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A Study on the Marxist Feminist Philosophy and Patriarchy in Bangladesh Society

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Abstract

Marxist feminism is borne out in feminist theory as well as politics which take its theoretical postulations from Marxism, popularized as the criticism of capitalism as a set of structures, practices, institutions, incentives and sensibilities that promote the exploitation of labor, the alienation of human beings, and the debasement of freedom. Concerning the Marxist feminist, empowerment and equality for women cannot be achieved with the framework of capitalism. Marxist feminism thus distinguishes itself from other modes of feminist thought and politics by attending critically and systematically to the economic organization of societies, including stratification along the lines of class; by refusing to accord the category of "women" separate and special status, without regard to class; by its commitment to the overthrow of capitalism; and by its allegiance to working- class and impoverishing and marginalizing women.

Keywords: Marxist, Feminist, Patriarchy in Bangladesh, Theory

1.1 Introduction

Marxist feminism is undeniably a philosophical variety of feminism that embraces and expands feminist theory. It has been established that Marxist feminism examines the extent to which women are exploited as a result of the birth of capitalism as well as individual ownership of private property. However, the Marxist feminist believes that women's freedom can only be pursued when capitalism is brushed under the rug due to the disaster of unpaid female work. Similarly, it has been established that Marxist feminists extended classic Marxist analysis by linking it with unpaid domestic labor and sex interactions. Because the story was founded on historical materialism. In

contrast, Marxist feminism had parallels with socialist feminism and accelerated toward materialist feminism. The preceding points associated a pre-modal allegiance to "reductionist's limitations" inside Marxist philosophy. However, according to Martha E. Gimenez, "clear lines of theoretical demarcation between and within these two umbrella terms are somewhat difficult to establish." Given the nature of this research study, an analytical method has been used to finish it. A source of information has also been considered for this aim. However, the references were taken from a variety of books, articles published in journals, research reports, newspapers, and the internet, making this a primarily secondary source of data collecting.

This work intends to carry out surgical operations concerning 'Marxist Feminist theory' and its corrections. In this process, the work shall begin by introduction after the grounded abstract. It also takes a look at the conceptualization of the key concepts about the topic under discussion where the key terms are defined with the aim of simplifying it for easy understanding. Subsequently, the work also analysis what is known as 'Marxist theoretical background' in attempt to fully comprehend the root of the theoretical observations regarding the topic of the study. However, this research could have been paralyzed in the absence of taking a look to the 'Marginalization and Feminism'. This is because it could help to give us a detail explanation concerning the national and international role of feminists in the struggle about marginalizing women across the globe. Furthermore, 'How to Set Wages for Housework?' has been fully justified for no reason rather than to see the level of women's housework hardship without any wages? However, one needs to fully be aware of "Domestic Slavery" as a prerequisite to understand Marxist feminism. This is because according to the proponents of feminist belief, women are treated as a slave at homes due to housework and reproductive as well as children caring without wages.

Other areas elucidated by this work include, "The Reproductive Labor Responsibility", in which women was obliged to so within the entire fertility period if without contraceptives. To them, it is a methods contributed to the women's exploitation. In a bid to advocate the rights of women across the globe, this work concentrates on "movement to withdraw sexist operation" as an everlasting solution to this issue. Towards the end, corrections, findings, and recommendations will be brought to our attention.

1.2 Conceptualization of Key Concepts

The concept of Marxism is referred to as dual social and political theory comprising Marxist Class Conflict Theory and Marxian Economies. This philosophy was in the first place formulated since the age of 1848 in a

pamphlet called as *The Communist Manifesto* authored by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels. As at then, the pamphlet had opened a Pandora box of “theory of class struggle and revolution within many societies (Jim Chappelow, 2019).

By the way of definition, the term “Feminism” is often accepted to be the advocacy of women’s rights on the ground of equality of the sexes. Feminism as well, is referred to as the belief in social, economic and political equality of the sexes. However, this philosophy originated from the west. But then, feminism is manifested across every continent.

Coming down to the notion of “theory”, the theory is seen as a supposition or system of ideas intended to explain something especially on the basis of general principles independent of things to be explained. Likewise, a theory is an explanation of the natural world that can incorporate laws, hypotheses as well as facts (Elinor Bukket).

However, ‘Marxist feminism’ is a method of socioeconomic analysis that uses a materialist interpretation of historical development, better known as historical materialism, to understand class relations and social conflict as well as a dialectical perspective to view social transformation. It originates from the works of 19th-century German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. As Marxism has developed over time neo Marxist, post Marxist theories have been developed.

