

Radical Feminism; a reaction against Rationalized Injustice

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Abstract

The movements of feminism through various stages of human evolution have been fighting for women's emancipation from the atrocities of the androcentric society. In response to these atrocities and the patriarchal justification of gender construct, radical feminists started digging deeper into the rationale of women's subordination. Besides, the researcher has reviewed extensive literature to examine the direction of subjugation. A review of literature from radical feminists and their premises led to a new dimension of understanding the nature or gravity of the oppression of women in the areas of psychoanalysis, Marxism, epistemic platforms, sociobiologism, and anthropology. The researcher has presented the logic employed by the patriarchal forces to defend their notions and the arguments against manipulated logic or reason. The study comprises various arguments from various schools of philosophy and explores how women had been subjugated for many ages under false assumptions.

Key Words: *Anthropology, epistemic injustice, sociobiologism, psychoanalysis, Marxism*

Introduction

Women have been suppressed through the ages by the sophisticated forces of patriarchy and androcentrism. The cultural practices and the scientific explanations were thoughtfully distorted to achieve the purpose of male dominance. Philosophers, theorists, and anthropologists played a crucial role in misleading gender identities and their roles. The misconception of gender identity was so strong that the concept of the *second gender* inseminated into the psyche of women making them believe that they are subservient to men (1). As the researcher browsed through the volumes of philosophical and intellectual debates

and inferences, there is substantial evidence to justify the epistemological injustice done to women and their identity. As a result, women had lived in the abyss of subjugation and servility for many ages. However, the feminist movements uncovered these distortions and started intellectual arguments with theorists or philosophers about the evident prejudices prevailing in articulated reason, misinterpreted knowledge, and deceitful cultural practices. Simone de Beauvoir is one of the acclaimed feminists during the second wave of feminism for protesting this series of epistemic injustices. She scientifically questioned epistemologists for misdirecting the cultural or social evolution of women. Beauvoir's the *Second Sex* may be one of the masterpieces of second-wave feminism that shuddered the androcentric foundation of culture, society, ethics, and politics (2).

Rationalized Injustice and Feminism

The researcher has articulated the phrase *Rationalized Injustice* to address the logical perspectives of patriarchy and androcentric philosophers and theorists. It has been observed that social dogmas, cultural practices, and ethical norms have been distorted by the intellectual community for achieving male dominance wherein phallogocentric expectations were imposed on women. The second wave of feminism driven by existential feminists revolted against these fallacies and asserted that reason and rationale were metamorphosed. Beauvoir being a significant and authoritative feminist initiated the rational approach to treat the gender construct and she challenged various schools of philosophy (3).

The researcher has examined various schools of philosophy or knowledge to study the intensity of injustice done to women under the banner of rationalization. The researcher has analyzed the assumptions from sociobiologism, anthropology, psychoanalytical theory, Marxist Theory, and epistemic injustice. Indeed, radical feminism has abundant literature on various schools of philosophy and their assumptions, however, the researcher has examined other areas of knowledge that vandalized the gender identity of women (4).

Sociobiologism and Gender Prejudices

The term sociobiologism is referred to the study of social behavior concerning the biological evolution of humans. The sociobiologists assumed that males and females are two different entities with different biological competencies. Men are more masculine, and superior compared to feminine women who were considered the weaker sex. This assumption was

applied in all the rational debates while constructing gender identity. The assumptions of organic evolution and its misinterpretation became a touchstone for evaluating the status of men and women. Finally, male dominance over women prevailed through various sociocultural practices. Female objectification became a norm of social construct depriving them of all equality in social and economic platforms (5).

In addition, biological determinism asserts that masculinity and femininity are based on biological attributes. These biological attributes play a crucial role in defining gender identity. The sociobiological feminists opine that the inferences drawn out of biological determinism are infested by the deceitful intentions of a patriarchal society. The sociobiological feminists overtly deny the assumptions of biological determinism and they argued that women's destiny cannot be determined by their biological inheritance. The researcher further examined the assumptions of sociobiology wherein it was presented that human traits are reproduced based on the biological essence and these traits are bound to reflect in males and females. However, the researcher observed that biological determinism did not consider other intervening forces that influence these traits. The intervening forces like cultural practices, defined gender roles, and ethical implications have significant influences on the evolution of behavioral traits, beliefs, and values (6).

