Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator</td>
<td>Sujata Patel</td>
<td>Professor Department of Sociology University of Hyderabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Coordinator</td>
<td>Anurekha Chari Wagh</td>
<td>Assistant Professor Department of Sociology Centre for Advanced Studies Savitribai Phule Pune University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Writer/Author (CW)</td>
<td>Sudeshna Mukherjee</td>
<td>Assistant Professor Centre for Women’s Studies Bangalore University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Reviewer (CR)</td>
<td>Anurekha Chari Wagh</td>
<td>Assistant Professor Department of Sociology Centre for Advanced Studies Savitribai Phule Pune University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Editor (LE)</td>
<td>Anurekha Chari Wagh</td>
<td>Assistant Professor Department of Sociology Centre for Advanced Studies Savitribai Phule Pune University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Module Structure:

1. Introduction,

2. Basic tenets of Marxism and subordination of gender perspective under class perspective,

3. Engel’s on
   a) Productive and reproductive labor and
   b) *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*

4. From Marxism to Marxist Feminism: (Thinkers: Margaret Benston, Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James)

5. Issues:
   - Socialization of Domestic work
   - Wages for House work
- Theory of comparable worth

6. From Marxist Feminism to Socialist Feminism
7. Emergence of Socialist Feminism: A synthesis of Marxist Feminism, Radical Feminism and Psychoanalytic Feminism
8. Socialist Feminism on Patriarchy and Capitalism
9. Dual System Theory(Juliett Mitchell, Heidi Hartmann)
10. Unified System Theory(Irish Young, Alison Jagger)
11. Contemporary Socialist Feminism
12. Critiques of Marxist and Socialist Feminism
13. Socialist feminism in Indian Context

(B) Description of Module

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Description of Module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Name</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Name</td>
<td>Sociology of Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module Name/ Title</td>
<td>Marxist and Socialist Feminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module ID</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-requisites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Objectives             | ➢ The basic postulates of the Marxian model of class oppression based on economic determinism.  
                           ➢ Gender blind nature of ‘oppression’ under Marxism and necessary push initiated by |
Marxist feminists to address gender based oppression along with class oppression.

- Inadequacies in Marxism and emergence of socialist feminism combining Marxist, Radical and Psychoanalytic Feminisms.
- Socialist feminism’s emphasis on both patriarchy and capitalism in explaining women’s subordination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alienation, Capitalism, Marxism, class and class struggle, Dual System Theory, Unified System Theory, Marxist feminism, mode of production, patriarchy, Private Property, Productive Labor, Reproductive labor, sexual division of labor, Socialist Feminism, Socialization of domestic work, Wages for House Work, Comparative Worth, women’s oppression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Marxist and socialist Feminism Module**

**Introduction:**

Interdisciplinary and intersectionality have been influencing feminist theorizing since inception. Feminist theorizing has been reshaped by multiple mainstream theoretical perspectives in its understanding of women’s oppression. Inability of the liberal welfarism and radical patriarchal feminist agendas of women’s liberation, paved the ways for Marxist and socialist feminism. Marxist and socialist feminists’ claim that it is impossible for women, to achieve true freedom in a class-based capitalist society where the powerless many, that produce the wealth, are deprived of it. Private ownership of the means of production by relatively few persons, originally all male, inaugurated a class system whose contemporary manifestations are corporate capitalism and imperialism. Reflection on this state of affairs suggests that capitalism itself, not just the larger social rules that privilege men over women, is the cause of women’s oppression. Women’s true liberation demands, the capitalist system must be replaced by a socialist system in which the means of production belong to everyone. No longer economically dependent on men, women will be just as free as men.

**Basic tenets of Marxism: subordination of gender perspective under class perspective:**

Marxism, based on influential works by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (1848) in ‘The Communist Manifesto’ , Marx (1859) in ‘A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy’ and Engels’ ‘The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State’ , regard classism rather than sexism as the fundamental cause of women’s oppression. For the Marxist, material forces—the production and reproduction of social life—are the prime movers in history. In other words, Marx believed a society’s total mode of production—that is, its forces of production (the raw materials, tools, and workers that actually produce goods) plus its relations of production (the ways in which production is organized)— generates a superstructure (a layer of legal, political, and social ideas) that in turn reinforces the mode of production (Tong,2009).
Marx and Engels focused on class struggle as the driving forces of history; they paid scant attention to “sex class.” Shulamith Firestone, a radical feminist, following Marxian dialectics claimed that the material basis for the sexual/political ideology of female submission and male domination was rooted in the reproductive roles of men and women. She proposed to make up for this by developing a feminist version of historical materialism in which sex class, rather than economic class, is the central concept. Firestone said it would take a major biological and social revolution to effect this kind of human liberation.

