

Feminism

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Introduction

The debate on women's position in society became an important issue with the coming of the industrial society. With the introduction of machines and use of external power for production, physical strength ceased to be an issue in selecting labour. In fact the ability to concentrate on a simple task for a long period became most important in some industries. Fine adjustments and quality control became equally important. Many such changes in the working patterns, gave women ample opportunities to become workers. However this didn't automatically give them equal place in society. One of the most important was the issue of equal pay for equal work done. There was no logical answer to the question on lower payment given to women for identical work done. Agitations and struggles appeared in work places over this issue.

At the same time studies into anthropology raised the question of the nature of primitive human society. Many anthropologists claimed that their investigation indicated that early human society was matriarchal with women taking leadership in day to day management of the affairs of the community. They concluded that the male domination in society to be of recent origin. Humans emerged from pre-human existence as female dominated social beings, but with the development of tool-making, the situation changed and became members of a patriarchal society. Obviously this view was challenged by traditional, social, political and religious leaders at that time.

Demands of the working women combined with the ideology of matriarchal society, lead to the emergence of a feminine movement. At this stage, understandably, those who took the lead were feminist men who emerged from the contemporary socialist movement. However, the influence of the working class on the feminist movement was partially responsible for the loss of independence of that movement towards the turn of the century. Because, increasingly the socialist movement, considered itself to be the political movement, that stands for women's liberation. The ideology of matriarchal society was replaced by the idea of simple equality. It was claimed that the social emancipation of women, the guarantee of equal rights with men, the creation of conditions for their all round development is part and parcel of the socialist transformation.

After the Second World War, with the disillusionment of the Soviet experiment, discussions on the

fundamentals re-emerged. In particular, in many Western countries virtual equality was won within liberal reformist regimes. Women became political leaders and won the right to join armed forces, expeditions, and professions etc. as equal partners. However, the burden and pressure on women, the social insecurity, and the continued aggression on women both at home and work place led to a debate with a variety of views expressed by women's leaders on the aims and objectives of women's liberation. Finally socialism itself was placed within the context of feminism.

2. Ideology of a Matriarchal Society

The first grand lesson learned from evolution was that of the unity of life. Though one of the greatest ethical achievements of all religions was recognition in principle of the brother and sisterhood of men and women only few religions such as Buddhism, that carried this conclusion to a much higher level: not only are all humans brothers and sisters; all living things are brothers and sisters in the very real, material sense that all have arisen from one source and have been developed within the divergent intricacies of one process. Confirmation of the truth of evolution established this doctrine as a scientific fact (G. G. Simpson). Though human is part of the nature and he is kin to all life, it is almost certain that Homo-erectus, with its several variants, represents a stage ancestral to Homo Sapiens and it is virtually certain that chimpanzee and gorilla together are the closest living relatives of humans.

However, it is false to say that human is nothing but an animal or nothing but an ape with a few extra tricks (G.G. Simpson). Because human is an entirely new kind of animal in ways altogether fundamental for understanding of his nature. It is important to realize that human's place in nature and its supreme significance to human are not defined by his (her) animalism but by his (her) humanity. He (she) is a fundamentally a new sort of animal and one in which although organic evolution continues on its way a fundamentally new sort of evaluation has also appeared. The basis of this new sort of evaluation is a new sort of heredity: the inheritance of learning that goes from one generation to the other through the development of information technology and culture. The new evaluation peculiar to humans, operates directly by the inheritance of information and culture which arise in and are continuously a part of an organismic environmental system, that of social organization. Human social organization which is unique, is in a sense the basis of the new evolution, but more strictly it is the medium in which the new heredity operates and an evolving result of the interactions of that heredity with many other factors, both organic and social in nature (G.G. Simpson)

Now the question arises how this social being emerged from within the animal kingdom and what are the prime factors which lead to the evolution of this social nature. The fossil evidence dug up by the archeologists lead Engels to conclude in 1876, that the use and fabrication of tools as the primary distinction separating the first humanoids from other primates. Since tools are the basis of labour activities to produce the necessities of life, this would locate the dividing line between ape and human at the point where production was initiated. The gist of Engels theory is that the activities and results of cooperative labour constituted the principle factor creating the distinctive capacities and characteristics of our species. But how did this cooperation started in the first place? Who started it? Was it man or woman?