1.3 Marxist theoretical background

It is a brief spiritual journey to the year 1884, considering Fredrick Engel's writing titled *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), in which the writer investigates the earliest origins of the family structure, social hierarchy, and the concept of wealth, drawing on ancient and modern research. He deduced categorically that, ‘women originally had a higher social status and equal consideration in labor and in particular, only women were sure to share family name’. As such, ‘as the earliest men did not even share the family name, Engels holds that they did not know exactly who their children were to benefit from the inheritance.

History has shown that Marxism emulates the history of tyranny and class division within human society through the creation and organization of wealth and production.. As well, the eve has concluded by the evolution of oppressive societal systems to be relative to evolution of oppressive family structure. For instance, the normalizations of oppressing the female sex marks or coincide to the birth of sheer operative society in totality.

In relation to the subject under consideration, there was a time "when agriculture first became abundant and is seen as male wealth, yielded from her work environment away from the home." As a result, there was a greater concern in male lineage and inheritance in absolute terms. 'Women were not merely granted their long-sought monogamy, but actively coerced into it as part of domestic slavery' in order to accomplish this aim. At the same time, males pursued a hushed culture of "heterism". In this regard, the author explains the situation as being coincidental to the beginnings of forced servitude, which became a dominating aspect of society. This resulted in what was known as the European culture of class operation. As always, the children of the poor remained dominant serfs of the rich people. On the other versions of Engel's narrations, regarding this notion citing reference to himself and Marx by the year of 1846, that "the first division of labor is that between men and women for the propagation of children". Both scholars hold, "The first class operation that appears in history corresponds with the formation of hostility between men and women in monogamous marriage, and the first class operation corresponds with male sex by females". From then, 'gender operation is reproduced culturally and maintained through institutionalized inequality'. Hence, it became evident that 'by prevailing men at the expense of women and refusing to acknowledge traditional domestic labor as equally valuable, the working class man is socialized into an oppressive structure which marginalizes the working-class women.

This categorically expresses how naturally men marginalized and monopolized women economically, socially and politically which makes them to count it as class operation.

1.4 Marginalization and Feminism

To understand the condition of being a housewife which creates a sense of emptiness, non-existence, nothingness in women. There are aspects of the housewife's role that make it almost impossible for a woman of adult intelligence to retain a sense of human identity, the firm core of self or "I" without which a human being, man or woman, is not truly alive. For women of ability in America today, I am convinced that there is something about the housewife state itself that is dangerous'.

In this regard, the authors added that the marginalized women are "the silent majority". If they raise an alarm, nobody cares. If they cry, who might come to their aid? As such, this write up portrays the prolonged voiceless sorrows and bitter life of the marginalized women "as if these women did not exist", despite the heavy academic attack on and indeed it shapes and continuously shapes the tenor and the direction of feminist movement.

To cite concrete example regarding the Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique*, let employ his famous thought "the problem that has no name", used to be quoted to describe the condition of women in American society for those referred to as "the plight of a select group of college educated, middle- and upper-class, and married white women". But then, housewives were bored with leisure, with the home, with the children, with buying products who wanted more out of life. Towards his conclusion, Friedan advocated that "We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my house'". By the "more" here, this writer means careers. But he declined to explain who will take care of her children and maintain the home if the women are given equal opportunity to the professions. At the same time, the author fails to analyze the needs of women without men, or without children or without homes.

But unfortunately, it has been proven that the author ignored the existence of all non-white women and poor white women which signifies marginalization. On the other hand, the writer "did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute than to be a leisure-class housewife. Within her book Friedan makes it clear that the women seen as victimized by sexism were college-educated white-women who were compelled by sexist conditioning to remain in the home.

Despite the above analysis, it became common practice that "specific problems and dilemmas of leisure-class white housewives were real concerns that merited consideration and change, but they were not the pressing political concerns of masses of women. Masses of women were concerned about economic survival, ethnic and racial discrimination, etc. When Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, more than one-third of all women were in the workforce. Although many women longed to be housewives, only women with leisure time and money could actually shape their identities on the model of the feminine mystique. They were women who, in Friedan's words, were "told by the most advanced thinkers of our time to go back and live their lives as if they were Noras, restricted to dolls houses by Victorian prejudices". As stated by the writer.

