

English (Hons) Part-3; Paper-5; Unit-X, Topic
"Feminism"; Lecture Series: 67: by GIANDESA
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FEMINISM

Feminist Criticism is a type of literary Criticism which may study, write and advocate the-right of women. according to Judith Fetterly, "Feminist Criticism is a political act whose aim is not simply to interpret the world but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read". Using feminist Criticism to analyze fiction may involve studying the repression of women in fiction. The emergence of feminist literary Criticism is one of the major developments in the literary studies in the past forty years or so. Feminist Criticism became a dominant force in western literary studies in the late 1970, when feminist theory more broadly conceived was applied to linguistic and literary matters. Since the early 1980s, feminist literary Criticism has developed and diversified in a number of ways and is now characterized by a global perspective.

Although interested in the subject of feminine language and writing, North

American feminist critics of the 1970 and early 1980s began by analyzing literary text - close textual reading and historical scholarship. One group practiced "feminist Critique", examining how women characters are portrayed, exposing the patriarchal ideology implicit in the so called classics, and demonstrating that attitudes and traditions reinforcing systematic masculine dominance are inscribed in the literary canon. Another group practiced what came to be called "gynocriticism", studying writings by women and examining the female literary tradition to find out how woman writers across the ages have perceived themselves and imagined reality.

While it gradually became customary to refer to an Anglo-American tradition of feminist criticism, British feminist critics of the 1970s and early 1980s objected to the tendency of some North American critics to find universal or "essential" feminine attributes, arguing that differences of race, class, and culture gave rise to crucial differences among women across space and time. British feminist critics regarded their own critical practice as more political than that of North American feminists, emphasizing an engagement with historical process in order to promote

social change.

By the early 1990s, the French, American, and British approaches had so thoroughly critiqued, influenced, and assimilated one another that nationality no longer automatically signaled a practitioner's approach. Today's criticism seldom focus on "woman" as a relatively monolithic category; rather, they view "women" as a relatively monolithic category: rather they view "women" as members of different societies with different concerns. Feminists of colour, third world (preferably called postcolonial) feminists, and lesbian feminists have stressed that women are not defined solely by the fact that they are female: other attributes (such as religion, class and sexual orientation) are also important, making the problems and goals of one group of women different from those of another.

Many commentators have argued that feminist criticism is by definition gender criticism because of its focus on the feminine gender. But the relationship between feminist and gender criticism is, in fact, complex, the two approaches are certainly not polar opposites but, rather exist along a continuum of attitudes towards sex, sexuality, gender and language.

What is the feminist approach to literary criticism?

Feminist literary criticism is the critical analysis of literary works based on the feminist perspective. Particularly, feminist literary critics tend to reject the patriarchal norms of literature that privileges masculine ways of thinking and marginalizes women politically, economically and psychologically. Virginia Woolf argues that the male dominated ideas of the patriarchal society prevented women from realizing their creativity and true potential. In her essay, "Professions for women", she states that she had to "kill" the "angel in the house" in order to write her novels and critical works.

The idea of feminist literary criticism is to apply ideas that have a basis in feminism, to look at the book or poem through the eyes of a feminist in order to evaluate how that literature "treats" issues related to feminism. As the issues of women's rights grows in our society, feminism is being used to measure many aspects of modern life.

Modern feminist literary criticism had its roots in the post-world war II