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A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN BETTYFRIEDAN AND MARGARET MEAD

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ABSTRACT

This is a comparative study between Betty Friedan and Margaret Mead and their Feminine Mystique view. Mostly in all the columns, books and articles and television experts keep telling women their role was to seek fulfillment as wives and mothers. But Betty Friedan's "Feminine Mystic" and Margaret Mead's "Coming of age in Samoa" says, that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity crossing the boundaries of genders with the hope that someday there will be girls and women whose name will no longer signify merely an opposite of the masculine, but something in itself, something that makes one think not of any complement and limit, but only of life and existence: the feminine human being.

Keywords: Feminism, anthropological, sexism,

Betty Friedan was considered by many as the "mother" of the second wave of Modern feminism.

When she was expecting her second child, she was restless as a homemaker and began to wonder if other women felt the same way as she is undergoing through. To answer this question, she surveyed other graduates of Smith College and her research formed the basis of the book "Feminine Mystique". The book became a sensation –creating a social revolution by dispelling the myth that all women wanted to be happy home makers. The book was an immediate and controversial bestseller and was translated into a number of foreign languages. Its title was a term she coined to describe "the problem that has no name". It provided feeling of personal insignificance resulting from the acceptance of selected roles that requires a women's intellectual, economic and emotional confidence to only revolve around their husbands. They were supposed to be happy in their built-up

paradise with a working husband and smiling children, but many were bored, depressed and anxious. She delved further, not satisfied by the explanation women gave that their unhappiness was their own fault.

When on a routine assignment involving a strike at a major electric plant most of the workers were women, she discovered that women seemed to be discriminated against, not only by the company, but also in the union. But no one was interested to raise their voice; even she was fired for being pregnant, from her own newspaper's job. Above all, that drove her to pen the "Feminine Mystique".

In this book Friedan encourages women to seek new opportunities for themselves. Through her findings, Betty Friedan hypothesized that women are victims of a false belief system that requires them to find identity and meaning in their lives, not only viewing themselves in relation to their husband

and children, but also seeking personal fulfillment through their performance of tedious and repetitive household work. Domesticity had created what Friedan calls a "trap" that prevented women from growing into fully self-actualized individuals with knowledge of their abilities beyond household work and mothering, and interests beyond the confines of their home. Messages in media, particularly in the women's magazines to which women looked for advice, catered to the notion that the domestic world was the only one that mattered. Friedan explains the ways in which society had equated domesticity with femininity; forcing women into roles they believe they had chosen, but they had not. Such a system causes women to completely lose their identity in that family, particularly for women who had college degree. Though these women had obeyed convention- whether by leaving their jobs at munitions factories after the Second World War, or by forfeiting their educations in favor of husband- housework had left them with conflicting sense of having too much to do and nothing at all to do.

"The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the 20th century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the bed, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured cub scouts and brownies, lay besides her husband at night – she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – "Is this all?"

From the beginning in the 1960's American Women came to realize that the problem they were facing which was the one Betty felt laid buried and unspoken, in the minds of American Women for many years. In the fifteen years after the world war II, the mystique of feminine fulfillment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary culture. Women were considered to be simply different, the question of their superiority or inferiority was not argued at all. Betty Friedan found that each one of the American Women was not sharing the problems with their husbands and children or the home. They suddenly realized that

they all share the common problem- "the problem that has no name." The problem assured as a national important and much attention was given in social media repeatedly. Betty Friedan says that "no other road to fulfillment was offered to them in the middle of the 20th century." The resultant tragedy was that "most women adjusted to their roles and suffered or ignored the problem that has no name." Betty finds some clues to the mystery, she says

1. It was not the career women who suffer from the problems; it was the common woman with conventional ideas of fulfillment.
2. Even higher education does not make women aware of women's rights. Even then, women suffer as housewives and mothers.
3. Friedan says that if maternity or sexual satisfaction is the answer to woman's desperation, the American Women are producing more and more children and are getting much deeper satisfaction.