1.5 How to Set Wages for Household work?

Because women are kept at home and denied the right to work for pay, some Marxist feminists have clearly argued for the "inclusion of the domestic within the waged capital economy". This explicitly implies that 'the idea of compensating reproductive labor remained part and parcel of socialist writings like that of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1898), where he declared that 'women's oppression stemmed from being forced into the private sphere'. At the same time, Gilman cautions that 'the conditions for women would for sure be

improved when their work was located, recognized and valued in the public sphere'. As a response to the above advocacy, a special movement was launched to ensure reproductive labor compensations under the banner of International Wages for Housework Campaign. This is a non-governmental organization that was launched in Italy in 1972 orchestrated by the members of the International Feminist collection. To solidify this movement some people like Selma James, Silvia Federici among others have embarked upon a series of publications "to promote their message in academic and public domains". But we should note that, despite the fact that they are few in number for those struggling in Italy, but then, the wage for housework campaign was successful in mobilizing huge numbers of people at international level. As a result of this movement, soon another group sprang up in Brooklyn, New York City under close supervision of Federici. This movement for sure, had opened a new chapter of discourse regarding the value of household work and its intimate relation to the political economy.

In light of the above, this is indeed a notion of struggle within many governmental and non-governmental institutions.

1.6 The Notion of Domestic Slavery

A classic example concerning the case under study is seen within the write up called as Capital Accumulation and Women's labor in Asian Economies. This writer, notes that "women's labor in the garment industry in West Bengal and Bangladesh as well as in the Bangladesh Agricultural sector, labor management method of the Japanese industrial bourgeoisie and finally the methods of employment of the women laborer in the Japanese industry" which demonstrates the ways in the domestic sphere exhibit similar gender-based exploitation of differences.

Proponents of this concept believe that housework has a negative impact on women in capitalist society. For this perception, in Angela Davi's *Women Race and Class*, expressed that the concept of housework is to deconstruct the capitalist construct of gendered labor within the home and show the way in which women are exploited through "domestic slavery". In this view, Davis deduced that the "socialization housework –includes meal preparation and child care –presupposes an end to the profit's motive to reign over the economy". This view simplifies that, 'domestic slavery upholds the structural inequalities faced by women in all capitalist economies. However, according to Marxist feminism, 'the concept of domestic work for women abroad and the role it plays in buttressing global patriarchy'.

1.7 Reproductive Labor Responsibility

Gayle Rubin's work was popularized through her 1975 essay *The Traffic of Women: Notes on the Political of Sex*, as such she propagated the notion of "sex/gender system" and also condemned for what she claims is its incomplete analysis of sexism under capitalism, without dismissing or dismantling Marxist fundamentals in the process. However, many Marxist feminists have recently moved their focus to the ways in which women are now potentially in poorer conditions as a result of gaining access to productive labor. That is why Nancy Folbre was compelled to suggest feminist movements that began to focus on women's subordinate status to males in both the reproductive (private) and workplace (public) spheres. Hence, in an interview by the year 2013, Silvia Federici urges feminist movements to consider the fact that many women are now forced into productive and reproductive labor, resulting in what she called "double day". She also believes that 'the liberation of women cannot come unless they are free from the burden of unwaged labor, which she stated will include institutional changes such as narrowing the wage gap and addressing child care problems in the workplace'. Some Marxist feminists advocated remedies to free women from the York of forced labor in reproductive labor. That's why, in her critique of traditional Marxist feminist movements like the Wages for Housework Campaign, Heidi Hartmann (1981) stated that they "take as their question the relation of women to the economic system, rather than the relation of women to men, apparently assuming the latter will be explained in their discussion of the former." She expresses her conviction in her article that "traditional discourse has ignored the importance of women's oppression as women instead focus on oppression as members of the capitalist system."

1.8 A Movement to Withdraw Sexist Oppressions

The House report demands rights, a full voice and role for women in determining the destiny of our world, our nation, our family and our individuals. It specifically calls for (1) the eliminations of violence in the homes and development of shelter for battered women, (2) support for women's business, (3) a solution to child abuse, (4) federally funded non-sexist child care, (5) a policy for full employment so that all women who wish and are able to work may do so, (6) the protection of home makers so that marriage is a partnership, (7) and end to the sexist portrayal of women in the media, (8) establishment of reproductive freedom and the end to involuntary sterilization, (9) a remedy to the double discrimination against minority women, (10) a revision of criminal code dealing with rape, (11) elimination of discrimination on the basis of sexual reference, (12) the establishment of non-sexist education, and (13) an examination of all welfare reform proposals for their specific impact on women.

It became a common knowledge that a sheer obstacle within the feminist discourse has been “our inability to either arrive at consensus or embrace definition (s) that could serve as a point of unification”. In the same vein, there is no “agreed-upon definition (s), as we lack a sound foundation on which to construct theory or engage in overall meaningful praxis”. To portray sorrow concerning the absence of precise and clear definitions a woman called as Carmen Vazquez states that:

We can even agree on what a “feminist” is, never mind what she would believe in and how she defines the principles that constitute honor among us. As in the case of American capitalist observation for individualism and anything goes so long as it gets you what feminism in America has come to mean anything you like, honey? There are many definitions of feminism as there are feminists some of my sisters say, with a chuckle. I don’t think it’s funny.