Thirty years later in 1927, Robert Briffault demonstrated in his book "Mothers" that prolonged maternal care in the higher apes was instrumental in spurring the female sex to become the trail blazers in the advanced to social life. Thus Engels and Briffault together pointed to the conclusion that women are to be credited with leading the humanization and socialization of our species. (E. Reed).

3. Dawn of Human Civilization

Most probably human emerged around 200,000 to 150,000 in Africa, spread though out the world, led gather - hunter life until the Neolithic Revolution around 10,000 years ago. There is little evidence to go by, to understand the social organization during the gather - hunter period. However there is ample evidence to accept that child care necessitated by helpless childhood of big brained child was a primary factor in making a socialized being. Intense affection of mother and her care for a long period naturally incorporated the collective effort all of females in the group. Sister-hood among females led to the spirit of brother-hood among men. It has been pointed out that in contemporary hunting and gathering human societies human live still in habitat similar to our early ancestors, the men may hunt, but it is the women who provide most of the nourishment for the group collecting plants, insects and small animals. A bipedal woman, the gatherer, may also have fashioned the first tools for digging up or opening food (Dean Falk).

Before Homo-erectus males were bigger than females. Thus dimorphism among hominids indicates aggressiveness and competition among males, with weaker tendency for pair bond, 'monogamy'. If all the Homo-erector's ancestors were dimorphic, what causes the difference between sexes to shrink? The answer is clear. Human is unique among apes in the assistance and care the father gives his children (even if only in the form of protection and food), and because a sexual division of labour is common to all known human cultures.

The gatherer-hunter division may have been crucial invention, because it allowed looking out for protein rich food to supplement the daily diet provided by the females. But this is possible only when the two sexes enter into pair bond to share the rewards of each others labour. (Economist 94).

Emotional intimacy and romantic love are after-growths of necessity. These are extensions of mother love bestowed on the child. Pair bond can be a powerful method to monopolize the males by females who need continuous support for her motherhood. In turn such female choice naturally controls the competition among males for sex and creates the condition for co-operative action for protection and food. Biologists now consider the female choice as a powerful effect on the course of evolution. With humans this female choice checked and controlled male behavior. Women with capacity for co-operation and collective action had a strength superior to that of any single individual in a group. In addition as mothers they wielded their socializing influence over the young males for a longer period than among anthropoids. These advantages enabled women to institute the prohibitions and restraints required for social life. Through totemism and taboo men were reconditioned to overcome the handicaps imposed upon males in nature. Their combative traits were channeled into useful services such as defense, meat supply and expenditures (Evelyn Reed)

Though organically separated from the rest of the animal kingdom, as a gatherer and hunter, human was totally dependent on nature. It was Neolithic revolution that made the participants active partners with nature instead of parasites on nature. This revolution- an economic and social revolution based on technological advancement- first occurred in the Mediterranean-middle east area around ten thousand years ago. Women had collected among other edibles the seeds of wild grasses, ancestral to our wheat and barley. The decisive step was deliberately to sow seeds on suitable soil and cultivate the sown land by weeding and other measures. This was the first step in the evolution that humanized humans. This was followed by animal husbandry, pottery, baskets, woven fabrics, mud huts (Gordon Childe). Oldest village excavated so far is the Cayonu site in Turkey. The Cayonu culture extended along a north south axis between what is today Israel and Turkey. There is no evidence to suggest rulers or leaders of high status were present: everybody lived on the same social plane. The people lived in large planned communities. The houses were regular, with flat roofs (Newsweek 93).

Technological discoveries on which the Neolithic revolution surged forward were, judged by ethnographic evidence, the work of the women. To that sex too, may by the same token be credited the chemistry of pot making, the physics of spinning, the mechanics of the loom and the botany of flax and cotton (Gordon Childe). At the same time it is natural to expect that hunters would have learned to make pets of baby animals and nurse them to maturity. It may have started with the totemic taboo placed on hunters so that they will work together without hurting each other. Totemic relationship is based on identification with a sacred animal and that animal becomes kith and kin. Whichever way the practice started, the exploitation of both animal and vegetable species, each dependent on other started simultaneously. But the habitat and the garden plot remained the centre of the new revolution.

4. The end of feminist commune

The combination of cultivation and animal husbandry was always there, but the concrete application of the system diverged to produce a contradictory set up. Settled farming villagers were surrounded by nomadic shepherd tribes and the division of labour between sexes led to a socio-economic contradiction.