“Historical Materialism is that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and great moving power of all historical events in the economic development of society, in the changes of the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggles of these classes against one another.”

_Friedrich Engels (Socialism: Utopian or Scientific, quoted in Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex, pp. 1–12)._ 

Historical materialism is that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all historical events in the dialectic of sex: the division of society into two distinct biological classes for procreative reproduction, and the struggles of these classes with one another; in the changes in the modes of marriage, reproduction and child care created by these struggles; in the connected development of other physically-differentiated classes (castes); and in the first division of labor based on sex which developed into the (economic-cultural) class system.

According to Marxist feminists, women's liberation can only be achieved through a radical restructuring of the current capitalist economy, in which much of women's labor is uncompensated and invisible. In the capitalist system, two types of labor exist. Followed by Engels, Marxist feminists like Margaret Benston and Peggy Morton stressed on:

**Productive Labor:** in which the labor results in goods or services that have monetary value in the capitalist system and are thus compensated by the producers in the form of a paid wage.

**Reproductive labor:** which is associated with the private sphere and involves anything that people have to do for themselves that is not for the purposes of receiving a wage (i.e. cleaning, cooking, having children).

_Engels- The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State:_

Although the fathers of Marxism did not take women’s oppression as seriously as they did workers’ oppression, but Engels did offer explanations for women’s oppression. Engels in “The
Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State” (1845), showed how changes in the material conditions of people affect the organization of their family relations. Engels speculated that primitive hunting gathering; promiscuous societies may have been not merely matrilineal but also matriarchal societies in which women ruled at the political, social, and economic levels (Tong, 2009). Only when the site of production changed, women lost their advantaged position. Engels said a site change did occur with the advent of agriculture, domestication of animals and the breeding of herds. Somehow, the male-female power balance shifted in favor of men, as men learned to produce more than enough animals to meet the tribe’s needs for milk and meat. As men’s work and production grew in importance, the value of women’s work, production and status of women decreased.

With new found social status, suddenly men wanted their own biological children (by imposing control on pre-existing free female sexuality) to get their possessions and exerted enormous pressure to convert society from a matrilineal one into a patrilineal one. Engels presented the “overthrow of mother right” as “the world-historic defeat of the female sex” (Engels, 1845: 118–119). In this new familial order, said Engels, the husband ruled by virtue of his economic power: “He is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat” (Engels, 1845: 118–119) Engels believed men’s power over women is rooted in the men’s control over private property. He believed the oppression of women will cease only with the dissolution of the institution of private property.

**From Marxism to Marxist Feminism:**

Classical Marxist feminists work within the conceptual terrain laid out by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and other nineteenth-century thinkers. During the Communist Revolution of 1917 in Russia, women were invited to enter the productive workforce with expectation that economic independence would increase the possibility of women’s developing self-confidence and viewing themselves as makers of meaningful human history (Tong, 2009). But it was disturbingly found:

1. The relegation of most women to low-status “women’s work” (i.e., secretarial work; rote factory work; and service work, including jobs related to cooking, cleaning, and caring for the basic needs of the young, the old, and the infirm);
2. Reconfirmation of sexual division of labor through the creation of “female professions” and “male professions”;
3. The payment of lower wages to women than the wages paid to men;
4. The treatment of women as a “colossal reserve of labor forces” to use or not use, depending on the states need for workers (Voronina, 1993: 107).

Like Marxists in general, Marxist feminists claim that social existence determines consciousness. Thus, Marxist feminists believe we need to analyze the links between women’s work status and women’s self-image in order to understand the unique character of women’s oppression (Holmstrom, 1984: 464).

According to Marx, capitalist ideologies lead workers and employers to focus on capitalism’s surface structure of exchange relations (Schmitt, : 96–97) where workers gradually convince themselves that even though their money is very hard earned, there is nothing inherently wrong with the specific exchange relationships into which they have entered. But, as Marxist and socialist feminists see it, when a poor, illiterate, unskilled woman chooses to sell her sexual or reproductive services, chances are her choice is more coerced than free(Tong, 2009).