In this regard, one cannot see it as funny. But rather it indicates an increasing lack of interest in feminism as a radical political movement. In the same vein, some are of the view that “solidarity among women is not possible”. Likewise, a lot of people in the United States are thinking about feminism or the more commonly used “Women’ lib”, as a movement that aims to change the women's social status to be equal to men. In this context, “the broad definition popularized by the media and mainstream segment of the movement, raises problematic questions”. This is due to the fact that, men are not equal in white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal class structure, which men do women want to be equals to? For instance, do women share a common vision of what equality means as its original context? But then, the core analysis of their definition about women’s liberation is the dismissal of race and class as factors that in conjunction with sexism determine the notion in which individuals will be discriminated against exploitation or oppression. Concerning these claims, well-to-do white women interested in women’s rights issues have been satisfied with the simple definitions for some obvious reasons.

On the contrary, women in lower class and poor groups, particularly those who are non-white, would not even have the opportunity to determine women as gaining social equality with men. This is due to the constant claims that “all women who do not share a common social status are exploited and oppressed”. In this scenario, “men in their groups do not have social, political and economic power. As such, they don’t even think and see it as liberatory to share their social status”. Also, they have the knowledge that, “sexist enable men in their respective groups to have privileges that are denied then, they are more likely to see exaggerated expressions of men chauvinism among their peers as stemming from the male’s sense of himself as powerless and

ineffectual in relation to ruling male groups, rather than an expression of an overall privileged social status”.

Another thing to keep in mind is that not all of the women who were at the forefront of organized women's liberation were synonymous with women obtaining social status alongside men." That is the reason why, the radical feminism of domination and elitism in all human relationships. This would make self-determination the ultimate good and require the downfall of society as we know it today'. In this case, an individual radical feminist such as Charlotte Bunch based their analyses on an informed understanding of the politics and domination and the recognition of the interconnections and among various systems of domination even as they focused primarily on sexism. As such, it became evident that their perspectives were not valued by those organizers and participants in the women's movement who were more interested in social reforms.

By the age of 1976, pamphlet on feminism issue was published titled as *Women and the New World*, the writer categorically explains that ‘many women active in women’s liberation movement were far more comfortable with the notion of feminism as a reforms that would help women attain social equality with their men in their class then feminism defined as a radical movement that would eradicate domination and transform society:

‘Whatever the organization, the location, or ethnic composition group, all the women’s liberation organizations had one thing in common: they all come together based on biological and sociological facts rather than on a body of ideas. Women came together in the women's liberation movement on the basis that women were common and all women were subject to men domination. We saw all women as being the oppressors. We never questioned the extent to which American women accept the same materialistic and individualistic values as American men. We did not stop to think that American women are just as reluctant as American men to struggle for a new society based on new values of mutual respect, cooperation and social responsibility”.

1.9 The Corrections in Marxist Feminist

Many academicians, including Alexandra Kollontai and Clara Zetkin, were opposed to feminism that perpetuates class rank. As a result, they did not see a true prospect of uniting across economic inequality, arguing that upper-class women would find it incredibly difficult to truly appreciate the hardships of the working-class. To give a specific example, Kollontai wrote in 1909: *For what reason, the women worker seeks a union with the bourgeois feminists? Who in actual fact would stand to gen in the event of such an alliance? Certainly not the woman worker.*

Looking at the above critical analysis, it became evident that people like Kollontai hold that liberal feminism would undermine the struggle carried out by Marxist to improve conditions for the working class. That is to say, the 'Marxist supported the more radical political program of liberating women through socialist revolution, with a special emphasis on work among women and in materially changing their conditions after the revolution.

1.10 Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, the first class operation that arises in history coincides with the formation of hostility between and women in monogamous marriage, and the first class operation coincides with female sex by the male. This also explains how men have naturally sidelined and monopolized women economically, socially, and politically, leading them to regard it as a class operation. One could be right, when holding that those women are the silent majority. In the same vein, if they raise an alarm, nobody cares. Once they cry, who might come to their aid? In this scenario, "a mark of their victimization is that they accept their lot in life without visible question, without organized protest, without collective anger or rage".

Findings of this work shows that women are of the view that, 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my house'". - American marginalized women. To liberate the women out of their calamity and tragedy, a special movement was launched to ensure reproductive labor compensations under the banner of International Wages for Housework Campaign.

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