Nomadic herdsmen were never independent. Though their adventures and mobile life brought them rich experience, they were dependent on exchange with farming communities. They have trade with settlers, if not the resort to loot and violence. Village settlements were dominated by commune mother culture and were generally un aggressive. There was self sufficiency and hence the society as a whole was not very innovative. All tools and practices needed for the village life have been already found by the female lead Neolithic revolution. However in spite of inherent passivity and the constant harassment by the peripheral Nomads, Neolithic feminist commune culture has spread over the greater part of the so called old world, from Niger to Hwang Ho and from Ireland to South of India. Mediterranean humans who spread this culture are variously identified as Semitic, Hamatic and Dravidian. This happened between 1500 BC to 6000BC.

As the climate changed, early simple Neolithic life developed in two directions. Cultivators shifted to sunlit river valleys and with planned irrigation built first city civilizations. Organized life gave rise to a state that coordinated production and distribution. For the actual cultivator, life remained the same for thousands of years. More organized, protected but daily life patterns didn't change from that of early Neolithic village commune. So called kingdoms were nothing more than cluster of villagers supervised by priestly leaders. Separation of handy craft was limited and so was the merchant class.

On the other hand shepherd people, were probably driven out, and moved into Caucasian grass lands to adapt to constantly migrating life between summer and winter pasture. Wandering life brought them before new challenges and new situations. They were forced to be inventive. Normadism strengthened the position of male, and kinship became patrilinear with father family becoming the norm. animals need personal care and are movable with the care taker. This was the beginning of private property which was passed from father to the son. Their group organization became rigid and militaristic. Leadership and ability to control depended on physical power and military might.

Wandering life gave nomads ample opportunity for discoveries and inventions. Use of bronze and then iron, taming horse and use of chariot, food preservation, protection where, were all inventions by Nomads. Then around 2000BC these nomadic patriarchal people started spreading out in large numbers in all directions. Historically they had one mission: to destroy the cultivators' feminist

commune, the ancestral society, firstly for plunder and secondly for slavery. First invasion occurred around 2000-1750BC. Hittite arrived in Asia Minor about that time and invaded Babylonia in 1595 BC. Within the life span of humans, in a short time of 1000 years, matriarchy and collective living was thrown into the dustbin of History and Patriarchy was established with cruelty may be never surpassed in history of mankind. (Man and the Vertebrates)

5. Women's Liberation: Historical Perspective

Above analysis shows that woman's position in society and patriarchy is not an aberration due to irrational thinking. It is a part and parcel of the exploitative setup created by specific historical circumstances and technological changes. Since the early slave owning societies, though there was technological advancement and resultant changes in socio-economic organization, oppressive nature has not ceased. Things may be refined and sophisticated but the nomadic patriarchic command system and oppressive management systems continue. Above all the dehumanization and alienation of human, created by the destruction of the ancestral feminist commune lingers as a permanent curse. In this respect humans are like children that have been abandoned by mother.

It is only the struggle for equality that will clear the mist that covers the real problem. Infact in many Western countries this has been achieved. It is precisely in such countries that new liberation movements have grown and serious discussions are conducted on gender issue in general. In countries like ours, there are areas in which democratic reforms could improve the status of women. Still the primary problem of changing the attitude and thinking of society remains unsolved. Hence there is now international awareness, about the importance of question of ideology and the fundamentals of women's liberation.

Engels writings on this question say that complete radical Constitutional equality does not abolish man's domination over women, just as much complete democracy does not abolish the antagonism between the capitalist and the worker. "On the contrary, it provides the field on which it is fought out. And similarly peculiar character of mans domination over women in the modern family and the necessity as well as the manner of establishing real social equality between the two, will be brought out in to full relief only when both are completely equal before the law. It will then become evident that the first premise for emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished"

Individual family (Nuclear family) is a contract agreement within the market economy and private property system. Emotional intimacy (love-sex) becomes the primary reason for marriage only in the case of working people or wage earners. Working woman is often the sole bread winner hence the economic base of male domination vanishes. Brutality and violence can remain as it is firmly rooted in the institute of present day marriage. But Engels adds "The woman has regained the right of separation and --- the proletarian marriage is monogamous in the etymological sense of the word, but by no means the historical sense". In other words institute of contract marriage breaks down, and in place arises the true emotional intimacy.