Marx observed that every class divided political economy (right from the primitive communal state, the slave society, the pre-capitalist society, to the capitalist society till date) contains the seeds of its own destruction. According to Marx, when these two groups of people, the haves and the have-nots, both become conscious of them as classes, class struggle begins and ultimately topples the system that produced these classes. As Marxist and socialist feminists wish to view women as a collectivity, Marxist teachings on class and class consciousness play a large role in Marxist and socialist feminist thought.

A Marxist answer to the question of women’s oppression would point to the sexual division of labor and the implications of this division for power differential between women and men. By widening the Marxist concept of reproduction to include household labor and child care, feminists like Margaret Benston, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James, Sylvia Walby, and Clara Zetkin made major contribution to
our understanding of the interaction of gender and the economy. They have stressed on the following ideas:

**Socialization of domestic work:**
Margaret Benston defined women as that class of people “responsible for the production of simple use-values in the activities associated with the house and family” (Benston, 1969: 16). Focusing on women’s exclusion from productive labor as the most important source of female oppression, some Marxist feminists argued for the inclusion of domestic work within the waged capitalist economy. According to Benston, feminist plan for women’s liberation through bringing women into the productive workforce would be thwarted if it is not simultaneously supported by socializing the jobs of cooking, cleaning, and childcare.

To be sure, she conceded, the socialization of domestic work might lead to women doing the same sorts of “female” work outside the home as they do inside the home but with remuneration and recognition. Wage employment will increase the men’s chance of taking up those jobs and thereby increasing the status of these works as well (Benston, 1969: 16).

**Wages for House Work:**
Marxist feminist thinkers, Dalla Costa and James claimed that women’s work inside the home generates surplus value (Dalla Costa and James, 1972). They reasoned that women’s domestic work is the necessary condition for all other labor, from which, in turn surplus value is extracted. By providing not only food and clothes but also emotional comfort to current (and future) workers, women keep the cogs of the capitalist machine running. Therefore, Dalla Costa and James argued, men’s employers should pay women wages for the housework they do (Dalla Costa and James, 1972).

Their suggestion attracted lot of criticism from within and outside feminist discourse. Complexities associated with modalities of payment of wages for house work makes it untenable (not all or not even most women in advanced capitalist economies are stay-at-home domestic workers, if they have to pay wages for house work employers would probably pay housewives’ husbands lower wages, if they have to most small companies would probably go out of

---

*In Sept, 2012, Indian parliament discussed the issue of wages for Housework but failed to table the bill.*
Some feminist argued if house work become remunerative then it may thwart women’s education and other productive intellectual activities, thereby, subverting the process of women’s liberation. It also may push them more within the four walls of home.

**Comparative Worth:**
Marxist feminists have focused their attention on the inequitable manner in which the sexual division of labor operates within the society in capitalist world where men and women are differentially paid for doing the comparable work. Job where concentrations of women are more attracts much lesser remuneration in comparison to the job dominated by men. Marxist feminists view this having far reaching consequence on mitigating feminization of poverty.

**Emergence of Socialist Feminism: A synthesis of Marxist Feminism, Radical Feminism and Psychoanalytic Feminism**
Socialist feminism in its quest for origin combines Marxist, Radical and Psychoanalytic Feminisms. Socialist feminism on the one hand broadens the Marxist feminism’s gender blindness in explaining the role of capitalism in the oppression of women and on the other includes radical feminism’s idea of the role of gender and the patriarchy in subjugating women (Buchanan, 2011). While Marxist and Radical feminists emphasized macro social aspects of women’s oppression; psychoanalytic feminists in their respective explanations of women’s oppression, emphasizes that the roots of women’s oppression are embedded deep in the female psyche. Considering Freudian Oedipus complex as the root of male rule, or patriarchy, some psychoanalytic feminists speculate that the Oedipus complex is nothing more than the product of men’s imagination—a psychic trap that everyone, especially women, should try to escape. Others like Ortner, Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow accept some version of the Oedipus complex as the experience that integrates the individual into society. They opined dual parenting and dual participation in the workforce would change the gender valences of the Oedipus complex (Chodorow, 1978). Authority, autonomy, and universalism would no longer be the exclusive property of men; love, dependence, and particularism would no longer be the exclusive property of women (Tong, 2009). Thus Socialist feminists see women’s liberation as a necessary part of larger quest for social, economic and political action.
From Marxist Feminism to Socialist Feminism:

Influenced by the Historical Materialism, Socialist feminists consider how the sexism and gendered division of labor of each historical era is determined by the economic system of the time. Those conditions are largely expressed through capitalist and patriarchal relations. Socialist feminists, thus reject the Marxist notion that class and class struggle are the only defining aspects of history and economic development.

