

## FEMINISM AND IT'S IMPACT ON THE STATUS OF TODAY'S WOMEN

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### ABSTRACT

*Attempting to normalise gender standards that are comparable to those of males is the goal of feminism, which is also known as the battle for women's equality. This research throws light on the condition of women in India both before and after the country gained its independence. The purpose of this study is to explain where we are today with regard to this topic. In order to provide support for the notion that feminism is essential for India to transition into a developed nation, the viewpoints of a number of authors have been used. The elimination of all forms of discrimination based on gender is essential if our country is to continue its progress towards development, and the basic rights of women must be on par with those of men. Traditional Indian society portrays the perfect woman as someone who is submissive, warm, dependent, and caring. This is the stereotype of the ideal lady. Due to the fact that the role of women has been quickly shifting in recent times around the world, it is necessary that women be accurately represented in all aspects of society. The lack of education and scientific temperament among the mass of the people in pre-independence India, as well as their slavish devotion to mediaeval traditions and orthodox religious ceremonies, were the primary factors that contributed to the suffering of women in that country. Despite the efforts of a number of organisations to close the gender gap, women continued to encounter prejudice in a variety of forms even after they had achieved their freedom. There is no reasonable expectation that contemporary women would adhere to archaic ideas about what it means to be a woman. Things are undergoing change, and there is a need for more modifications. It is imperative that each and every one of us recognises the inherent prejudices that are present in our collective consciousness and works to alter things from the floor up. The only way to make the transition from a state-organized nation to a global society that is varied and interconnected is to shift in this manner. The word Empowerment means the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's right. When someone is empowered they have the ability to accomplish something and they know it, giving them confidence needed to succeed. This paper deals with "women empowerment" a burning issue all over the World. In this paper i want to analyze the status of women in India after empowering especially in my village mendhar Chajjla a small village of district Poonch. The study reveals inspite of government efforts in rural areas women are still lacking this opportunity. This paper analyse various indicators like women's household, decision making power, freedom of movement, exposure to media , education etc. Gender gap still exists in rural areas. It is well said if a man educate only he will but if a woman educates whole family will. It is found that inequality is still prevailing in the society. More than half of the women believe wife beating to be justified for one or the other reason. I myself have seen such coincidence with my eyes men are still beating women. Women have to take permission for spending money and for going out from the home. This so called male dominated society is still an obstacles in the oath of women empowerment. Even i myself found in my area where women are only doing household activities. They are not living their life they are only spending life. In spite of many efforts by government women empowerment is still pending .The*

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*empowerment of women in the most powerful sense will be achieved only if women have genetic changes in relation to women, they should be treated with proper respect, dignity, fairness, and equality. The rural areas of the country are largely sunk in the feudal and medieval perspective, so women have equal status in their education, marriage, dress code, profession, and social.*

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Status, Women, Impact.*

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## Introduction

Feminism is a social movement that advocates for the liberation of women and the comprehensive eradication of any and all types of prejudice that are directed towards them. In the context of this discussion, the term "gender equality" refers to the concept that equal access to political, economic, and social power should be granted to both men and women. A wide variety of moral philosophies, social movements, cultural transformations, and political ideas have come together to produce feminism. Feminism is an ideology that aspires to eliminate gender discrimination and promote human rights for all individuals. The term "feminism" was first used in English to refer to the movement for women's equal political and legal rights. The French word "feminise," which was first used in the 1890s by the utopian socialist Charles Fourier, is where the English term "feminism" was first used.

A number of issues, including but not limited to: gender stereotyping, discrimination, sexism, objectification, domestic abuse, reproductive rights, gender roles in the workplace (including maternity leave and equal pay), and economic independence, have been at the core of feminist political actions.

Throughout the course of our civilization's history, women have been exploited for some time. To this day, even in the present day and age, the position of women is not particularly favourable. It would seem that India is a snake with its head firmly planted in the present period and its tail firmly planted in the 1700s. Beginning with the sati period, the devdasi system, and child marriages and continuing up to the current day, women have undergone a huge metamorphosis. This transition is comparable to an avalanche that has been latent for many generations but is suddenly bursting with positive energy and moving at a rapid pace. "The proposition is to be regarded as constituting feminism," according to Janet Richards, "whose strong fundamental case it is to say only that there are excellent reasons for thinking that women suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex." The term "modern feminism" refers to a subset of the larger concept of "feminism," which originated in the decades after the 1960s and evolved into a powerful political and social force. This study is mostly theoretical in nature, and its overriding objective is to gain a deeper comprehension of the social practices, institutions, power dynamics, and male domination that are factors that lead to the marginalisation of women in our society. Feminist philosophy also provided methodologies to transform social structures as a means of assisting in the process of emancipation.

"I have often said that I am not a feminist yet in any concern for the privileged, how can I ignore women who have been dominated and discriminated against in social customs and by in-laws since the beginning of history?" During the All India Women's Conference in 1980, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made the following statement. It is imperative that women be more involved, lively, and proactive in our society, not just because they are female but also because they constitute half of the human population.

Fair salaries, the right to marry or divorce as one chooses, ownership of one's own property, and, most significantly, equality with men in all aspects of society were and continue to be two of the most fundamental aims of the feminist movement.

