

Q Post-modern feminism upholds philosophical ideas such as existentialism and post structuralism. Critically analyze postmodern feminism and expound upon the ideas of Foucault, Butler and Beauvoir.

## Preface:

The post-modern feminism emerges the debate on the universal idea of "womenhood". This also engage the ideas like, existentialism and structuralism. These challenge the womenhood nature of universality and that all women are equal. Post-modernism question the narratives of identity, power and emancipation. Thus, this shows that instead of perceiving a single feminist truth, post-modernism emphasize on plurality, linguistics and institutional practices.

## Core concepts of Post-modern feminism:

Post-modern feminism is derived from the early feminist theories i.e. liberal feminism and radical feminism. Further, this theory emphasized upon three main dimensions.

### i. Anti-essentialism:

It rejects the idea that all the women faces are similar and share common experiences. For instances, the experiences diverse in women from West, Africa or middle-class etc.

### ii. Suspicion of Meta-theories:

It also rejects that a single theory can explain all the oppression. Even the feminist ideas cannot fully comprehend all the issues.

### iii. Focus on Power and language:

It also rejects that single cause can lead to oppression. For instance, patriarchy is the only factor of oppression neglecting the power hierarchy and language.

Post-structuralism  
(Michael Foucault  
and Judith Butler)

Existentialism  
(Simon de Beauvoir)

Post-modern Philosophies

### i. Existentialism influenced by Simon de Beauvoir:

It states:

|| "One is not born, but rather becomes  
a woman" ||

Existentialism defines the idea that individuals create their own identity. It reflects with the idea introduced by Simone de Beauvoir. It says, the idea of <sup>being</sup> a woman is not rooted in the biological determination of sex. Instead, it says the idea of being a woman is derived by the socially constructed standards. Existentialism implies freedom and choice. Thus, Simone de Beauvoir suggests the choice to define oneself is independent choice rather socially or biologically inherited. Women must have their own free will to choose and make decisions.

ii - Post-Structuralism influenced by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler:

Post structuralism defines the idea that norms are not universal and fixed. This challenges the rigid ideas of suggesting that fixed norms are constructed through language. However, the

identity is fluid.

### (a) Idea of Michel Foucault:

The idea of Michel Foucault emphasizes that power is not centralized. This reflects that the core issue does not lie in the single objectivity such as patriarchy. Michael Foucault says,

|| "Gender is not a noun,  
but a verb." ||

This rejects the universally fixed idea of gender. He suggests post-structuralism and the problem lies in the power division. Power is derived through language, institutions and daily norms. This shapes the gender identity. Thus, Michel Foucault defines the post-structuralism as a course not imposed through single source but, influenced by multiple factors such as, education, media, law etc).

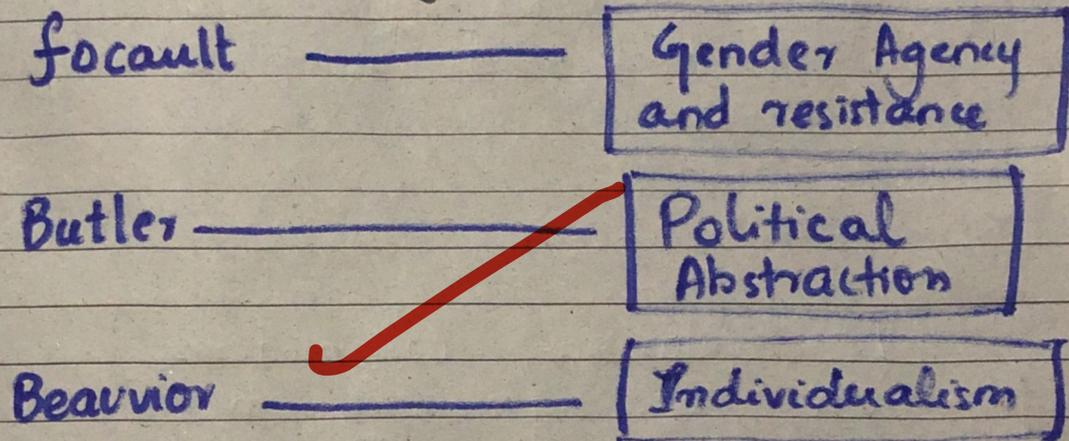
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### (b) Idea of Judith Butler:

The Judith Butler dissect the concept of gender itself. The

primary idea of Judith Butler in post-structuralism lies in the gender performativity and undoing of the identity. Gender is not something one is, but something one does repeatedly. This sets a norm or identity, creating the illusion of stable gender norm or practice. This leads to performative nature of gender.

### Critical Analysis:



#### i. Foucault : Gender Agency.

The Foucault's stance was criticized due to being exclusionary to gendered agency. It raises the question if the power is the only phenomenon that shapes the identity. Hence, this debate nevertheless upholds the philosophical ideas i.e. ~~essence~~ existentialism and post structuralism, but in a narrow perspective.

## ii. Political Action : weak (Butler)

Judith Butler, on the other hand, undergone criticism for its rigid and trivial-scope stance. It majoritarily focused on fluidity of gender and neglected political action.

## iii. Behaviour individual focus.

Behaviour focused mainly on the individual focus rather than collective effort. Similarly, it was also conciesed view focusing only western ideas. Behaviour neglected the perspective of other civilization's women.

add a few more arguments.....

## Inference :

In conclusion, post-modern feminism is significant in understanding gender. Its philosophical debates such as, existentialism and post-structuralism open great discourse and concepts. The concepts of individual and collective freedom, anti-essentialism, linguistics, role of institutions and gender fluidity are greatly scripted by the scholar such as, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and Simon de Beauvoir.