To understand socialist feminism, one must understand praxis. Praxis is a Marxist concept which means the ability humans have to consciously change the environment in order to meet their needs. Socialist feminists, like Marxist feminists, hold that praxis is the one thing universal to all humans. Unlike Marxist feminists, socialist feminists hold that praxis has gender specific forms and extends to the private sphere of life. Unlike Marxist feminist theory, socialist feminists believe that the home is not just a place of consumption, but of production as well. Women’s work within the home, having and raising children, as well as supporting men by doing cooking, cleaning, and other forms of housework which permit men to work outside the home, are all forms of production because they contribute to society at large. Production, according to socialist feminists, should not be measured in dollars, but rather in social worth.

Socialist feminists agree with both Marxist feminists that capitalism is the source of women’s oppression, and with radical feminists that patriarchy is the source of women’s oppression. Therefore, the way to end women’s oppression, in socialist feminists’ estimation, is to kill the two-headed beast of capitalist patriarchy or patriarchal capitalism. Motivated by this goal, socialist feminists seek to develop theories that explain the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy.

To overcome the limits of traditional Marxist feminism on the one hand and of Radical and psychoanalytic feminism on the other Socialist feminists have developed two different approaches. They are: a) **Dual System Theory** and b) **Unified System Theory**
Dual Systems Theory:

Dual system theorists maintain that patriarchy and capitalism are distinct forms of social relation and distinct sets of interest, which when they intersect, oppress women more. For women’s oppression to be fully understood both patriarchy and capitalism must be analyzed first as separate phenomena and then as a phenomena that dialectically relate to each other. Although all dual systems theorists describe capitalism as a material structure or historically rooted mode of production, only some describe patriarchy as a material structure or historically rooted mode of reproduction or sexuality. Others describe patriarchy as a non material structure that is, a largely ideological and or psychoanalytic structure that transcends the contingencies of space and time (Tong, 1999).

A Non-materialist Account of Patriarchy plus a Materialists Account of Capitalism: Juliet Mitchell is an example of dual system theorists who coupled a non materialist account of patriarchy with materialist account of capitalism. Mitchell’s account of patriarchy was nonmaterial because some aspects of women’s life within the family are economic (result of changes made in the mode of production across space and through time) while others are biosocial (the result of the interplay between the female biology and the social environment); and that still others are ideological (the result of the ideas society has about the way in which women should relate to men). In spite of the changes in the mode of production, these biosocial and ideological aspects will remain essentially the same. Thus, even under socialism, women will remain somewhat oppressed.
unless the defeat of capitalism is accompanied by the defeat of patriarchy. She has suggested while economic aspects of patriarchy can be altered by material means, its biosocial and ideological aspects can be altered only by nonmaterial means—through a rewriting of the psycho-sexual drama (Tong, 1999).

**A Materialist Account of Patriarchy plus a Materialist Account of Capitalism:** Heidi Hartmann defined patriarchy as “a set of social relations between men which have material base. This material base rests in men’s historical control over women’s labor power; this control is constituted by restricting women’s access to important economic resources and by disallowing women any control over female sexuality and especially female reproductive capacities. Men’s controls over women’s labor power various from society to society and across time (It appears for example, in the shape of a women’s need to please her husband or lover so that he does not leave her and their children; or in the shape of a women’s need to please her boss so that he does not fire her).

Marxists analysis predicts that patriarchy will wither away in the face of capitalism’s need to proletarianize everyone. A feminist analysis predicts that capitalism and patriarchy will reach some sort of compromise on the women’s question. Reflecting on the present sexual division of labor, which results in the under payment and over work of women, Hartmann concluded that men’s desire to control women is at least as strong as capitals desire to control workers. Capitalism and patriarchy are not two heads of the same beast. They are two different beasts, each of which must be fought with different weapons (Tong, 1999).

**Unified Systems Theory:**

According to R. Tong (1999) In contrast to dual system theorists, unified system theorists attempt to analyze capitalism and patriarchy together through the use of one concept. According to these theorists, capitalism is no more separate from patriarchy than the mind is from the body. This is an even more ambitious form of socialist feminism than is the dual system approach, for if there is one conceptual lens through which all of the dimensions of women’s oppression can be filtered, then it may be possible to unite all of the feminist perspectives.