The Darwinian principles of human evolution played a crucial role in understanding the source of biological discrimination and the false interpretation of gender capacities. Organic *evolution* may be one of the crucial areas that threw useful insights into feminine objectification and the irrational reason for turning women into the second gender. Dimen (1995) illustrates one of the crucial forces that manifested women as an object of enticement. Based on the biological essence, men reserved the right of ownership over the resources as they believed that they are potential enough to safeguard the resources whereas women were treated as accessors to those resources. To access the resources, women had to entice or impress men to consume the resources. The practice of a *safeguard and an accessor* became one of the fundamental reasons for women's oppression. As the researcher examined the assumptions of biologism and biological determinism, it is evident that theorists or sociobiologists were not free from the influences of androcentrism, and the socio-biological theorists were deceitfully altered to express male supremacy (7).

Anthropology Vs Feminist Anthropology

Anthropology is a science that studies the evolution of societies and various social institutions like marriage, cultural practices, and religions. The evolutionary path of social/religious sentiments and cultural practices has abundant literature about the interpretation of gender roles and the construction of gender identity. As the researcher examined the available literature, she comprehended the social and cultural dynamics of rationalized injustice imposed against women. Feminist anthropology driven by the insights from classical texts of feminism like *Sexual Politics* and *the Second Sex* tries to explore the evolutionary path of sexual discrimination throughout human history. In this regard, feminist anthropology asserted against the anthropologists that women have been depicted as the objects of fertility good enough for continuing species (8).

Shulamith Firestone (1972) in her book the *Dialect of Sex* presumes that the illustration of women as just the female bodies and these female bodies were socially constructed as material. Further, she claims that social institutions turned women into the second gender. The gender roles based on sex led to plausible discrimination and the cultural/social description of male and female attributes further worsened the conditions of women. The primeval needs and wants of humans particularly the male instincts dominated the women's identity, and they were reduced to either the status of servitude or glorified/consecrated idol with no authority (9).

One of the major concerns of anthropology was the *universals* wherein men and women were given common attributes having no logic or reason. The concept of collective life was plausibly denied because of various factors like context, culture, race, and ethics. It is argued that collective life is based on the presumptions of *universals*, and they did not consider the multiple factors that contribute to gender identity. Besides, these universals were deep-rooted in the anthropological definitions of roles and these roles were based on androcentric biases. It was also observed that the women's roles were ritualistic, and their functions were strictly guided by cultural norms. Women were denied from the freewill and their life goals were defined or formulated by men's supremacy. In brief, the researcher infers that the anthropological injustice against women was very subtle and there was a shrewd intention of dominating women from all walks of life.

Psychoanalytical theory and Rationalized Injustice

Psychoanalytic theory is one of the major influences on feminist thoughts that provoked crucial arguments between psychoanalysis and feminists. Freudian Theory of psychoanalysis and the concept of the Oedipus Complex were much debated, and the assumptions of Freud were androcentric. As Sigmund Freud illustrates feminine and masculine attributes that are inherent in the human psyche, he emphasizes more on the biological essence and basic instincts of the human species while ignoring cultural or social factors that impact gender identity. Further, Freud asserts that boys or girls build their identity based on their sex and the process of identification happens during the pre-oedipal stage. During this stage, girls identify themselves with their mothers and identify their roles or functions, and boys identify themselves with their fathers' roles or functions. It was assumed that gender identity takes place based on the biological essence and that femininity or masculinity is inherent in every sex (11).

The researcher examined the feminist assumptions on psychoanalysis theory and gender construct. It is noted that gender bias is ostentatiously and logically illustrated by the theorists with utmost care and precision. Psychoanalysis became a strong foundation for devaluing women's status. Therefore, the researcher analyzed the assumptions of psychoanalytical feminists and their arguments against the biases logically portrayed in psychoanalysis. Horney and Clara (1998) discarded the misogynistic assumptions of Sigmund Freud as they were intended to justify the superiority of men. It was observed that prejudices were deceitfully presented by androcentric intentions to distort the economic or political identity of women. The politicization of psychoanalysis was much debated, and counter-reason or logic was presented to justify the amount of damage done to women's identities. Cultural, social and moral perspectives driven psychoanalysis were scientifically challenged by psychoanalyst feminists during the second wave of feminism. Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is one of the major reactions against these prejudices that fought against the psychoanalytical presumptions of gender.

The psychoanalytical theories distorted the construction of gender through false assumptions of femininity and masculinity. It was inferred that femininity is a psychological disposition of women with a set of feminine attributes like love, compassion, tenderness, affection, and caring. Further, these attributes were deconstructed to justify the inferiority of these attributes

compared to masculine attributes like bravery, strength, courage, and adventure. It was assumed that femininity is a result of their biological essence wherein women inherently possess these qualities, and they cannot claim, logically, the masculine features. However, the psychoanalytical feminists justified that femininity or masculinity is not only based on biological essence, but cultural or social contexts play a major role in influencing these attributes. They argued that men and women may share feminine or masculine attributes based on their cultural or social contexts. However, the masculine or feminine attributes in men and women may vary due to various factors (12).

