

Feminists refer to three broad forms of misogyny or woman-hating.

1. **The first is sexism.** This form of hating, oppression, discrimination, intimidation is easily identifiable because it relates to overt behaviour. Any visible act or speech or attitude or theory which treats women as inferior to men, which disadvantages women to men, and thus subjugates women and when subse-The Sex /Gender System frequently the subjugation is thought to be legitimate, then it is a form of sexism. Umpteen examples of such sexist references are to be found in the texts written by some of the most revered philosophers. Plato, Aristotle, St Augustine, Kant, and Hegel are all guilty of such sins of commission. Sexism is the outward manifestation of an embedded level of discrimination, it is not a contingent, free flowing occurrence like an emergent social phenomenon.
2. It has its roots in a deeper and more pernicious form of misogyny, namely, **patriarchy**. Patriarchy is the second form of misogyny. In patriarchy institutions and customs are all conducive to male supremacy. By gaining institutional and social support sexist practices are further entrenched in patriarchy. This presence may not be easily identifiable in a society, since it works like an underlying structure of human behaviour. Patriarchy has specific roles assigned to men and to women. Women are objectified in this social mode. There are different ways of objectifying women. The modes of objectification vary from society to society and from one period of history to another. What is common to all forms of patriarchy is male supremacy. Patriarchy is rooted in men's control of women's productive and reproductive labour. Patriarchy is necessarily related to power. Those who have power have the right to control the destiny of those who are powerless - it works on the principle that 'superiority justifies domination'.

Patriarchy necessarily incorporates and sanctions an unequal distribution of power which helps maintain the status quo of oppression. In patriarchy man is born with a male gender privilege. This advantage is not gained by choice. Although one cannot be held responsible for having such a privilege one can be held personally responsible for not doing anything to stall the perpetuation of male gender privilege.

An accomplice in patriarchy is thus guilty of a sin of inaction. He is collaborating by ignoring woman's rightful participation in social engineering by perpetuating the status quo which ignores the status of women. One could be guilty on either count - by committing sexist acts or by not resisting sexist acts. In philosophy sexist omissions are caused by not including women's lived experience in mainstream philosophy.

3. The third type of misogyny referred to by feminists is **phallocentrism**. This is a form of discrimination against women at the conceptual level. If sexism is discrimination at the level of speech and action, and patriarchy is structural oppression then phallocentrism is a form of conceptual male domination. Phallocentrism is a discursive series of procedures - meaning thereby that this form of conceptual practices is established by argument or reasoning as opposed to intuition. It has been

argued that there is a sex/gender transcendent human essence - an essence which is sex/gender neutral. By developing and expressing this essence men and women can achieve dignity, freedom and equality. They can also overcome all forms of difference and discrimination.

According to this view the liberatory aim should be to collapse the masculine-feminine identity into a human identity. The idea being that sexual oppression is bound to continue unless the body is transcended or displaced as the centre of female identity,<sup>5</sup> which means that human essence is bestowed in the realm of consciousness away and apart from the body. It has been argued that if female essence is located beyond her productive and reproductive identity then male control over woman's productive and reproductive labour will fail to constrain or inhibit her human excellence which belongs to an entirely separate plane. Feminists identify a male manoeuvre implicit in this tripartite classification of man/woman and human. Allegedly the category human is just as gender biased as the categories of male and female. To begin with the gender identity of man and woman is characterized by the following binaries: rational/emotional, abstract/concrete, assertive/submissive, agentic/indecisive where the first term of each set characterizes man. The binaries are culture specific. What needs to be noted is not the actual content of the binaries but their structure.

In each culture the male gender features have greater value than the female gender features. Feminists who are critical of the man, woman, human tripartite division identify some form of phallocentrism in such a categorization. The phallocentric charge is that the masculinity which characterizes 'human' goes unrecognized. On closer examination it transpires that human essence is nothing other than the universalization of particular features of masculinity as if they were genuinely representative of both the sexes.<sup>6</sup> Aristotle refers to man as a rational animal. Reason for him is a monolithic category which excludes emotion and context and by implication woman's 'lived' experience. Aristotle refers to woman as 'deformed man'. This is because by definition women, children and slaves are disqualified from the same kind of reason and virtues available to men. Phallocentrism stakes its claim to rationality and truth only by forgetting or constantly repressing its own rhetorical character. In other words phallocentrism's claim of being discursive is a disguise, in actuality it is rooted in rhetoric, which means it is presented in a language designed to impress or persuade with an implication of insincerity and exaggeration. Phallocentrism refuses to acknowledge its relation to power, it pretends that its truth has an absolute validity independent of the metaphoric and power strategies that bring it into being and perpetuate its existence. In a phallocentric conceptual scheme woman is always relegated to a subordinate position. She is required to gain equality by transcending her female identity, that is, by ignoring her lived experience as a woman. For her this is only possible through a neutral existence. The aim of excellence set before her in this conceptual scheme is that of becoming more 'human'. There is a hidden manoeuvre in this prescription of asking men and women to converge in a neutral human ideal since the concept human is not jibed by gender bias

in patriarchy. There is a feminist convention of writing human as huMan. In this way the hidden agenda of branding male virtues as human universals is exposed. There are two alternative stances open within a phallogentric scheme: 'feminine' could be defined as the inversion of 'masculine'. This depiction is implicit in the binaries stated above, e.g., aggressive/submissive, abstract/concrete. Alternatively, the same binary positions could lead to an interpretation different from inversion - they could be seen as complementary pairs. Each of these three possibilities, namely, equality (on male terms - being human), inversion and complementarity confirm the primacy of the masculine and the subordination of the feminine. Therefore each one of these alternative conceptualizations is phallogentric. Each takes the male as primary and, measures and defines the female only in her relation to the male.

In phallogentrism the masculine is granted an autonomous self-defined position while the female or feminine has a secondary position having a dependent definition.