**A) Gender Division of Labor as Unifying Concept:** Young believed that feminist who wishes to avoid the pitfalls of the dual systems approach to capitalist patriarchy need to develop a new core concept for Marxist theory. She suggested that the gendered category “division of labor” has the conceptual power to transform Marxist feminist theory into socialist feminist theory, which is
powerful enough to accommodate the insights of Marxist, radical and psychoanalytic feminist in a unitary framework.

According to Young a division of labor analysis has the advantage of being more specific than a class analysis. Division of labor analysis requires a detailed, very concrete discussion of, for example, who gives the orders and who takes them, who does the stimulating work and who does the drudge work, who works the desirable shift and who works the undesirable shift and who gets paid more and who paid less. Division of labor analysis can better explain why women usually take the orders do the drudge work, work the undesirable shift, and get paid less while men usually give the orders. All these analyses really suggest is that a Marxist class analysis can be supplemented by a feminist division of labor analysis. As young saw it, capitalism is very much aware of its workers gender, race and ethnicity. Because a large reserve of unemployed workers is necessary to keep wages low and to meet unanticipated demands for increased supplies of goods and services, capitalism has both implicit and explicit criteria for determining who shall constitute its primary, employed work force and who shall act has its secondary, unemployed work force. Capitalism has its own patriarchal criteria of identifying men as primary work force material and women as secondary work force material. Because women were needed at home in a way that men were not or so patriarchy concluded men were freer to work outside the home than women were (Tong, 1999).

B) Alienation as a Unifying Concept: Alison Jaggar was working towards unified systems theory and like young she advanced a concept other than class as the quintessential Marxist concept. In her book ‘Feminist Politics and Human Nature’, Jaggar identified alienation as the concept that will provide us with a theoretical framework powerful enough to accommodate the main insights of Marxists, radical, psychoanalytic, and even liberal feminist thought.

Under capitalism work becomes a dehumanizing activity. Jaggar organized her discussion of women’s alienation, her fragmentation and splintering, under the aegis of sexuality motherhood, and intellectuality. Under Capitalism, the way a wage worker is alienated, or separated, from the product he produces, a women is also alienated from the product upon which she works: her body. A woman may think that by dieting, exercising, and dressing she is beautifying herself, but in reality she is probably shaping and adorning her flesh for satisfaction of men (Tong, 1999). Many a time a women has little or no say about the control and use (voyeuristic gaze to rape) of her body. This process of commodification
objectifies the worker (considering him as mere machine from which labor power is extracted) and women (a tool for satisfaction of men) and intensifies undue competition amongst them.

Motherhood, like sexuality, is also an alienating experience for women. According to Jaggar, the way a worker is alienated from the product he produces, a women, is alienated from the product of her reproductive labor when instead of her someone else (family, husband/partner, state population policy, financial condition, demand of cheap labor, social prejudice like son preference etc.), decides how many children she should bear.

Jaggar continued that; as labors have no control or identification with the process of production in highly technical assembly like production under capitalism; women are also alienated from the process of their reproductive labor. Obstetricians take total control of the birthing process, sometimes performing medically unnecessary cesarian sections and / or anesthetizing a woman against her wishes. With the advent of most sophisticated technological instruments under new reproductive technologies, women are likely to be further alienated from the product and process of childbirth (Tong, 1999).

Childrearing like childbearing, is an alienating experience when scientific experts, (most of whom are male) not women, take charge of it. As Jaggar saw it the pressure on mothers are enormous because, with virtually no assistance, they are supposed to execute every edict of the experts. One of the most distressing features of a mother’s alienation from her children is that her inability to see her children as persons is equaled only by their inability to see her as a person. Proper mothering impedes the growth of friendship between women, as mothers compete with each other to produce and to process the perfect child.

Finally, said Jaggar not only are many women alienated from their own sexuality and from the product and process of motherhood, they are also alienated from their intellectual capacities. A woman is made to feel so and sure of herself that she hesitates to express her ideas in public; for fear that her thoughts are not worth expressing and fearing that she will be exposed as a pretender, not possessor, of knowledge.