Marxism and Rationalized Injustice

Marxism is one of the major paradigms that defined and transformed commercial activities in Europe and later spread to other parts of the world. Besides, the assumption of Marxism influenced various schools of thought like anthropology, psychology, history, sociology, and many other faculties. Marxists believed that social phenomena can be better understood through material essence and commercial transactions in society. The gender biases and gender construct were based on material production and their contribution to economic progress. However, it was noted that the economic division of labor created a huge gap between men and women, and this led to gender discrimination and suppression. Marxists under the influence of patriarchy misinterpreted gender roles based on their ability to generate income and their contribution to economic progress. In addition, Marxists precisely divided the labor class into domestic labor and wage labor. Domestic labor included women who worked in their household front and the work included household chores, nurturing family, emotional support, and their support in their farmlands. The wage labor included men who worked in industries or any other platforms that directly contributed to economic progress. The logic of revenue generation became a substantial factor to neglect the domestic workers and it upheld the superiority of men. These assumptions further motivated men to have possession of material things and women were expected to be subservient to men to access these resources. Indeed, Marxist feminists argued that women's domestic labor although it was laborious was never considered an economic activity. Influenced by Marxist principles, the society was divided into various labor sections based on their contribution to the economy. Men were involved in the labor that directly contributed to revenue generation, however, women's domestic labor involved working in the farms, household

chores, and nurturing families was never considered. However, some of the theorists of Marxist feminism inferred pro-feministic principles that upheld the significance of domestic work that contributed to revenue generation. As a logical reaction against androcentric Marxism, Reich (1933) brings out the structure and superstructure of society wherein structure includes the labor that generates revenue adding to the economy and the superstructure includes the domestic work of women that indirectly stands as a backbone to the structure helping them to generate revenue. Besides, the superstructure that includes women indirectly helps in revenue generation and it offers the most significant contribution to the development of the economy (13).

Friedrich Engels (1870) comments on the plight of women in society and the non-acknowledgment of their contribution to the economy. It is inferred that the discrimination of women is not just based on their biological essence but the deprivation of economic rights to women contributes to male dominance. Eli Zaretsky (1974) observes that capitalism was a great threat to women as the paradigm of capitalism aimed at dividing the workforce into wage labor and domestic labor, however, wage labor was given the utmost priority whereas domestic labor was never considered equal to wage labor. This too influenced the gravity of discrimination (14).

Therefore, it is argued that the principles of Marxism must be carefully examined, and it must be assured that men and women have equal access to economic rights. The researcher has carefully examined the principles of Marxism and their male-dominated assertions, and these assertions must be logically analyzed. Androcentric logic must be terminated as it influences the rationale of feminism and leads to gender discrimination.

Epistemic Injustice

The term epistemic injustice refers to the intentional manipulation of one's identity or status through fallacious or biased conception. Fricker (2007) observes dimensions of injustice under epistemic injustice. These are *Testimonial* and *Hermeneutical* injustices, and these biases were sophisticated and logically justified by the patriarchal forces. The testimonial injustice included the existing biases on based on caste, creed, race, and gender and false assumptions were employed to examine the prevailing context of gender construct. Besides, Hermeneutical injustice is understood as a condition wherein women's non-expression of

their beliefs or their pacified voice against gender discrimination was taken for granted and the voicelessness of women became a foundation for the injustice inflicted on them.

Conclusion

The main objective of the study was to examine the rationalization of injustice inflicted on women by forcing certain premises and these premises were subtle. These subtle and sophisticated premises were charged by androcentric forces to subjugate women and claim the dominance of women in all walks of life. Further, it was inferred that the androcentric society used reason and logic to uphold the fallacies of masculine superiority, and they justified these notions by scientifically validating through various theories or schools of philosophy. These patriarchs tried to derive false assumptions from anthropology, psychoanalysis, sociobiologism, and Marxism to validate their premises. In this regard, the researcher examined various schools of philosophy and theories to explore the possible injustice inflicted on women, and the concepts of radical feminism were carefully examined for further studies. It is observed that the androcentric society manipulated various schools of philosophy and constructed their own theories for achieving their prejudiced objectives. As presented in the paper, the researcher calls for further analyses and examination of the topic and suggests further solutions for treating women's discrimination.

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