The real root of the malaise among American Women is due to the multiple roles as modern house wife, mistress, mother, nurse, consumer, cook, chauffeur, expert on interior decoration, child care, appliance repair, furniture refinishing, nutrition and education. She remarked that the American Woman was trapped simply by the enormous roles she had to play at home.

Betty Friedan finds it all the more urgent to arrive at a correct diagnosis of the burden that the women have been carrying, which was noted in her words:

"The housewife's day is fragmented; she can never spend more than fifteen minutes on any one thing, she has no time to read books-only magazines; even if she had timeshe has lost the power of concentrate. At the end of the day, she is so terribly tired that sometimes her husband has to take over and put the children to bed."

She found that the patients suffering from "housewife's fatigue" slept more than an adult need to sleep, and that the actual energy they expended

on housework did not tax their capacities. Medical authorities had confirmed this finding. The problem was also identified as one of boredom.

According to an article in McCall's magazine from April 1957 titled "Is Boredom Bad for You", the "cure" for domestic boredom was to find "honest enjoyment in some part of the job such as cooking or an incentive such as a party". The author also mentions "male praise" as a good [antidote]for domestic boredom". Friedan cites the article as an example of how the feminine mystique sought to convince housewives to regard their household work as a "job"-equal to other jobs in its occasional drudgery, but with the external benefits of parties and male praise. Meanwhile, the article never addresses the internal problem of chronic dissatisfaction which led to problems such as alcoholism, overeating and the abuse of tranquilizers.

The feminine mystique had coaxed women into believing that their activities within their homes comprised the only world they needed to know. A properly feminine woman was solely dedicated to domesticity. During the Eisenhower era, women had no other purpose in the world than "snaring a husband" and committing to life as housewife. The mystique led to the creation of a "happy housewife heroine" who contrasted with the spirited career women who were younger both "in looks" and in their child like dependence. When they envisioned the future, it was exclusively with family planning in mind. When they talked about money, it was never anything "boring, like taxes or reciprocal trade agreements, or foreign aid programs"- though they knew about these things; it was how to increase their allowances. Stories such as "The Sandwich Maker" showed a woman using her creativity and entrepreneurial spirit to start a lunch service. However, the story concludes with the woman abandoning her successful but overwhelming enterprise in relief after finding out that she is pregnant. The "happy housewife" in these stories usually found work to be "too much" and was relieved to revert to her "job" as a mother, while letting her husband be the "boss" of money.

The "mystique" had forced women to choose between being career women and wives and mothers, where as the New Woman of the 1920's and 1930's had a both a passionate determination to live her own life and to love a man. By the 1950's, taking an individual interest in one's own pursuits and learning about the issues of the day – such as desegregation or the cold war – due to the belief that their readership lacked an interest. The goal of the magazines seemed to be to keep women's perspectives narrow – to confine their minds to the home as securely as their bodies had been. A woman who was interested in the issues of the day might be tempted to participate in them, thereby disrupting the static mode of life that made her "feminine".

Betty Friedan conducted field investigation and concluded that a growing body of evidence find against the standards of feminine normality, feminine adjustment, feminine fulfillment and feminine maturity, by which most women are trying to live. She says this discrepancy between theories and actual experience cast a strange new light on American Women's problems that had been for so long taken for granted. Therefore, she concludes that this problem is the key to women's future as a nation, and as a culture. These new and old problems are a part of social reality and have nothing to do with the loss of femininity or whether one is having higher education or is involved in the demands of domestic needs.

Betty Friedan's analysis the problem is not sexual but identical

Betty explodes the myth of the "happy housewife" of the American suburbs. She diagnosed the discontent among the housewives who lead restricted lives. She encourages the women to ignore the identity imposed upon them as a mother and a wife. Since the American Women has no image as to whom she is and what she wants to be, and therefore she needs a new image. This new image cannot be taken from one's mother or from the career of a woman, who lacks the warm centre of life as at home, Friedan says:

"I never knew a woman, when I was growing up, who used her mind, played her own part in the world, and also loved and had children."