To the same degree that young was convinced that a gender division of labor is essential to capitalism, Jaggar believed that use of the theoretical framework of alienation identifies women’s contemporary oppression as a phenomenon peculiar to the capitalist form of male dominance. Jaggar concluded that although the overthrow of capitalism might end women’s as well as men’s exploitation in the productive workforce, it would not end women’s alienation from everything and everyone, especially themselves.75 Only the overthrow of patriarchy would enable women to become full persons(Tong,2009).
Contemporary Socialist Feminism:
Like Young and Hartmann, Sylvia Walby saw patriarchy is located in six somewhat independent structures: unpaid domestic work, waged labor, culture, sexuality, male violence, and the state (Walby, 2003:45). These structures, and their relative importance, vary from one historical era to another. Walby noted, for example, that patriarchy oppressed women mostly in the private sphere of domestic production during the nineteenth century, and mostly in the public sphere of waged labor and the state in the twentieth century. According to her, “the modernization of the gender regime i.e. women’s entry into the productive labor force along with men is creating a new political constituency of working women who are vocalizing their perceived interests in policies to assist combining home and work” (Walby, 2003:53).

Along with invisibility of women’s work at home, contemporary socialist feminists have focused on the gender pay gap and the often oppressive nature of women’s work in the so-called global factory. According to Nancy Holmstrom, “The brutal economic realities of globalization impact everyone across the globe—but women are affected disproportionately. Displaced by economic changes, women bear a greater burden of labor throughout the world as social services have been cut, whether in response to structural adjustment plans in the third world or to so-called welfare reform in the United States. Women have been forced to migrate, are subject to trafficking, and are the proletarians of the newly industrializing countries……..Socialist feminism is the approach with the greatest capacity to illuminate the exploitation and oppression of most of the women of the world” (Holmstrom, 2003:3).

Socialist feminism in Indian Context:
Socialist feminism helps us to understand women’s oppression in caste and class ridden Indian society in more egregious ways. A dalit women worker in a garment export unit is oppressed not just because of her proletarian status in the capitalist mode of production; she is often oppressed due to her vulnerable caste and gender identity in a patriarchal system. She often finds herself in monotonous, long duration, low remuneration job in a women intensive organization controlled
by minority men. Global vulnerability of capital and withdrawal of state from social sector under structural adjustment often exacerbate her vulnerability.

**Critiques of Marxist and Socialist Feminism:**

a) Marxism’s’ economic determinism and inability to distinguish between economic class and sex class attracts lot of criticisms. Given women’s distinctly unprivileged position in the workplace, it is somewhat difficult to understand why, beginning in the 1970s, many feminists, including some Marxist feminists, abandoned materialist explanations of women’s oppression. They turned instead to psychological explanations for women’s oppression, explanations that could answer the question why women’s status remains low irrespective of the political and economic character of the society in which they live.

b) Juliet Mitchell rejected the claim of the Marxist feminists that an economic revolution aimed at overthrowing capitalism will make men and women full partners. Just because women enter the productive workforce to labor side by side with men does not mean women will return home in the evening arm in arm with men.

c) Marxist Feminism considered women as a part of working class and emphasized more in the economic sphere rather than paying attention to women’s experience in the domestic front i.e. outside the labor market. The solution to female exploitation in the lines of abolition of Capitalism seems to be a very long way to pursue as revolutionary overthrow of Capitalism does not seem likely to occur very soon.

d) Mitchell explained, attitudes toward women will never really change as long as both female and male psychologies are dominated by the phallic symbol. Thus, patriarchy and capitalism must be overthrown if society is to be truly humanized (Tong, 2009). Psychoanalysis was seen as essential to an understanding of gendered subjectivity.

e) Radical Feminists have criticized Capitalist forms of exploitation. Radical feminists argue that patriarchal forms of exploitation have existed in all known societies, not just Capitalist ones. Patriarchy predates Capitalism which makes it a more significant explanation of female exploitation and oppression (www.sociology.org.uk).
f) Cultural analysts and post-modernists’ were explicitly critical of materialist explanations of women’s oppression. Discourse and the language is considered essential to interpret women’s identity and activity as there is no unity to “women,” or to “women’s oppression,” and that differing discourses simply constructed varying definitions of “women.”( Jackson, “Marxism and Feminism,” p. 33) Thus began the deconstruction of “women” and the ascendancy of postmodern feminism.

g) The significance of Capitalist forms of exploitation is underplayed in Socialist forms of Feminism Socialist Feminism is criticized for being neither revolutionary nor radical enough to create lasting solutions to the problem of female economic and social exploitation.

Reference:
14. www.sociology.org.uk

Further Readings: