeed, conditioned by the wider social structure as the Marxists and Marxist feminists opine.

The Marxist feminists use pre-defined categories and view the education system on the basis of these categories. They first offer an account of the education system under capitalism and then proceed to suggest measures which will do away with the defects of the capitalist system of production. Since the capitalist system of production requires the continuous production of both forces and relations of production it requires the active collaboration

14. Bernbaum in David Reynolds and Michael Sullivan, Towards a new socialist sociology of education, University College, Cardiff, p.174.

between the base (economy) and the other superstructures (religion, family, education etc.). The reproduction of skills requires a technically efficient but a submissive labour force and this in turn necessitates the existence of an educational system which effectively socializes the working class and the ruling class to assume appropriate future roles.

"Each group is provided with the ideology to suit its role, yet the mechanisms, whereby this occurs are disguised by the apparently neutral character of the school".¹⁵ This line of argument has been pursued by Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, and Samuel Bowles and Gintis. Education is not as necessary for the reproduction of technical skills as it is for relating its social structure, to the forms of consciousness, inter-personal behaviour and personality it fosters and reinforces in students. Exploitation has to be disguised and this is aptly provided by the educational system which produces a highly motivated work force for the lowest possible wages. "The effect of school organization and curricular structure can not therefore be dissociated from the overall division of labour both in regard to paid employment and

15. Michelle Barrett, Women's oppression today - Problems in Marxist Feminist analysis, London, 1980, p.116.

and within the family".¹⁶

The Marxist feminists in keeping with this tradition try to "explore the relation between organization of sexuality, domestic production, the household and so on and historical changes in the mode of production and systems of appropriation and exploitation".¹⁷ They concentrate on women's oppression in the capitalist system which necessitates the study of gender in a historical context. It must be noted that sex and class divisions are, interwoven together and yet autonomous. Using the Althusserian approach Ann Marie Wolpe thus argues, 'there is a necessary disjunction between the "requirements" of the economy and the range of skills, the educational system can produce".¹⁸

Since capitalism stresses the profit motive, unbridled individual educational achievement is a necessary prerequisite to prosper. In contrast under socialism education will be ^a collective enterprise since cooperation is the essence of socialism, not aggressive individual achievement.

The Marxist feminists call for universalization of

16. Ann Marie Wolpe - "Education and the sexual division of labour" in Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe, - Feminism and Materialism, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, pp.325-326.

17. Ibid. p.9.

18. Ibid. p.119.

access of education irrespective of sexes which in turn can lead to united political action of the working class. The victory of the working class through collective education would automatically ensure women's liberation. The socialistic revolution is the key to the fulfilment of women's potentialities.

The Marxist feminists however transpose on to the divisions of gender a theoretical frame-work which has been conceived along class lines. They must then, first resolve the question of the relationship of the sexes to the class structure before dealing with the question of education.

The radical feminists like the others do believe that the school differentiates between sexes labelling children, to correspond with the wider reality. This male bias has to be removed and a distinctively female perspective of education is advocated. Such an education will "help women discover their real needs and begin to fulfill their potentialities so long repressed by patriarchy, devoid of hierarchy".¹⁹

Education is to be an active learning process where women are engaged in learning about themselves and the world in an atmosphere of trust, dignity, honesty and support. To this end they advocate individualistic forms

19. Jaggar n.12, p.268.

personal experience to facilitate consciousness raising groups. This will help demolish the myth of male supremacy. Radical feminists have concentrated on a wide variety of educational projects which range from automobile maintenance, accupressure massage, karate to feminist political theory. They have businesses, books, restaurants, clubs, films, poetry, painting, sculpture all of which are aimed at highlighting the women's perspective.

By building alternative educational systems "radical feminists pursue what an anarchist would call the "hollowing out" of the patriarchal systems".²⁰

These feminists however divorce themselves from the male world and hence their views are as much distorted as the male world view. The lack of a theoretical perspective on the educational system and the call for uncontextualised individual forms of consciousness further, complicate the problem.

Having discussed the feminist view-point on education it would be worthwhile to note that women indeed, have been confined to the liberal arts and domestic sciences while men's education aims at producing skilled man power. The appropriate^{and} expected behaviour of each sex gets reflected

20. Jaggar. n.12, p-281.

in academic disciplines which is further legitimized by the hidden sex-biased curriculum, unconscious manipulation of teachers and so on. An entire edifice of school culture is then built on such gendered notions of inequality. A number of studies have been carried out which point to this trend. It is not our intention to present a full review of the extensive literature ^{produced} all over the world concerning the existence of sexist bias in education. Rather, our purpose is to point to the similarities in evidence and, the way in which treatment of both sexes seems to be based on an assumption of "natural differences".

Evans²¹ illustrates an elusive form of sexism in Australian primary schools. Classroom interaction, curriculum and teaching materials are discussed in terms of the role they play in gender construction. The importance of understanding and focusing upon the taken for granted gender assumptions of class-room life is also highlighted by Clarricoates.²² She points out how teachers perpetuated dominant ideologies in observed class-room dis-

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21. Terry Evans - "Gender differentiation and interaction in Australian primary schools" in Sandra Acker (etal) World year book of education 1984, Women and Education Kogan page, London/Nichols Publishing Company, New York 1984, pp. 90-99.
 22. Katherine Clarricoates - "The importance of being Ernest, Emma, Tom, Jane the perception and categorization of gender conformity and gender deviation in primary socialization" in Rosemary Deem (ed) Schooling for Women's work - Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1980, pp.26-41.

cussions. Mary Fuller²³ too arrived at a similar conclusion that teachers' professional commitment to fair distribution based on merit is superficial.

Bushwells²⁴ field work in North England show how subtle interpersonal messages reinforce and reproduce dependency relations. Her case studies of a 'sponsored boy' and a 'nurtured girl', acquiescent girl and invisible girl are evocative-leading to a different kind of understanding from the harder statistical evidences. So is Llewellyn's²⁵

examination of single sex schools in England. Both conclude that girls' response is structured according to the wider social and interpersonal relations between sexes.

In essence, gender typing recurs in the official curriculum, teaching materials, organization of subject choice, teachers behaviour both inside and outside the class-room,

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23. Mary Fuller "Black girls in a London comprehensive school" in Rosemary Deem (ed) Schooling for women's work - Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1980, pp.52-65.
 24. Carol Buswell - "Sponsoring and stereotyping in a working class english school", Sandra Acker (etal) World year book of education 1984, Women and Education Kogan page, London/Nichols Publishing Company, New-York, 1984, pp. 100-101.
 25. Mandy Llewellyn - "Studying girls at school - the implications of confusion", in Rosemary Deem (ed) Schooling for women's work, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.. 1980, pp.42-51.

the hidden curriculum of traditional assumptions, unquestioned expectations and codes of behaviour as Jacquetta Megarry²⁶ points out.

Women gain attention only when it would be impossible to leave them out, such as a discussion of domestic life which would obviously involve the role of women. When females do appear in paid employment they are portrayed in a very narrow range of low status jobs with limited prospects (Mc Donald 1980). The end result is disenchantment with education for women. It must however be noted that it is not stereotyping which causes educational indifference; but rather an irrelevant curriculum which fails to interest women who are already alienated from the learning process. A distorted view of womanhood is thus promoted. It is suggested that the implicit themes with their positive evaluation of everything male and devaluation of anything female at best fail to challenge the sexist attitude in children and at worst actually encourage the development of sexist prejudice. Dale Spender while referring to language as a major instrument of transmission and acquisition points out

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26. Jacquetta Megarry - "Sex, gender and education" in Sandra Acker - World year book of education 1984 - women and education , Kogan page, London/Nichols Publishing company, New York, 1984, pp.14-28.
 27. Dale Spender (1980), in Arthur Brittan and Mary Maynard Sexism Racism and Oppression , Basil Blackwell publications, 1984, p.164.

to the 'rule of semantic derogation' according to which women's language acquires a negative and often sexual connotation while male language is superior. Simone de Beauvoir also elaborates on this when she remarks that "man represents both, the positive and the neutral, as 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".²⁸

All this leads to the fact that "it is not simply sexism which is being transmitted here nor just the benign signalling of the existence of two complementary gender roles. Rather girls are learning that the relations between the sexes are power relations where men are dominant and in control, while women are subordinated and inferior".²⁹

As Stanworth puts it "class-room interaction, the way in which pupils and teachers relate to each other does not merely transmit beliefs about the superiority of one sex over the other, but actively serves to give such beliefs a concrete foundation in personal experience".³⁰

28. Simone de Beauvoir - The second sex: Harmondsworth: Penguin 1982, p.15.

29. Brittan and Maynard. n.3, p.165.

30. Stanworth in Brittan and Maynard, n.3. p.166.

Thus both macro and micro studies have conclusively proved the status quoist nature of the educational system.

The present chapter has elaborated on three different but interrelated aspects of education of women and has substantiated these views with micro level case studies conducted all over the world pointing to the covert and overt marginalization of girls in education.

The liberal marxist and radical feminists offer different strategies for the redressal of women's oppression. They are however, unanimous about the existence of a distorted world view of women. They are also agreed in condemning the classical theories for their marginalization of women and focus on class analysis.

The liberal feminists lay down an abstract condition of rationality and opine that legislation is the means to arrive at this rationality. In contrast Marxist feminists while taking cognisance of the sex and class nexus argue that all knowledge being socially conditioned, the class system has to be done away with to achieve women's liberation. Finally the radical feminists with their anti male approach call for consciousness raising through the educational system. In criticising all these three approaches to education we have argued that all of them regress

either into crude materialism or naive idealism. What is needed is a balance between these extremes, an educational system with open access to both sexes, retaining the rationality and content of the bourgeois culture but not its values, believing in institutional reforms of liberal feminism but not its abstract notion of rationality, and taking consciousness raising as one of the many means to achieve a sexless educational and value system but discarding the anti-male, ahistorical approach. We shall in our alternative paradigm then, argue for a view point which recognises the interplay between the sexual division of labour and the reproduction of capital. But before this, we need to look at the Indian women's movement and educational system. This will help in putting the substantive issues in a clearer perspective.

CHAPTER + III

FEMINISM AND EDUCATION - THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter an indepth analysis of the relevance and implication of women's education is attempted in order to determine the progress of women's movement in India. Prior to this we shall dwell on the orthog-enetic and heterogenetic sources which have influenced women's education directly. In doing so we shall keep in mind India's cultural, familial socio-historical and politico-economic conditions and try and relate issues pertaining to women's education simultaneously. We shall conclude by arguing that inspite of the subjugation of women by the educational structure, women to in India have become conscious of their oppression and "a vigorous if uneven women's liberation has taken shape in India. A whole range of women from different classes, castes and communities have participated in this movement along with activists drawn from a variety of ppolitical trends, parties and groups"¹.

The Indian educational system as well as other aspects of development by and large, are the

1. Gail Omvedt - "Women's Movement : some ideological debates," in Smitu Kothari & Harsh Sethi (ed) - Lokayan Bulletin, 4:6, 1986, p.35

legacy of the colonial past. The reason for this predominance of the Raj on the country's policies and planning even after Independence could be linked with the historical conditions under which India achieved freedom. Indian independence was achieved through a national movement led by a powerful alliance of the landlords and capitalists which could not deliver the necessary historical blows to bring radical social transformation"². Even after Independence India was influenced considerably by western ideology and values resulting in modernization which was "more of an artificial graft on the body of traditional economy than a metamorphosis of the latter through its own innate compulsions"³.

The educational system in both, pre-independence and post-independence India, hence in keeping with the colonial policy, served the interests of the rulers alone. Such an educational system advocated the "trickle down" theory by which a small section of Indians involved in the smooth running of administration benefitted. Thus

2. Balaji Bhande, "Women's education" in social scientist, Vol. 13, No. 10-11, 1985, p-11.

3. Nirmala Banerjee, "Modernisation and Marginalisation" in social scientist - Vol.13, No.10-11, 1985, p.49

only 16 percent of the total population was literate by 1947. The number of educated women during the same period was practically negligible.

The reason for this is "that the demand for women's education arose as a concomitant of the social reform movement"⁴. The other important agents were the christian missionaries and the British government. All the three agents saw education "as a necessary condition for raising the status of women in society, for improving the quality of family life as also for strengthening the bonds of tradition and the family as the chief unit of social organisation"⁵. It was felt that "denial of education and early marriage prevented the development of the personality and rationality of women, stunted and crippled personality, affected

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4. Karuna Chanana Ahmad, - "The social context of women's education in India - 1921-81, Tentative formulations in New frontiers in education. Vol.15, No.3, 1985,p.4
 5. Usha Nayar, "Cultural roots of oppression - patterns of women's education in India" in Susheela (ed), Women's oppression - patterns and perspectives Shakti books, 1985, p.54.

the harmony of the family atmosphere weakening the bonds of the family"⁶. The well being of the family being predominant, women's education in India naturally made slow progress.

The first wave of the women's movement which was initiated by social reformers concentrated on the elimination of social evils such as ~~abolition of~~ sati (1829), child marriage, polygamy and dowry while at the same time concentrating on women's education. Many institutions for girls came to be established due to individual and institutional efforts". As Arya Samaj, Dev Samaj, Sanathan Dharam Sabha, the Khalsa Divan, Rama Krishna Mission and a host of other religious organisations funded female education and created an atmosphere favourable for education of girls, the fear of conversion gradually receded. It should be reiterated that "the majority of the reformers, wanted to improve the position of women within the family as wives and mothers, not to expand their role in society They were of the view that

6. Susheela Kaushik (ed) - Women's oppression - patterns and perspectives . Shakti books, 1985.p.54

improving women's capacity to fulfil their familial roles would strengthen their influence on their sons and daughters and help perpetuate the authority of the traditional family and its values"⁷, since women were far better carriers of these values". Educating a girl thus meant educating an entire family. Swami Vivekananda too wanted Indian women to grow and develop in the foot prints of Sita - the ever patient, pure and faithful sufferer who never returned injury. He says "it is only in the homes of educated and pious mothers the great men are born"⁸. He also adds "Even after marriage and entering the world, the girls, educated ----- will inspire their husbands with noble ideals and to be the mothers of heroic sons"⁹.