Betty pointed out that when American women reach at the age of 18,20 or forty they have no image of their own future of themselves as women, and no purpose in life, and no peace of mind. It also been called women's "role crises", which was described by sociologist, psychologist and educators, etc., As a discontinuing in cultural conditioning, it has been blamed on the education that made American girls grow up feeling free and equal to the boys. But did not prepare them, for their role as women. When girls are forced to adjust to this role there is a crisis, Betty Friedan rejects the above view point, that if girls are educated for their role as women, they would adjust well and suffer no crisis. She says that the real problem has not been understood for what it is, and therefore no real answer to it can be expected.

According to Betty Friedan the problem is not sexual, but one of identify a stunning of growth that is perpetuated by "the feminine mystique". The Victorian culture did not permit women to accept their basic sexual needs. Consequently, American culture did not permit them to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and to fulfill their potentialities as human beings a need, which is not wholly defined by their sexual role.

Betty noticed that many of the engaged girls, they are not going to use their education. They are ready to play traditional role which is assigned by the society. In counter-part she shared the words of a Woman, fifteen years after she left college, a doctor's wife, mother of three, who said over coffee in her New England kitchen:

The tragedy was, nobody ever looked us in the eye and said you have to decide what you want to do with your life, besides being your husband's wife and children's mother. I never thought it through until I was thirty six, and my husband was so busy with his practice that he could not entertain me every night. The three boys were in school all day. I kept on trying to have babies despite Rh discrepancy. After two miscarriages, they said I must stop. I thought my own growth and evolution were

over. I always knew as a child that I was going to grow up and go to college, and then get married, and that's as far as a girl has to think. After that, your husband determines and fills your life. It wasn't until I got so lonely as the doctor's wife and kept screaming at the kids because they didn't fill my life that I realized I had to make my own life. I still had to decide what I wanted to be. I had not finished evolving at all. But it took ten years to think it through.

She shares her own experience when she got a fellowship and she is not in position to decide what she really wants to be. She gave her fellowship and years later she realized that she could not read a word of science that once she thought as her future life's work. Betty quoted that:

I never could explain, hardly knew myself, why I gave up this career. I lived in the present, working on newspaper with no particular plan. I married; I had children, lived according to the feminine mystique as suburban housewife. But still question haunted me. I could sense no purpose in my life; I could find no peace, until I finally faced it and worked out my own answer.

Betty Friedan was distressed by the failure of the theorist to understand the progress made by English and American Women towards establishing a new identity during the hundred or more years. Women were vilified by contemporary psychology and history by demanding participation in major decisions and in the workplace as equals to men in the society.

According to Betty Friedan the salient features of the earlier feminist movement are decisive and basic to the aspiration of the women. Feminism was fought for women in order for women to fulfill them, but not hate men. The feminist movement started in the U.S on the heels of the revolutionary war and grew strong with the movement of the free slaves.

According to her, feminists had only one model, one image, and one vision of a full and free human being. She precisely puts this idea forward in two questions:

1. Did the women want freedom because they wanted to be men?
2. Did they want freedom and equality with men because they were also human?

In this context Betty Friedan writes that the so-called excess of the feminists arose from their helplessness. That is the irony of the man hating myth about the feminist. Leading feminist were women of the middle class, driven by a complex of motives to educate themselves and smash that empty image. Their social or psychological roots were dissimilar. But all of them shared more than common intelligence, fed by more than common education for their time. Finally the unpleasant image of the feminist today resembles less the feminist themselves than the image fostered by the interest that so bitterly opposed the vote for women.

Betty Friedan has been criticized for solely focusing on the plight of the middle-class white woman, and not giving ample attention to the different situations encountered by women in less stable economical situation, or women of differing race.

Betty Friedan believed through her writing that women can affect the society as well as be affected by it and that "in the end a woman as a man has the power to choose and to make her own heaven or hell", After questioning her life as a wife and mother , with heavy heart , Betty Friedan left her home and her three small children.

Her complaint is that "One reason the mystique prevails is that very few women under the age of forty know the facts of the women's rights movements".

In her arguments, Betty Friedan has posed the question as to why the American women, in spite of their achievements in their past, had gone back home again? Why was it that they had reversed the trends of a century without cause?

Her object is to demonstrate how the theoretical approaches trapped American Women once again in the glorified femininity; and thus put an end to the feminist wish to be more than just a wife and mother.

Betty Friedan criticized Freud Theory Psychoanalysis and sexism.

This is an angry chapter; Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* gives an account of the detrimental effects of conservative popular psychology on American Women. The sexual Solipsism of Sigmund Freud, she questions the application of the Freudian theory of femininity to the American women of her times. She says Friedan theory about women is obsolescent, an obstacle to truth for women in America today, and a major cause of the pervasive problem that has no name.

She says Freudian thought has become the ideological bulwark of the sexual counter-revolution in America. Without Freud's definition of the sexual nature of woman to give the conventional image of femininity new authority. She says I do not think several generations of educated, spirited American women would have been so easily diverted from spirited American Women would have been so easily diverted from the drawing realization of who they were and what they could be. She criticizes Freud's key concepts for his anti-women perspectives and interpretation.

The concept 'penis envy', which Freud coined to describe a phenomenon he observed in women- that is, in the middle-class women who were his patients in Vienna in the Victorian era- was seized in this country in the 1940's as the literal explanation of all that was wrong with American Women.

According to her, Freud was a prisoner of his own culture. She remarks that the popularization of Freudian thought is responsible for the negative results.

Freud grew up with this attitude built by his culture in which men said the daily prayer: 'I thank thee, Lord, that thou hast not created me a Woman', and women prayed in submission: 'I thank thee, Lord, that Thou has created me according to Thy will'.

Freud saw women only in terms of their sexual relationship with men. But in all those women in he saw sexual problems; there must have been very severe problems of blocked growth, growth short of full identity-an immature, incomplete self. Society as it was then, by explicit denial of education and independence, prevented women from realizing their full potential, or from attaining, or from attaining those interest and ideals that might have stimulated their growth.

Using Freud's letters to his future wife, Martha, as evidence, Friedan creates a portrait of Freud as a man who saw women as "childlike dolls". These women existed only in relation to men's love and to serve men's needs. The women whom Freud viewed as nurturing and sexually appealing were infantile. On the other hand, he took only a platonic interest in women who had serious intellectual lives of their own. Freud's view of women validated the feminine mystique by posting that career women were "unnatural" and envious of men.

Freud was particularly averse to philosopher John Stuart Mill's views on "the woman question" because he believed that women's increased activity outside of the home would turn them into men's competitors". Equality between the sexes, he thought, would reduce a woman's "tender attributes", which sought to gratify a man's every wish, just as his mother had gratified his as a boy, at the expense of his musically- gifted and ambitious sisters. Freud liked intellectual and ambitious women, "but they had no erotic attraction for him." These were for him, Women of a "masculine cast" for whom "normal femininity" could only be achieved through the renunciation of "active goals of her own" in favor of those which pertained to her husband or her son.

Freud posited that it was through the birth of a son that a woman could satisfy her supposed desire for penis- envy which Freud believed tended to be projected on to her husband until she gave birth to the desired son. Of course, Freud's views of women were "biologically inferior to men".

For Freud, his understanding of middle class femininity was base on penis envy- his idea that when a little girl learns of the existence and

significance of the penis and finds that she does not herself have one, she believes that she is at a great disadvantage, for which she must compensate. Thus, if a woman in analysis expressed a desire to pursue "an intellectual career," it was merely a sublimation of her true desire for a penis.

Freudian theory thus helped to validate the feminine mystique by convincing women that their active pursuits and ambitions were merely manifestations of penis envy. Thus, "the most advance thinkers of [Friedan's] time" elevated Victorian standards over the needs of the post war era and encouraged women to embrace domesticity fully. Conversely, men were inclined to support women's retreat into home, since having female "competitors" triggered what Freud classified as "the castration complex", or the fear of losing the penis to a woman with "penis envy".

