

# An analysis of the feminism theory



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Belief in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes, the movement organized around this belief. Feminist theory is an outgrowth of the general movement to empower women worldwide. Feminism can be defined as a recognition and critique of male supremacy combined with effort to change it. Simply saying: Feminist fights for the equality of women and argue that women should share equally in society's opportunities and scarce resources.

### **Goals of Feminism:**

To demonstrate the importance of women.

To reveal that historically women have been subordinate to men.

To bring about gender equity.

### **Historical Perspective:**

#### **“ Three Waves” of Feminism**

First Wave (19th through early 20th centuries).

Second Wave (1960s-1980s).

Third Wave (1990's-Present)

#### **First Wave Feminism:**

First-wave feminism refers to a period of feminist activity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It focused primarily on gaining the right of women's suffrage. The term, “ first-wave,” was coined retrospectively after the term second-wave feminism began to be used to

describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as further political inequalities.

### **Second Wave Feminism:**

The “ second-wave” of the Women’s Movement began during the early 1960s and lasted throughout the late 1970s. Whereas first-wave feminism focused mainly on overturning legal (de jure) obstacles to equality (i. e. voting rights, property rights), second-wave feminism addressed a wide range of issues, including unofficial (de facto) inequalities, official legal inequalities, sexuality, family, the workplace, and, perhaps most controversially, reproductive rights.

### **Third Wave Feminism:**

Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s, arising as a response to perceived failures of the second wave. and also as a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. Feminist leaders rooted in the second wave like Gloria Anzaldua, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other feminists of color, sought to negotiate a space within feminist thought for consideration of race-related subjectivities.

### **Types of Feminism:**

#### **Liberal Feminism:**

All people are created equal and should not be denied equality of opportunity because of gender.

Liberal Feminists focus their efforts on social change through the construction of legislation and regulation of employment practices.

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Inequality stems from the denial of equal rights.

The primary obstacle to equality is sexism.

### **Marxist Feminism:**

Division of labor is related to gender role expectations.

Females give birth. Males left to support family

Bourgeoisie= Men

Proletariat= Women

### **Radical Feminism:**

Male power and privilege is the basis of social relations.

Sexism is the ultimate tool used by men to keep women oppressed.

Women are the first oppressed group.

Women's oppression is the most widespread.

Women's oppression is the deepest.

### **Socialist Feminism:**

Views women's oppression as stemming from their work in the family and the economy.

Women's inferior position is the result of class-based capitalism.

Socialist believes that history can be made in the private sphere (home) not just the public sphere (work).

## **Feminism and the Media:**

The mass media have played an important role in the dilution of feminist goals and ideals. They often ignore, trivialize, or belittle the principles of feminism. The media employs several techniques or strategies that contribute to the negative representations of women and feminism, which are also damaging to the central goals of feminism. Women are often represented as sexual spectacles, as being “on display” for men. Patriarchal society dictates that women be constructed as an object for the “gaze” of the male spectator. Women are positioned as the passive object of the male “gaze,” rather than the subject in mainstream media and come to internalize this view (Dow, 1999; 1997; Wahers, 1992).

Wahers (1992) describes the “male gaze” as the idea of men determining the specific vantage point of media depictions of women, as occupying a privileged space in the process-of contacting “ways of seeing.” Ways of seeing remains an important text for feminist cultural theorists who contend that women are forced to identify themselves within in a visual society constructed for male pleasure (Walters, 1999; 1992).

Wolf (1992) suggests that women’s attempts at achieving equality are negatively affected by images of women portrayed as sex objects. She discusses the concept of the “beauty myth,” which refers to how women’s societal worth is based on physical appearance and youthful beauty. Walters argues that “objectification of women is not an ‘added-on’ attraction, but rather endemic to the very structure of image-making” (Walters, 1999, p. 235). This is exemplified in media advertisements where women are frequently represented in what Wahers (1999) terms a “fragmented” way.

Women are often signified by their specific body parts; their lips, legs, hair, eyes, etc., instead of being represented as a serious “ whole” or subject. In advertisements women are urged to think of their bodies as “ things” or “ parts” that need to be molded and shaped into a male conception of female perfection. The fragmentation of the female body into body parts that women should then “ improve” often results in women having self-hating relationships with their bodies.

### **Media Feminism in Pakistan:**

“ Muslim women form a highly diverse and complex group and assumptions about them are often ill-conceived, miss-informed and grossly misrepresented. This is often reflected in images of them, particularly in the West, as oppressed, powerless and victimized. The voices of Muslim women, striving to keep their religious identity in Western contexts, are seriously under-represented within academic research.”

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in Islamic culture as a fundamentalist and sensationalist phenomenon. Media coverage and Western scholarship often views Muslim women as an oppressed mute victim and ‘ asserts or implies that Islam itself oppresses women’. Islamic Feminism and Its

Role in Cinema is a study derived to counter react the portrayal of Muslim women by the media.

Feminists and Muslim women activists have sought to determine the cause of discrimination against women by examining the effects on Muslim women of patriarchy, kinship and norms within Muslim and non-Muslim societies.

6 Overall trends in the published material focus on colonialism, Orientals and the media as the cause of discrimination against the Muslim woman's identity. An extensive study of the research literature has failed to identify how Muslim women filmmakers represent Muslim women and whether they support feminist agenda.

### **Critical Analysis: Movie Name: “ Dragon Seed” (1944)**

Dragon Seed is co-directed by Harold S. Bucquet and Jack Conway. It received two Academy Award Nominations for Best Supporting Actress, Aline MacMahon, and for Best (Black-and-White) Cinematography, Sidney Wagner. The freewheeling plot has a heroic young Chinese feminist woman, Jade (Katharine Hepburn), who goes dressed as a man to lead her fellow peaceful farmer villagers in an uprising against the Japanese invaders.

It opens in the spring of 1937 with patriarch Ling Tan (Walter Huston) and his family planting rice in the valley of Ling, China. The farmers are concerned about the recent Japanese invasion of the north, and take out their anger on Wu Lien—as an angry student mob insists that he stop selling Japanese merchandise or else. When he refuses their demands, they destroy his store.

Soon after the farmers observe Japanese airplanes bombing the nearby city. The pacifist Ling is shocked by the attack, but along with Lao San and eldest son Lao Ta (Robert Bice) decide to remain on their farm despite the anticipated dangers of a Japanese invasion. While Lao Er and Jade join a resistance group of refugees in the hills. Upon their departure the Japanese Army takes over the valley, and Lao Ta's wife Orchid is raped and killed by the invading soldiers, who also kill Wu Lien's elderly mother. Ling and his

wife remain secure as they go into hiding. This cruelty drives the remaining sons of Ling to join the resistance.

In the conclusion, Ling must accept that he must destroy his land so that he can sacrifice his present gains to ensure the future of his grandson. When Jade and hubby rejoin the resistance fighters in the hills to ensure a Free China, they leave their son the, " seed of the dragon," in the care of his loving grandparents.

The story of this movie showed that how the brave women struggles and fight for their country, she appears as a caring mother, a loving and trustworthy wife and a true patriot. The movie shows that how the heroic young Chinese woman leads her fellow villagers in an uprising against Japanese Invaders. This movie truly reflect the feminism theory.