Such unflagging campaigning of leaders in course of time brought forth women like Swarna Kumari, Sarla Devi Choudrani, Pandita Ramabai Ranade, Rukmabai, Laxmi Chandraverkar, Shantibai Randiker. Anandibai Joshi, Francina and Cornelia Sorabjee, Annie Besant and Kashibai Naurange who dedicated their lives to the

[7]. Vina Mazumdar, "whither the women's movement in India"? in Indian and Foreign Review Vol.14, No.3, 1976, p-21

8. Swami Vivekananda, Our women, Calcutta, Advaita Ashram 1982, p.24.

9. Ibid. p.31.

upliftment of women. "These women leaders continued in the tradition of the reform movement, skillfully using traditional symbols, religious feelings and rationalist arguments for propogating their cause and, set up educational institutes and homes for distressed and socially stigmatised women. Like their reformist male patrons, they too believed that the revitalisation of Hindu society required educated wives and enlightened mothers"¹⁰.

By the turn of the century women wanted to establish organizations which concentrated exclusively on women's problems and this was welcomed by the Indian National Congress. But it was Gandhijis' leadership that really "facilitated the rise and growth of women's movement in the country"¹¹. "He was not a feminist or a suffragist in the western sense"¹² but he advocated equality of

10. Nandita Gandhi - "The Emergence of Autonomous women's groups" in Smitu Kothari and H arsh Sethi, Lokayan Bulletin 4:6 1986, p.85.

11. Radhakrishna Sharma, "Nationalism, social reform and Indian women" Janaki Prakasan, 1981, p.51.

12. Ibid.p.51.

sexes and saw women and men as performing complementary roles in society. In the nationalist movement of the early twentieth century, he devised a programme for women "in a way that they could remain at home and still contribute to the movement"¹³. He redefined women's roles by raising degraded feminine qualities into virtues and looked at them as the very embodiment of non-violence and sacrifice. Thus he made it possible for women to participate in the national struggle. "He made the vital shift from the reformist tradition which saw women as objects to projecting them as agents of transformation their own and the nations"¹⁴. As a result of his efforts women participated in large numbers in the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements. It should however be noted that the leaders of such women's movements were often from upper middle class having a liberal outlook. We thus have women like Sarojini Naidu, Abala Bose, Hansa Mehta and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay who led the women's movement in early twentieth century. Many other women like Bina Das, Kalpana Dutt and Sushila Devi took to

13. Madhu Krishnan - "Gandhi on Women", Economic and Political Weekly, Bombay, Oct.5&12 1985, p.1695.

14. ~~G~~andhi - n.12, p.86.

took to terrorism with the hope of liberating their motherland.

Before 1917 many organizations such as the Ladies Association (1886) Sharda Sadan (1892), Seva Sadan (1909) and Bharat Stri Mandal (1910) were established but they were all regional in character. The Women's India Association (1917) established by Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Margaret E. Cousins and Dr. Annie Besant was the first organization whose aim to be All India in scope, to band together all categories of Indian women for mutual service and welfare of the country. Subsequently in 1927 the All India Women's Conference was established under the initiative of Margaret E. Cousins. This was the beginning of a coordinated homogenous all India womanhood having its own ideology and programme. The organization initially started as a forum for educational reforms and gradually widened its scope to include all areas of women, children and humanity at large.

Despite the efforts of social reformers, christian missionaries, and the consequent awakening of consciousness among women, their education appeared "to have been an auxillary development of education of men and the rise

of colonial bureaucracies. The development of ~~education~~ western education which was purely academic in character had the limited specific purpose of filling up lower and middle rungs of administration by men of the colonized societies. Women were not even remotely considered for these posts; in any case, women of the upper socio-economic strata (from where men entered modern education) were still home-bound"¹⁵.

"Education had become a transferred subject under the Montague ~~Chelmsford~~ reforms in 1919. Thereafter "dyarchy" was introduced in 1921 and education came under dual charge"¹⁶ by this time the Indian activists and the British government lent open support to women's education. A number of commissions such as the Sadler Commission (1916), Montford report (1921) and Hartog Committee (1929) stressed on the need of female education, in the creation of a modern nation. The Hartog Committee argued that "the education of women especially in the higher stages will make available to the country a wealth

15. Kaushik, n.6, p.54.

16. Ahmad, n.+, p.2.

of capacity that is now largely wasted through lack of opportunity. It is only through education that Indian women will be able to contribute in increasing measure to the culture, the ideals and activities of the country."¹⁷....

Between 1921-22 and 1939-40 there was a definite increase in the number of institutions of girls but by 1946-47 there was a decline in their number.

TABLE - I

Number of Institutions for girls(All types)	
Year	Number of institutions
1921-22	23,517
1926-27	27,756
1931-32	33,969
1936-37	33,989
1939-40	34,564
1946-47	28,196

Source: Quoted from Karuna Ahmad, "The social context of women's education in India, 1921-81: Tentative formulations" in ^{New} ~~west~~ Frontiers in education," Vol.XV, No.3, July-September 1985.p-7

17. Hartog Committee Report (1929) Quoted in the Report of the All India Women's Education Fund, 1920,p-11.

During the same period the number of girls and boys enrolled in institutions also rose steadily as can be seen from the table.

TABLE - 2

Number of pupils by sex in all institutions

Year	Boys	Girls
1922	69,62,928	14,24,422
1927	93,15,144	18,42,352
1932	1,02,73,888	34,92,649
1937	1,10,07,683	31,38,357
1942	1,22,66,311	37,26,876
1947	1,39,48,979	42,97,785

Source: Quoted from Karuna Ahmad, - "The social context of women's education in India, 1921-81: Tentative Formulations" in New Frontiers in education, Vol.XV, No.3, July-September 1985, p.7.

Taking tables 1&2 together we observe that despite the decline in educational institutions for girls, their enrolment increased steadily. Possibly single sexed schools were replaced with co-educational institutes specially at the primary and higher levels of education. "This is confirmed by figures on enrolment in co-educational

institutions rose steadily rising from 35 percent in 1921-22 to 54.6 percent in 1946-47"¹⁸. At the secondary level the number of girls studying in girls' schools was higher. So was the case in special, vocational and technical institutions. It is also to be noted that inspite of the increase in women's education, the gap between the two sexes was unbridgeable at all levels. "For every 100 boys in 1946-47 there were only 36 girls in primary schools, 22 in middle schools, and 14 in high schools, 7 in colleges of professional education and 12 in the colleges of general education. On an average there were 30 girls per 100 boys in all educational institutions"¹⁹.

Women's education was further confined to urban areas only and rural areas were badly neglected. This was because of the government's policy to rely on private efforts. Thus nearly 50 percent of the girls' schools were private institutions at the dawn of India's independence. There was also no suitable machinery to deal

18. Quoted from PEI, 1937-47, Vol.2, p.361 in Ahmad n.4 p.7

19. Quoted from India 1959, p-28 in n-4,p.8

with the problem of women's education. Lastly lack of funds was the greatest stumbling block in furthering the cause of women's education. Thus inspite of the several gains which included women's heightened consciousness it has to be admitted that the progress in the field of women's education was inadequate and imbalanced.

With the attainment of Independence "Equality of sexes" has been incorporated as a constitutional provision under Articles 14, 15 and 16. Articles 38, 39 and 42 of the Directive Principles of state policy also aim at social justice. The Indian constitution has thus heralded a social revolution by guaranteing social and political equality for women in free India. "The cautious policy of the British government was replaced by one of positive and assertive position vis-a -vis women's education"²⁰. The major issues confronting women's education at the dawn of independence to quote Neera Desai and Vibhuti Patel²¹ were :-

(1) Women's illiteracy (2) widening gap between boys and girls education (3) regional imbalances (4) women's enrolment in limited faculties of higher education. It

20. Ahmed, n.4,p-8

21. Neera Desai and Vibhuti Patel, Indian Women - Changing Realities, Popular Prakasam 1985, p.26.

would be no exaggeration to say that the India is confronted with the same issues even after 41 years of independence.

Taking each of these issues separately, we find that in 1951 when the country launched its first five year plan for National Development, the literacy rate of women stood at 7.93 percent while among men it was 24.95 percent. It was 18.69 percent in 1971 and 24.88 percent in 1981.

Literacy rate of boys and girls for the period 1951-81.

TABLE - 3

Year	% of total population	% of males	% of females
1951	16.67	24.95	7.93
1961	24.02	34.44	12.95
1971	29.45	39.45	18.69
1981	36.17	46.74	24.88

Source:- Provision population totals - Paper I of 1981 census.

The gap between rural and urban female literacy is extremely high. The 1981 census reveals that female literacy in rural areas was 17.96 percent compared to 47.82 percent

in the urban areas. The number of female illiterates has been increasing steadily from 185.2 million in 1961 to 241.6 million in 1981. This means that nearly 75 percent of the total female population of India is illiterate.

The enrolment figures for the two sexes also indicate a wide gulf. "Over 55 percent girls at primary level, more than 75 percent at the middle level and more than 85 percent at the secondary level are out of schools. The corresponding figures for boys are 20 percent at primary, 57 percent at middle and 71 percent at the secondary level"²². Renewed efforts have been made to retain and enrol an increased number of girls in schools. By the end of the sixth plan i.e. 85-86 363 lakh girls were enrolled as compared to 528 lakh boys for the same period. In the field of higher education women's enrolment to total enrolment has considerably improved specially in commerce, science and education. The table given below indicates the sex ratio (number of women per thousand men) of faculty wise enrolment during the decade 1971-81.

22. Pande, n.2, p.16.

TABLE - 4.

Sex ratio of faculty wise enrolment

Year	Arts	Science	Com.	Edu.	Eng/Tech	Medi	Agri	Vet Sc.	Law
1971-72	502	250	37	605	11	284	10	9	56
1981-82	619	401	200	934	47	354	36	45	75

Source: Quoted from Karuna Ahmad, "The social context of women's education in India , 1921-81: Tentative formulations," in New Frontiers in education, "Vol.XV, No.3, July-September 1985 .

Regional imbalances existing in pre-independence

India continue to exist in the post-independence period also. The Deshmukh Committee report, Report of the Committee on the status of women, and the recent new education policy have all pointed to regional imbalances as impeding factors in women's education. This uneven rate of progress is not only true between states but also "between different levels of education in the same state. According to 1981 census Rajasthan(11.31), Bihar (13.58), Madhya Pradesh (15.33), U.P. (14.42), and Arunachal

Pradesh (11.02) have maintained low performance at all levels while Chandigarh (59.30), Mizoram (52.57), Delhi (52.56) and Kerala (64.48) have a high level of female literacy. Other states such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have made rapid strides in primary and secondary education.

"If we were to take the percentage of enrolment in the relevant age group as an indicator, the gap between the boy's and girl's education in classes I-V is very wide in Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and U.P in 1977-78 and least in Kerala, Maghalaya, Manipur, Punjab. Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra are some of the states where it is not very wide (India 1981 : 186). At the secondary stage, Kerala and Delhi have the least gap. The maximum percentage of girls in the relevant age group (25.3 per cent) going to college (general education) in Chandigarh and Delhi is second (15.7) in this respect. In Delhi, the proportion of girls who are going to these colleges is higher than boys (14.6). Thus what strikes one is the continuity in the regional variation and the differentiation by level or stages of education".²³ One thus sees regional variation in educational expansion of women.

23. Ahmad, n.4, p.12.

The plea for differentiated curricula was made by numerous commissions in pre-independence India on grounds of expediency. The view was that a differentiated curriculum should be introduced in order to suit women's physiological and psychological make up which is different from that of men. Mayhew, Chiplunkar, Siqueira²⁴ and other including the All Indian Women Conference also argued for separate curriculum for both sexes. Indianization of education necessitated the view that girls were to be efficient house-wives and hence learn feminine subjects such as Hygiene, domestic science, music, needle work and home science while physics, chemistry and maths become masculine subjects. The majority opinion thus, favoured the representation of women in their traditional roles in conformity with the past. The subsequent committees such as the National Committee on Women's Education (1959), Committee on the differentiation of curricula for boys and girls (1964) and Education Commission (1964-66) continued to hold this line of argument. "The Report of the Committee on the status of women, 1975 is the first official report to question some of the assumptions underlying the debate on

24. Ahmad Karuna, n.4, p.20.

the need for differentiation of curricula for boys and girls. This committee briefly sums up the historical back-ground on this issue in the following words:

"These arguments received official support and became a part of the government's policy towards women's education. Starting with the Hunter Commission of 1882, most government committees on education accepted the validity of these arguments. This position remained even after independence and resulted in certain subjects being regarded as specially suitable for girls. Home /domestic science, needle work and fine-arts thus came to be regarded as exclusively girl's subjects in schools. Mathematics and science on the other hand, were regarded as too difficult and unnecessary for girls and were, therefore, kept optional. Consequently, a majority of girls' schools did not provide the facilities for teaching of science and mathematics".²⁵

This committee recommended common courses till class ten, differences in curricula in the secondary stage coupled with work-experience which would be meaningful to both sexes at the university stage. The homescience courses it said; "should be revised to meet the general as well as

the vocational needs of boys and girls. It also argued in favour of encouraging girls to take up science and mathematics".²⁶

However, the faculties of humanities, medicine and education are still preferred by women. Females outnumber males in teacher training institutes especially in the primary levels but higher education is dominated by male teachers. Again fine arts are dominated by girls as compared to boys. One can conclude that the "education of women is, in general, status quoist and does not equip them for anything but primary teaching or low level white-collar work".²⁷

Sex bias in school-curricula further reinforces the male-female dichotomy. N.N. Kalia in his "Sexism in Indian education: The lies we tell our children" undertook a research on the NCERT and CBSE text books and concluded that the biographics portray women in a very poor light. Even if women's achievements are noted they are appreciated not for their intrinsic worth but because they acted like men. Sex stereotyped role of parents, husband wife relations, control of female obedience, house-hold decisions and ma-

26. Ahmad, n.4, p.23.

27. Nayar, n.5, p.59.

rital arrangements were all in confirmity with the existing status quoist social structure. The educational structure thus provided a fertile ground for the subjugation of women through different strategies such as gender based educational system. This observation is important as it throws light on the effect of such education on women's social autonomy.