Overall, Betty Friedan accuses Freud of sexual solipsism. She says his background taught him to see woman as an inferior human being. He indulged in circular thinking. It was the uncritical acceptance of Freud's doctrine in US, which cause women to confine to their women. It prevented American men and Women from seeing that their growing frustration was more matter than feminine sexuality. At the popular level, it created a feeling that too much real education, freedom, equality and a right was wrong for women. In the end Betty asserts:

"The feminine mystique elevated by Freudian theory into scientific religion sounded a life restricting, future denying note for women."

She makes it clear that the practice of psycho-analysis as a therapy was not primarily responsible for the feminine mystique. It was the permeation of the populist version of Freudian theories in psychology, sociology, anthropology, education literature and even history, through mass media agencies and motivation research that had elevated Freudians think that the American women's respect and awe for the authority of science kept from the Feminine Mystique.

Betty Friedan notes various causes, which made Freudian doctrine an all-embracing American ideology, and shows how it misguided American women in their search for freedom. She cites peculiar paradox during the period of 1940's and 1950's, during which period American women fully accepted Freudian psychology, with its emphasis on freedom from a repressive morality to achieve sexual fulfillment.

Evidence against these rigid applications of Freudianism began to pile up, even among and more difficult to apply Freud's ideas to real life women. Friedan interviews one of the last remaining analysts to have trained at Freud's Psychoanalytic institute:

"I had a woman patient on the couch for nearly two years before I could face her real problem- that it was not enough for her to be just a housewife and mother. One day she had a dream that she was teaching a class. I could not dismiss the powerful yearning of this housewife's dream as penis envy. It was the expression of her own need for mature self-fulfillment. I told her: I can't analyze this dream away. You do something about it."

Margaret Mead analysis

To examine the foundation of the Feminine Mystique one could begin with Margaret Mead. Margaret Mead was an anthropologist and the author of the book "Coming of age in Samoa". She was a student of Franz Uri Boas, who opened the first anthropology department at Columbia University, where he trained many anthropologists, including the eponymous Margaret Mead. As we know historical particularism or the idea that each society constantly changes due to internal and external historic process. Issues regarding sex and sexuality across culture interest Mead in the year 1920, she travelled to Ta'u Island in Samoa. Where in her anthropological fieldwork, Mead had discovered and compares Samoan adolescent girls to American adolescent girls. She made the observation that society dictates personality more than genetics or biology. Samoan women spent time dating and participating in casual sex before they settled down to raise families without consequence on their future. They have more knowledge and freedom than western women about sex.

Academician loved how she spent extensive time with the people of Samoa. Her book "Coming of age of Samoa", strengthens the Nurture part of the Nature vs Nurture debate. Many conservative institutions placed the book at the top of their do not read list. According to Friedan, a "vision of the infinite variety of sexual patterns and the enormous plasticity of human nature." However, those observations did not impact her view of womanhood, which she defined according to "sexual biological function."

Mead had endorsed the feminine mystique in her work, which glorified the "sexual function" and asserted independence as a masculine thing that had to be unlearned by women.

In the 1960's Mead reversed her position and voiced concern over what she described as the retreat of women- "each to her respective separate cave"- into domesticity. While Friedan gives some credit for her ideas about motherhood, such as Mead's encouragement of breast-feeding, she blames Mead for contributing to the Feminine Mystique by persuading women to believe that their biology made them predestined for a domestic role. If women had retreated to their respective "caves," it was partly due to researchers, such as Mead, giving an intellectual basis to social myth.

At times, she looked at anthropological theory from Freud's view, arguing that it was better "to preserve the sexual biological limitations established by a culture". Sometimes, she argued for both the Freudian and functionalist positions and warned that women face a danger in trying to "realize a human potential which their society has defined as masculine." After 1931, it became clear that Mead was using Freudian theory in her anthropological exploration of other civilization. She identified "the superstructure" on which "a civilization depends, with the penis," while "feminine creativity" was defined "in terms of the passive receptivity of the uterus."

On one hand Mead provided a model of successful career and public figure for a woman and helped liberate from shackles of Victorianism. On the other hand, Friedan, *Feminine Mystique* (1961), "The functional Freeze, The Feminine protest,

and Margaret Mead “attacked implications of her later work for women. Argued that “how is “became “how should be.” Although not specifically targeting Mead, Barbara Ehrenreich in *Hearts Of Men* asks whether the social liberation (and sexual) was necessary a good thing for women.

Mead’s role as the spokesperson for femininity might have been less important if women had learned from the example of her life instead of her work. She made her way in a “man’s world” by using her unique knowledge as a woman. Her mother and grandmother were educated professionals and she encouraged women to choose “with free intelligence” to have children.

Most of the social scientists did not destroy the old prejudice that oppressed American women, but instead, validated them. They did not focus on social behavior; they gave importance to gender conventions as natural, engrained and necessary to the functioning society. They invented the theory of functionalism to justify gender inequality. Their fault was conforming their studies to fit the conventions instead of working to understand them impartially.

Contemporary literature offered women marital advice, encouraging them to conform to their roles. Women were convinced that there was value in the feminine mystique due to the notion that they had a place, a role that had been created especially for them. If women wanted to work, they would have to change the structure of the family as they knew it.

Margaret Mead’s status as both a woman and a social scientist encouraged women who read her work to trust her voice. Mead associated men with the active, public sphere, and women with the domestic sphere. Because women could “house” life in their wombs, she concluded that they belong at home.

Mead did not recognize the ways in which her biases informed studies of both the “primitive civilizations” and her understanding of American life. She also failed to recognize that the demands of American life were different from other societies. Mead depended on her gender to advance in her career, for she could provide the “woman’s

perspective.” Through she believed that women should make the individual choice to have children, her encouragement of functionalism still made childbearing seem ordained.

Comparative analysis

- Friedan *Feminine Mystic* and Mead coming in Samoa both are based on their survey. Friedan wrote a questionnaire for her former classmates at a reunion at all the female Smith College. Mead journeyed to the south Pacific territory of American Samoa.
- Both Friedan and Mead argued that sexuality was shaped by culture rather than nature. Friedan says in our culture, the development of women has been blocked at the Physiological level with, in many cases, no need recognized higher than the need for love or sexual satisfaction. Mead after spending nine months observed and concluded that adolescence was not a stressful time for girls in Samoa because Samoan culture pattern were very different from United States. She argued that, living in a homogenous culture, Samoan adolescent girls did not face numerous conflicting personal choices and demands.
- Margaret Mead captured the emotional texture of holding the small baby on their arms. Mead said that both Arapesh and Mundugumor mothers carried their babies suspended from their foreheads. These women generally used net bags, which simulated the experience of the womb. But Friedan took a radical view. The *Feminine Mystic* observes that women in 1930’s often had education and careers and after marriage they dropped their education and careers. She states, that women should develop themselves and their intellectual abilities, rather than making a “choice” to be just a housewife instead of fulfilling their potential.

- Margaret Mead and Betty Friedan both did not agree with Sigmund Freud theory. Both *Feminine Mystique* and *Coming of Age in Samoa* derived its power from Freudian thought.

“I think much of the Freudian theory about women in obsolescent an obstacle to truth for women in America today and a major cause of the pervasive problem that has no name”.

“Freud it is generally agreed was a most perceptive and accurate observer of important problems of the human personality. But in describing and interpreting those problems, he was prison of his own culture”. (Betty Friedan)

Ironically, Mead voiced alarm at the return of the cave woman, the retreat of American women to narrow domesticity while the world trembled on the brink of technological holocaust. “Why have we returned, despite our advances in technology, to the Stone Age pictures? Women have gone back to her separate cave waiting anxiously for her mate and children to return, guarding her mate jealously against another women, almost totally unaware of any life outside her door.

There is no doubt that Betty Friedan’s “*Feminine Mystique*” and Margaret Mead’s “*Coming of Age in Samoa*” gave a voice to millions of women, not only in their country but around the world. It confirmed that the core problem for women was not sexuality but a problem of identity.

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