What is the meaning of abolishing the individual family but at the same time perfecting marriage? In the Neolithic feminist commune, the collective habitat embraced many couples and their children. The administration of the habitat or the household was in the hand of women. So her choice and love was primary in keeping the couple together, and it was empowered by material strength. In contrast today, even if man and women are equal before law, socioeconomic power is largely concentrated in the male. As long as family is an economic unit, male can dominate even when both are equal wage earners.

Engels spells out three conditions of true emotional intimacy (sex love). "Firstly it presupposes reciprocal love on the part of the loved one". Secondly, emotional intimacy "attains a degree of intensity and permanency where the two parties regard non possession or separation as a great, if not the greatest, misfortune". Finally, "sexual intercourse should only arise from mutual love". He says not only in capitalist society but even under feudalism, these were recognized in theory, on paper, like all the rest; but, in practice, simply ignored.

Thus the oppressed state of women is tied to exploitation in general and capitalist exploitation in particular. Humans emerged over 150,000 years ago in to a feminist communistic ancestral society where assertive, aggressive individualism was controlled and contained. Development of technology and division of labour negated this situation to give rise to a patriarchal, competitive, individualistic society. Capitalism and the free market economy is the final triumph of this 'Free society'. Loss of status of women is organically tied to the aggressive competition inherent in a patriarchal society. Hence feminist Liberation is organically tied to the proletarian revolution for socialism.

About this revolution anthropologist Morgan says "The time which has passed away since civilization began is but a fragment of the past duration of man's existence; and but a fragment of ages yet to come. The dissolution of society bids fair, to become the termination of a career of which property is the end and aim, because such a career contains the element of self destruction.

Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges, and universal education, fore shadow the next higher plane of society to which experience, intelligence and knowledge are steadily tending. It will be a revival in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes".

So by negation of the negation we re-enters the feminist commune, but at a higher form. Separation of production and consumption will be changed giving back the management of daily affairs to women. Thus the contradiction that exists for all women today, as either job or family, will be brought to a conclusion. Separation of industry and work from residence and living can be eliminated only by a drastic change in the urban civilization. Electronic revolution has laid the foundation for such a 'ruralification' of towns. As

Bebel said "this migration will began as soon as urban population due to the advance of means of communications, production establishments, etc, are in a position to transfer to the country all their habitual benefits of civilization, to setup their educational establishments, museums, theaters, concert halls, public facilities, etc., there. People will enjoy all the advantages of city life but will be spared its disadvantages. The whole population will live in much healthier and more pleasant surroundings. The rural population will participate in industry, industrial population in agriculture and gardening, a variety in occupation at; present enjoyed by a few, and then in the main only at the cost of an excessive outlay of time and effort'.

6. Criticism of Feminist Commune Ideology

• Criticism is made of the Feminist commune ideology both within and out side of women's liberation. Within feminists those who oppose consider perpetuation of gender difference as a threat to equality of men and women. In their view biological difference is a marginal aspect of human character and hence it can be reduced to a minimum by social practice. Motherhood is nothing fundamental and with the development of modern technology, eventually may be totally dispense with. Hence humans whether male or female should have identical social and intellectual role to play and any obstacle should be over come by correct social and legal practices. This view was strong before the Second World War and continued up to late sixties, however in Western countries where to large extent "Social" and legal equality is won, increasingly it become evident that actual position

of women in work places and at home has not improved. Divorce and single motherhood, burden of marriage and children increasingly became a problem for women. Open and secret aggression and harassment remained a serious threat.

While 92 surveys by American National Victim Centre which gives the most conservative yet trustworthy numbers, a survey that did not include intoxication says 13 percent of adult women are victims of rape. 'Working Woman' magazine survey shows that just 26% of women who say that they have been harassed report the incident. Many women are just too afraid of retribution and often fears are justified. Still, the most pressing problem the majority of American women face is not rape or sexual harassment, "It is the fact that in addition to holding down full time work they still are burdened with the lions' share of parenting and house work responsibility. Add it up, says sociologist Arlie Hochschild, and it comes to full month's worth of 24- hour days. (*Newsweek* 93)

On the other hand, a study, the most comprehensive of its kind ever undertaken, is based on more than 1000 babies born in 1972/73 in the southern city of Duondon, says "By these you can measure, or get an indication of person's temperament by certain behavioral characteristics which are family enduring. The risk of a child becoming a criminal in adulthood can, to a high degree of probability, be determined at three years old" and further "It shows that varied and rich experiences, in a stable and loving home can overcome adverse factors". (*Daily News* 94)

These and many such studies in the recent past have demolished the simple equality theory of Liberal Women's liberation movement. But naturally, capitalist classes cannot agree to a theory that proposes communist revolution as the way out for women. Hence continuously new arguments are manufactured to strengthen the argument for liberal reformist equality theory. In fact some are against feminism. Katie Roiple argues that issues like date rape reduce women to a helpless victim in need of protective code of behavior. "The image of a delicate woman bears striking resemblance to that of 50's ideal my mother and other women of her generation fought so hard to get away from. They did not like her passivity, her excessive need for protection. But here she is again with her pure intentions and her wide eyes. Only this time it is the feminists themselves who are breathing new life into her" (*Newsweek* 93).

Other formidable criticism is from those who see patriarchy as natural form of existence for humans. Patriarchal family relieved the male from the burden of day to day affairs thus allowing them to indulge in experiment, investigation and adventure. Male aggressiveness is positive in inquiry and adventure. In the struggle against nature, male leadership was indispensable. Male is intellectually better equipped to be creative and innovative. As such male domination is natural genetical condition arising out of necessity of survival and expansion of the species. Many of the features of mother care, or parental care are genetical, and hence not a social construction. Such are the arguments of male chauvinists.

But there is no evidence to prove that family care and love is due to genetical links. Among closest apes there is no recognition of biological, father or any special relationship between biological father and the off springs. On the other hand parental care among humans is social cultural inheritance more than a biological feature. It is very important to realize where biological evolution ends and social evolution begins. Emotional intimacy and parental care for long period, the most important characteristics of human family, are essentially social characteristics and not biological or genetical. Biological feature is for each individual organism to struggle against the others for its own survival. "As Darwin points out, this is true not only between different species: the struggle is even more intense among members of same species, which have similar needs and rely on the same territory to provide with food and mates" (Evelyn Reed). Infact, one reason if not the only reason for the survival of homo sapient against Neanderthal and others who competed is that humans were socially organized and others not. No amount of biological or genetical 'links' or 'affinities' among them

could not compare with the social links within humans. On the other hand recent research has debunked the “maternal bond” myth claimed to be based on biology and established just after child birth. “Studies ‘proving’ the existence of a period during which mothers hormones made her biologically receptive to her new baby were ‘poorly conceived and executed” (Newsweek - 92) on the contrary “building a strong enduring relationship between mother and infant requires time and effort” (do).

Biological difference between male and female in human species has given rise to different social practices. Women were burdened with the problems of day today existence and management of human necessities. Hence the tendency for concrete evaluation and detail study is stronger in woman. On the other hand men tend to look beyond immediate existence, hence the emphasis on abstract and philosophical thinking. However there is no reason whatever to consider abstraction to be superior to concrete evaluation. If one argues that men were responsible for abstract and mathematical findings then equally powerful arguments can be put forward to claim concrete detailed study and management of human affairs developed due to women.

It is true the last 4000 years during which patriarchy ruled the world, science & technology developed and arts and music expanded in all directions. But this cannot displace or undermine, the emancipation of humans brought about by feminist societies for nearly 150,000 years.

Obviously biological and genetical traits are not completely eclipsed by social evolution. Many aspects of human behaviors can be explained by studies into biological and genetical evolutionary history of humans. However primary human functions that uniquely separate us from the rest of the animals can be explained by analyzing social evolution. Patriarchy and women’s emancipation are certainly just such features. Another question raised is about the meaning of feminism. Does feminism means actual physical hegemony of women, or the victory of intimate cooperate culture and a new way of life? Obviously any human can be a feminist in that sense and the revolution should be to integrate the entire humanity into collectivist living and to release the humanity from patriarchal chauvinism. In the present society patriarchy reins either under male or female political and administrative leadership. Hence this system has to be over thrown.

However the biological connection of female to reproduction with special intimacy of motherhood gives female natural emotional and biological endowments to acquire feminist attitudes with less effort. Hence the females domination in concrete aspects of social organization will be a reality for a long time to come. In particular management of day to day affairs, coordination and planning of the production and distribution of essential consumer items, housing and accommodation, etc. should be under female management. New form of extended family arising out of ‘neighborhood habitat’ will strengthen the position of women, and the elimination of contradiction between the family and the work place will naturally empower women. Matriarchic culture can redevelop only through a concrete rearrangement that empowers women. Such a beginning is a must.

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