This brings us to the effect of education on women's emancipation. Gender structures women's education and this offers both, opportunities and limitations for the women's movement. Women are marginalized in education and exploited to keep the traditional dichotomy between domestic work and labour. This dichotomy is strictly maintained in a developing country like India which bears the burden of nearly three fourths of its women population being illiterate. Education for women is necessary to develop "critical consciousness", "to act and think freely in a broader perspective, share and contribute in the stupendous task of the progress of the nation. Education of womenfolk can work as a two edged weapon which can push women forward towards the betterment of the nation and society and at the same time it can help eradicate social evils like dowry and satisystem".²⁸ Awakening thus has to come from women and through education.

28. Mohinder Kumar Dhingra, "Let them beware of their rights", Yojana Vol.32, No.9, 1988, p.36.

It is no surprise then, that women's organizations of all ideological overtones have clamoured for free and fair education for women. The period 1950's - 1960's saw a temporary lull in the women's movement since this generation had no links with the national movement and was extremely disillusioned with the state of the economy and politicians in the country. Education had helped a number of urban upper and middle class women to come in contact with a wide set of ideas from Paulo Freire, Mao Tse Tung, Ram Manohar Lohia, to Jaya Prakash Narayan. Small women groups disillusioned with political parties wanted to have alternative methods of organisation as "they began relief, developmental, educational and organisational work at grass roots".²⁹ "This latent base of consciousness was then, shaped by other influences like the western women's movement, the declaration of the International Women's decade, the report on the status of women, the mathura rape case, among other factors".³⁰

We are also aware of the fact that "there is a tendency to observe and describe realities in terms of concepts and theories shaped in the context of western experiences and to pass over the distinctive features of

29. Gandhi, n.12, p.87.

30. Gail Omvedt, n.1, p.39.

non-western cultures".³¹ This has grossly distorted the multi-cultural realities of a country like India. We recognize the academicians -activists divide in India, which has contributed to the glossing over of the unique socio-cultural features and hence we proceed to distinguish Indian women from their western counterparts along the following lines:-

- (1) Indian women in general express disapproval over western feminists anger.
- (2) Indian women have confused reaction to men as principal oppressors and the notion of patriarchy.
- (3) Indian women have relative inability to control their lives compared to their western counter-parts.

Whereas the western feminists had to fight for their rights at every stage Indian women got many of their rights without much struggle. The Indian society is also thoroughly hierarchical, in terms of age, sex, kinship relations and caste and such a structure has been maintained through customs such as reverence to elders and the latter's obligations towards juniors (operating mainly through the joint-family), the philosophy of self-denial and the sublimation of ego. The concept of "mother goddess" also glorifies the concept of womanhood and all that is pure.

31. Suma Chitnis - "Feminism in India", in Journal of Canadian woman studies, Vol.no.6, No.1, A York university project.

With the advent of western education the desire for social reform and political liberation provided a fresh impetus to the cause of women as we have noted earlier. Independent India by granting "Equality of sexes" and enacting a number of legislations solved the problem of equality and freedom in principle atleast. Naturally, Indian women are unable to empathise with the western feminists' anger . Their reaction to feminism is that of an alien struggle.

Patriarchy being only one among the several hierarchies, the consciousness of Indian women is not offended. It does not even operate the same way as it operates in other cultural contexts since the "typical patriarch" is not a formidable oppressor. He too is bound by certain rules and regulations governing the society and thus abides by the decisions of his caste and age superiors. This may include even females. "One cannot help feeling that the concept of patriarchy is overly universalized in current feminism".³²

Last but not the least, for a vast number of Indian women the divide between sorrow and oppression is thin. The major problems confronting Indian society such as

32. Ibid. p.46.

poverty, illiteracy and illhealth affect women directly and the inability to control their own lives thus becomes pronounced.

Since the ethical and socio-cultural context of feminism is different and unique to India, a framework of theory and action specific to this country has to be evolved. This does not mean that one should ignore the western influences on the women's movement which have provided the Indian society with deep insights. These influences interact with the Indian social structure simultaneously producing complementary and contradictory patterns of change.

The dominant influences on the Indian Women's movement happen to be that of Simone De Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Ann Oakley and Germaine Grer. Their ideologies have been reflected in the AIWC, Kalyani, Nari Raksha Samiti, Karmika Mahila Dakshata Samiti, self employed women's association, and young women's christian association.³³ True to the liberal ideology these women's organisations are reformative in spirit. They do not challenge oppression of women but "render legal advice, counselling in family disputes

33. The ideological orientations of the various women's organisations have been derived from their respective brochures.

and hold meetings in educational institutions and different colonies of the city to 'create awareness against social evils and for women's own rights'.³⁴

Radical feminists like Shulamith Frystone, and Kate Millet who hold patriarchy to be the problem have also influenced women's movement in India. We thus have "Saheli" which is not anti-men since it accepts their support, but it does not allow men to be members of the organisation. It also talks of two classes that of men and women but in recent time this organisation has shifted towards a Marxist feminist position demanding socialization of private property. Finally we have the All India Democratic Women's Association, National Federation of Indian Women and Stree Shakti Sangathan who have been influenced by Juliet Mitchell, Sheila Rowbotham and others who hold that the capitalist system is the root cause of women's oppression. These Marxist feminist organisations in India aim at the emancipation of women from casteism, untouchability, religious orthodoxy and positively propogate democratic ideas, socialism and secularism among women. They express their solidarity with the working class, trade unions, peasants, students and masses struggling for their

34. Brochure of Karmika.

rights.

Apart from these, Neera Desai and Vibhuti Patel have listed a few other organizations. They include:

1. Agitational propoganda and consciousness raising groups, also termed as Autonomous Women groups. They do not have any political backing though the members have their own beliefs. They have an important role in bringing about social transformation among women through exchange of ideas, shared experiences audio-visual films, camps and workshops.
2. Groups concentrating on providing shelter and services to needy women.
3. Groups of professional women who concentrate on issues of promotion, harrasment by colleagues and bosses, wage discrimination etc.
4. Groups involved in research and documentation on women's issues. Both, academicians and activists belong to this group.

One should however note that inspite of the identification of issues and the increase in women's organizations, the Indian Women's movement in recent times has a lot of unevenness in the extent of activities, programmes, strength of leadership, societal response and level

of consciousness in various parts of the country. This is due to the fact that India possesses a complicated social structure fraught with cultural variations, lopsided economic development and social orthodoxy, as mentioned earlier.

It remains to be seen whether the various women's organizations in the country can encourage a scientific temper among the women of this country. The members of women's organisations must ensure that the voiceless are allowed to speak for themselves in their own idiom. Since women of these organizations are often educated and cosmopolitan they tend to control the top end of a clearly hierarchical structure. This takes us back to the question of education for women. Education should aim not at the limited empowerment of women (as it exists now) but must enlarge its scope and reach the rural voiceless and faceless women who need to speak for themselves. Thus women's movement has a long way to go in the Indian context.

To sum up we have discussed how the educational strategies for women have been designed to conceal the patriarchal and elitist value systems. We have seen that education is by no means a class-neutral concept. The various women's organizations have tried to expose the

deficiencies of the present educational system apart from attacking issues that perpetuate women's oppression. In doing so they have been able to identify issues perpetuating women's oppression but have failed to redefine their own functioning. They have themselves fallen victims to the elitist bias which has been perpetuated by the wider social structure. Thus, "trying to form a picture of the women's movement today is much like looking through a kaleidoscope, with its many rapidly shifting patterns, where every mobile, colourful fragment is a significant part of the whole".³⁵ Fragmentation at this juncture should be discarded in the interest of the larger process of change. Feminism today needs to be redefined in the broadest possible terms to include all ranges of beliefs and organisations in the Indian context. This necessitates a healthy education system which will reach one and all.

35. Rajni Bakshi - "On the women's movement" in Smitu Kothari and Harsh Sethi (ed) Lokayan Bulletin, 4:6 1986, p.9.

CHAPTER - IV

TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE PARADIGM

Fritjof Capra in his "Tao of physics" quotes Werner Heisenberg who remarks "It is probably true, quite generally that in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet. These lines may have their roots in quite different parts of human culture, in different religious traditions, hence if they actually meet, that is if they are atleast so much related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow".¹

It is with this hope, that we propose to move beyond the fragments of the theoretical perspectives enunciated in the first chapter and explore possibilities for an alternative paradigm. We shall then aim to look at the educational system from this perspective.

While there are certain feminist writers like Lise Vogel, Michelle Barrett and the proponents of "domestic labour debate" who argue that an alternative perspective

1. Fritjof Capra , The Tao of physics, flamingo edition, 1975, p.1.

can emerge by expanding the scope of traditional marxism to include the issue of gender (called marxist feminism), there are others like Alison Jaggar, and Veronica Beechey who feel that a fresh insight combining materialist and historical explanations, class and sex concepts has to be evolved (called socialist feminism).

We shall not enter into the debate of naming this alternative perspective, nor shall we discuss whether this alternative view should be an extension of traditional marxism or adhere to socialist feminism. We contend that, in the final analysis it is the addressing of traditional marxist analysis to issues raised by radical feminism which really matters. We also argue that the growing sophistication within the "domestic labour debate" and issues raised by socialist feminism has blurred this dichotomy and^a fruitful alternative may emerge by synthesizing the best insights of both.

The marxist feminists set out with the idea of constructing a unitary theory of women's oppression and in doing so broaden the scope of traditional marxism to include the concept of "social reproduction". Out of this shared concern came the "domestic labour debate". Before we enter into this debate it will be interesting to note

the advances which marxist feminists have made over traditional marxism.

They contend that "whereas orthodox marxist theory had confined itself to an analysis of productive activity and production relations, the task of feminists would now be to enlarge these concepts to include reproductive activities and relations of reproduction"². Thus the same subject-object model which is used to explain the production process is also used by marxists to explain a highly intersubjective reproduction process thus narrowing it down under the model of work. While marxists are aware of the production-reproduction dichotomy as a historical process at one level yet at other instances they universally generalize this very dichotomy as a cross cultural phenomenon. The marxists recognize the historical and contingent nature of capitalist mode of production which "defamilized" the economy and historically "institutionalised a universalised system of exchange in the production and consumption of all goods including labour power itself"³. They also recognize that the family which was closely interlinked to the production

2. Seyla Benhabib, Drucilla Cornell (ed) Feminism as critique, Polity press, 1987, p.2

3. Ibid, p.4

process became increasingly a unit of consumption but their cross cultural generalisations of historical materialism contradict their socio-historical approach. Production as distinct from reproduction is falsely universalised across the societies thus obscuring the fact that what we today call reproductive activities (such as childbearing and rearing) were productive in pre-capitalist societies. Issues of class and gender were thus inseparable in such societies. This then, is the main reason for the marxists' preclusion of traditional female activities like house-work. In order to rectify this mistake marxistefeminists appeal to orthodox marxists to eliminate the cross-cultural approach and instead, follow the historical analysis more consistently. This would automatically bring gender relations into focus. The category of "production" would then, have to be augmented with the category of reproduction as Mary O'Brien says.

The dual systems approach advocated by the marxists i.e (the separation of productive and reproductive spheres) is useful to capitalist societies alone. The social divisions expressed by these categories need not have played the same significant role in structuring gender in earlier societies, but care should be

taken to grasp the categories in a historically changing manner. Gender may have been structured by kinship relations in pre-capitalist societies , but is now structured by the economy . The marxist feminists, have then, tried to focus on the differential power relations within kinship to explain the relation between sexes . They extend this analysis to the family, economy and finally the state which has emerged as a distinct sphere of the operation of power relations in modern times which necessitates the separation of the productive-reproductive activities. The paradigm of production is hence, modified and adopted with considerable improvements by marxist-feminists.

Women are constituted by the social relations they inhabit. It is the social relations governing society which determine the particular activity women perform. Women become abstractions outside these relations. Under capitalism since economy governs social relations, separation between the domestic and labour fronts becomes necessary. In trying to formulate an adequate theory of why women are assigned domestic labour tasks across various modes of production the marxist feminists here have developed the famous "domestic labour debate ".

Women's oppression needs to be studied with the help of a theory, its assumption being that family was the site of women's oppression especially household work. Under Capitalism women's oppression was provided with a structural context in which the personal lives of women were lived. Patriarchy as a concept emerged late in this debate and was incorporated by marxist feminists gradually. We shall not go into the argument of whether domestic labour is value-producing and instead concentrate on the attempts by marxist feminists at evolving a coherent sex conscious and class-conscious theory.

Digressing a little from the main analysis of domestic labour debate which considers family to be the site of women's oppression, one should note that in a pluralistic society like India, it is not the family alone which contributes to the oppression of women. Being a member of a particular caste, ethnic or even age group is equally important in determining the nature and extent of oppression. Hence it would be more appropriate to explore the nature of women's oppression along social, economic and political lines also.

Coming to the "domestic labour debate" Engels in his - "The Origin of the family, private property and the state" has distinguished between two kinds of social production. (1) production of the means of subsistence (2) production of human beings themselves . It is here that we are confronted with the question of the extent to which women occupy a specific role in the reproduction of the forces and relations of production.

The marxist-feminists attempted to answer this by attempting to specify the relation of domestic labour to wage labour for working class households under Capitalism. The other question which was raised was the continued performance of domestic labour by women who had entered the labour market.

Wally Seccombe argues that domestic labour helps reproduce daily and generational reproduction of labour power. Such a division of labour, says Seccombe, existed even in pre-capitalist societies but it was the capitalist mode of production which disrupted this traditional balance. The survival of capitalism depended on the subjugation of the private sphere and consequently

the suppression of women. Even though women perform the domestic chores in the capitalist society they enter the lower rungs of the labour market and thus enter the "double-shift" phenomenon. Seccombe puts forward the labour-supply thesis which justifies men's role as bread-winners and women's role as home-makers which is also the reason for the latter's economic vulnerability and subsequent lack of bargaining power within marriage (the primary site). This creates an effect on the labour market (secondary site) in terms of wage differentials and occupation of marginalized jobs.

At the work site the employer-demand model in turn posits that discrimination is profitable in the work place, since the employer aims at undercutting costs while increasing labour-productivity thereby increasing the profit. Sex-segregation, hiring and promotion policies all help in cutting costs.

Seccombe thus puts forward a theory of domestic patriarchy which explains "why the labour force participation of wives is subordinated to their husbands disrupting their employment careers and weakening

their bargaining power in the labour market."⁴ What he suggests as a solution is to "integrate the analysis of private households with capitalist production, paid and unpaid labour, the discourse of kinship and political economy"⁵.

Bruce Curtis defends Seccombe and points out that by fitting women's oppression into Marxist conceptual categories, of viewing capitalism as a system of production, the how and why of women's work at the home front was neglected. Seccombe's arguments, Curtis feels, adequately encompass issues of women's oppression and the interrelationship between the two sexes.

Angela Miles, a radical feminist herself disagrees with the class and general analysis of Marxism since they boiled down to crude economism. The only valuable contribution Marxism makes is to locate women's oppression

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4. Wally seccombe, "Patriarchy stabilized; the construction of the male bread earner wage norm in nineteenth century Britain" Social History, Vol. No.1, 1986.
 5. Wally seccombe - " Reflection of the domestic labour debate," in Roberta Hamilton, Michelle Barrett (ed.) The Politics of Diversity, verso books, 1987, p-194.

in a historical context but even here it ignores the very cause of women's oppression by generalizing across history. In her words - "To illustrate that women's oppression takes specific forms under capitalism is not to prove that it is derivative"⁶.

Roberta Hamilton also criticises Seccombe for imposing marxist categories on to domestic labour without recognizing the importance of women's lives and their experiential realities.

Patricia Cornelly and Michelle Barrett⁷

argue with the marxist feminists that sexual division of labour must be studied in a historical framework rather than as a theoretical pre-requisite of capitalism. They unlike Seccombe thus do not consider sexual division of labour as necessary for capitalism to emerge. Since there are recreations of forms of family and division

6. Angela Miles, "Never done! The struggle fo understand Domestic Labour and Women's oppression" in Roberta Hamilton and Michele Barrett - The Politics of diversity, Verso book. 1986.

7. For an argument of Patricia Cornelly and Michelle Barrett see "On Marxism and Feminism" in Roberta Hamilton and Michelle Barrett (ed) The Politics of diversity, Verso books 1986.

of labour in different historical periods. the capitalist mode of production adapted sexual division of labour to further its purpose. This necessitated women's subjugation. Both argue that if the necessity of women's subjugation is accepted and their possible exclusion from wage labour one falls into the trap of accepting functionalist, reductionist and biological arguments, that the outcome was inevitable. Gender predates capitalism and hence a historical approach emphasizing struggle and contradiction in shaping sex-differences under capitalism have to be evolved. So a distinction between the underlying economic structures and the "concrete and historically specific social formations" are necessary according to them. Such an approach in their opinion permits the analysis of social formations conditioned by class and gender structures in other modes of production as well. There are many other aspects of women's oppression in their view besides wage labour and these cannot be squeezed into pre-defined categories, ^{and} for which new concepts have to be evolved. Though both recognised the need for a progressive union between feminist issues and marxism they too have ironically extended class analysis to include the concept of gender without challenging the primacy of production.

Perhaps the best framework developed so far has been put forward by Pat and Hugh Armstrong who review marxist theory to include biological reproduction. They argue that sex divisions should be considered at all levels of analysis. Their efforts are concentrated on developing an analysis of class that recognises sex based cleavages as well as an analysis of biology grounded in materialistic, dialectical and historical contexts.

One can at once discern that the Armstrongs seek to work along marxian lines though they seek to go beyond marx's economic determinism. They adopt a materialistic approach in that, they acknowledge the existence of a materialistic world which conditions but does not determine the socio-political and intellectual processes in general. At the same time they go beyond the marxian framework which concentrates on capitalist mode of production and instead analyse the reproduction of labour power in the domestic sphere. Women's oppression and subordination predates capitalism and it is only under capitalism, has it assumed special forms such as the distinction of wage labour from domestic labour. They thus locate women's subordination in a social context. They also recognise that social processes and social relations are always dialectical and armed with this insight explore the class-sex nexus. Class covers subsistence and production units and women across classes do not share the same form of oppression. Women's biological

position, the Armstrongs argue is not the sole cause but it is crucial for women's relegation under capitalism as it stresses on production unit accompanied by commodity fetishism. They have thus attempted to see the ideology of gender as grounded in the material basis by linking economic structure and dominant ideology of social formation, in this case, capitalism and patriarchy.

The Armstrongs have indeed avoided the crude economic determinism of traditional marxists and have also made an advance over the marxist feminists such as Secombe who regard sexual division of labour as a precondition of capitalism and have thus tried to fit the notion of gender into pre-determined categories of class analysis. By pursuing the historical materialist and dialectical approach the Armstrongs have pointed out that the 'domestic labour debate' is an example of how the methodological tools of marxism can be applied to analyse women's position under capitalism without regressing into functionalism or determinism.

As pointed out earlier there is another set of feminists who view the alternative paradigm, not as emanating as an appendage of marxism but as requiring a fresh approach which they call socialist feminism. They

argue that "a correct analysis of the subordination of women cannot be provided by marxists unless marxism itself is transformed"⁸.

Socialist feminism emerged in the 1970's and aimed at avoiding the pitfalls of liberal, marxists and radical feminists. This approach is still in its infancy and mainly derives its strength by exposing the theoretical inadequacies of the other approaches. It accepts marxist conception of human nature as historically constructed while at the same time rejecting the notion that the only important form of labour for understanding women's oppression is wage labour. The definition of 'labour' has to be expanded, in its opinion, to include physical reproduction of species and domestic maintenance of the family. The material base has not only to include economy but also the family, media, education, politics and the like.

Sexual division of labour existing in capitalism is not just between procreation and production but also within production and within procreation. It seeks to explore the concept of patriarchy as it operates both within and outside the capitalist system"⁹.

8. Veronica Beechey, quoted by Annette Kuhn and Marie Ann Marie Wolpe Feminism and Materialism, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p.8.

9. Olive Banks, Faces of Feminism, Martin Robertson and Co. Ltd., Oxford, 1981, p.245.

Socialist feminism views human nature as only partially biologically determined since it is also subject to change due to conscious cooperative productive activities. Not only do human species transform themselves according to historical circumstances, but so does the production of sexuality and other goods and services. It states that human productive activity is organised around sexual division of labour which in turn helps in determining the historically prevailing constitution of human nature. Socialist feminism thus recognises the importance of the historical and materialist view points. As Iris young remarks "Given that its methodological commitment is basically marxist it seeks this understanding through an examination of what it calls a sexual division of labour"¹⁰. In doing so it rejects the abstract view of rationality of liberal feminists, sex-blindness of marxistfeminists and the ahistorical approach of radical feminists.

It is pertinent to point out that the increasing sophistication of the marxist feminists' view point as reflected in the domestic labour debate and the call for socialist feminism as an alternative approach are by no means antithetical to each other. In fact there are

10. Iris Young in Alison Jaggar, Feminist politics and human nature, The Harvester Press, Sussex, 1983.

many feminists who do not even distinguish between the two approaches. However, both recognise the need for expanding the premises on which marxism is based while at the same time addressing themselves to the task of asking feminist questions. They also have^{as} their goal, the full participation of women in social life by taking conscious control of the changes in social relations.

We shall now proceed to view the educational system from this perspective. Most of the earlier sociologists have viewed the education system in relation to class relation alone and this is positively flawed since the school or the educational system mediates between ascriptive factors of social class and gender in arriving at one's "life-chances". This point has already been discussed at length in the second chapter. We also argued that none of the earlier writings offered an analysis of the role of the education in the evolution of a sharply sex-segregated society.

This has led to an unsatisfactory explanation of the processes involved. The alternative approach we have offered above, attempts to rectify this mistake by describing and analysing the processes and elements in the educational system that have contributed to the creation of gender based inequalities under both pre-capitalist and capitalist societies. We also argued that in pre-capitalist societies, education being informal and

very much confined to the family, was indeed gender based but this was because of the fact that such an education system equipped children with the necessary skills for the smooth transition to adult roles in society. There was no formal calculating gender based education as we find in present day capitalist society. The alternative view also studies the ways in which schools in capitalistic society contribute independently to the perpetuation of a "male bourgeois" dominated world-view.

As we have noted earlier, with advent of industrial revolution and capitalist mode of production, the economic basis of parental authority started waning. The family has been supplemented with a host of specialised agencies such as the school, government and industries. Since the rationale of the pre-capitalist societies was not based on explicit profit making through improved production their tasks were mainly consumption oriented. The family retained the function of socialising children equipping them with the basic skills required for the perpetuation of the next generation. Such a function was gendered, in the sense that children of both sexes learnt appropriate roles to ensure smooth functioning of the society. Such an imparting of education i.e sexual

division of labour was dominated and governed by the dictates of the kinship. Under the capitalist mode of production there was the need for a work force with basic education and schools function to serve the narrow requirements of capitalist production and thus ~~were~~^{are} governed by the dictates of economy. Such a system however does not necessitate the need to alter fundamentally the division of labour between sexes as it served capitalist conditions excellently through the labour supply and employer demand model which we have discussed earlier.

Women ~~were~~ marginalised in both the educational process and the work force. Women ^{have} indeed occupied the lower rung jobs under capitalism as it benefitted the latter but a word of caution should be exercised here. Women's education is not merely to be seen as benefitting the capitalist economy alone but as also benefitting the patriarchal society. Women are systematically subordinated in the educational system not only to serve capitalists' interests but also men's interest. One should then try and conceptualize the end product of women's educational reproduction not only in class terms but also include the dimension of gender and this is what the alternative paradigm seeks to move towards. Women are

subject both, overtly and covertly to many competing ideologies. Some may pinpoint capitalist ideologies to be the reason for women's oppression while others view it as the patriarchal ideology. We opine that, alongwith the other factors of women's oppression, the notion of gender needs to be incorporated.

Thus Ann Marie Wolpe for instance argues that the sexual division of labour makes women generate the day-to-day labour power and the very task of reproducing the future generations of labour power. This division in the family is expanded to the wage market where women occupy secondary sectors of employment and also serve as the 'reserve army of labour' thereby undercutting costs.

The educational system 'functions' to satisfy the requirements of both i.e the domestic and the wage sector by subordinating women and super ordination of men. The production and the reproduction of the ideological structure is thus performed by the education system in a manner that embodies the dominant ideology (class and sex) in its organisation whether in terms of curriculum content, school organisation, teachers' attitudes or state policy reports.

Though Wolpe's argument suffers from a high degree of functionalism it rightly insists on the relations between the educational system and economic division of labour located within the ideological process of gender due to which a sex segregated labour-force emerges, serving the interests of both, the men, and the capitalist system. Wolpe has in her subsequent revisions eliminated the functionalist formulations by arguing that division of labour though a consequence of education (having relative autonomy) is a 'mediated' rather than a direct process.

Male dominated capitalist societies formulate state policies and find in the educational system a means of covert socialization to implement them. Schools then contribute to the social reproduction of both class and gender inequalities through sex and class typed courses, the large organizational structure, curriculum content and so on.

The alternative paradigm rejects notions which subsume the element of gender under class or alternatively of ^{the} element of class under gender.

Women have to be distinguished from men with relation to the class structure and yet the marxist

Kernel of the capitalist class structure analysis has to be retained with its emphasis on the historical, material and dialectical approach that the Armstrongs and socialist feminists talk of.

Education creates a work-force divided along class and gender lines and women have a dual relationship to the class structure. This may be direct as in the wage labour factor or indirect as in the domestic sector where she follows the dictates of the male bread-winner. The educational system must thus be explored with the help of alternative paradigm which does not see marxist feminism and radical feminism as opposed to each other but as complementary. This paradigm recognises intra-class and inter-class, intra-sex and inter-sex divisions and hence attempts at a fresh look at the educational system as we have seen earlier. It may go even further and take account of the complex Indian social reality by including dimensions of caste, ethnicity and age but that will be possible only after micro-studies have been undertaken. The implications for both the women's movements and the educational system are clear. Gender inequalities cannot be separated from class inequality and the solution to gender antagonism ^{is} are associated with class antagonism.

There is an urgent need to counteract barriers and threats to women's access to education and this can be possible only by taking such a holistic perspective. A word of caution has to be exercised here. It is not argued that the proposed paradigm is the most appropriate for analysing social reality since such a paradigm must answer questions such as racial, national and caste oppression. In fact, we are unable to suggest an alternative paradigm but only indicate the variables that should be taken into consideration while proposing it. Micro studies conducted along lines suggested above will lend fresh insights and add to the information generated by micro studies by scholars in women's studies. These may then lead towards an alternative paradigm. We do however hope that the present analysis is a step in the right direction and "only in this way will some of the seeming paradoxes that still obscure many aspects of feminism be resolved".¹¹

11. Olive Banks, n.9, p.263.

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