Throughout the twentieth century, feminist and modernist organisations saw the writing of women as a powerful and significant tool. The majority of the works concentrate on the mental suffering that disgruntled housewives go through, as well as the lifestyles that are restricted and the yearning that lower-class women have for greater independence. The feminist principles have been accepted by a number of female authors, whose works reflect how contemporary women have come to realise that their possibilities are not restricted to the domestic sphere. From childhood through age, Indian women writers explored the subjective experiences of women. Their work began with childhood and continued through adulthood. The feminist worldview that they held was made clear by their publications. From the perspective of these female writers, feminism is about putting an end to the agony that women experience through silence. Literature portrays their lives as being lively and unexpected, and this is true of their lives. The perception that women have in society is the most important thing. The portrayal of

women is becoming more important in the field of literary studies due to the fast shifts that have taken place in the status of women throughout the world in recent years. This will provide an insight into the evolution of feminism throughout history as well as the impact that it has had on the individuals from that time period.

Women in Indian culture are often portrayed as submissive, kind, and nurturing mothers. This is the idealised picture of women in Indian society. This conventional depiction of women at the time before their independence may be seen in works of literature. The virtues that are often associated with Indian women, such as patience, loyalty, and the ability to accept her station, are frequently praised in Indian writings that are centred on themes that pertain to women. Through the use of archetypes, society has, for a considerable amount of time, maintained the same societal preconceptions. Throughout history, women have always been expected to fulfil the roles of the selfless mother and the devoted wife. The feminine characters, on the other hand, are either unduly sentimentalised or overly idealised, and they are too far away from reality.

### **Types of Feminism**

There are many different facets and complexities to the ideology of feminism. Both women and men who identify as feminists have a broad variety of perspectives that reflect the diversity of the feminist movement. An overview of some of the most prominent sub-disciplines within feminism is provided below.

- **Liberal Feminism**

Liberal feminism is characterised by its emphasis on equality through the lens of individualism. While it is true that society as a whole does not need a large service, this line of thinking contends that rules need to be changed and opportunities need to be made available for women in order for them to attain equality in society. As far as liberal feminists are concerned, the most important sign of progress is the number of women who are now working in positions that were formerly occupied by males, especially those that are powerful. Liberal feminism is the ideology that is followed by the majority of Western nations, including the United States government.

- **Socialist Feminism**

Marxist feminism, which is often referred to as socialist feminism, is a political ideology that seeks to establish connections between the oppression of women and Marxist ideas on exploitation, oppression, and labour. Females are seen to be at a disadvantage by socialist feminists due to the fact that they do not hold positions of power in the workplace or the home. According to socialist feminists, the patriarchal system devalues women and the large amount of labour that they provide via activities such as marriage, prostitution, and household labour. In contrast to feminists who advocate for individualism, socialist feminists want to bring about systemic change that has an effect on every member of society. They see the oppression of women as a larger pattern that has an effect on everyone who is a part of the capitalist system<sup>5</sup>, and as a result, they recognise the need of working together with all groups, including males.

Marx was of the opinion that the elimination of class oppression will result in the elimination of gender discrimination as well<sup>6</sup>. A number of socialist feminists have contended that the concept of gender oppression as a subset of economic oppression is too simple. Instead, they believe that socialist feminists should concentrate on disentangling concerns related to class and gender. Classic Marxist notions, according to the arguments of certain socialist feminists, do not address gender oppression at all; rather, they choose to hide it under economic oppression. There are a significant number of other socialist feminists, such as members of the Freedom Socialist Party and Radical Women.

- **Radical Feminism**

Radical feminism, much like socialist feminism (and occasionally these two philosophies are merged), emphasises the need of a significant societal revolution in order to achieve full gender equity for women. As a result of the inherently patriarchal nature of society, radical feminists<sup>8</sup> believe that the system will continue to be unequal. Individuals who adhere to the belief that gender roles and relationships have to be kept firmly compartmentalised are known as separatist feminists. This subclass of radical feminists is very tiny yet loud.

- **Third Wave Feminism**

There is a significant number of younger women who identify with Third Wave feminism, particularly those who are the children of Second Wave Feminists who come from the 1970s. Third Wave

Feminism is characterised by an individualistic approach that is reminiscent of liberal feminism. Third Wave Feminism lays a greater focus on human agency as a springboard to social change, despite the fact that it does not disapprove of political activity. Third Wave feminism, which encourages women to identify themselves in whichever way they see fit, takes great delight in the fact that women in today's complex postmodern culture have access to an almost infinite number of possibilities.

- **Feminism in India**

The history of feminism in India is almost nonexistent, and the mainstream perception of the movement is that it is essentially a pragmatic one. When compared to other countries, the amount of theoretical works concerned with feminism is quite low.

#### Literature Review

**Herr, R. S. (2014).** The simplifying of gender oppression by white second-wave feminists, who failed to account for the varied types of oppression that Third globe women suffered in different regions of the globe, has resulted in the creation of transnational and Third World feminisms. This is a reaction to the feminist movement's simplification of gender oppression. Therefore, there are two demands that are shared by these feminisms that are referred to as "Third World feminist" demands. The first demand is that feminist studies of oppression and resistance by women in the Third World should be grounded in history. The second demand is that feminist analyses of the agency and voices of women in the Third World should be honoured. Transnational feminism has concentrated on the global level, whilst Third World feminism has looked at conditions on a more local and national scale. This is despite the fact that both movements have tried to achieve identical aims. In addition, famous transnational feminists have chosen a position that is diametrically opposed to that of leading transnational feminists, who have taken the opposite attitude. They believe that nation-states and nationalism are detrimental to the cause of feminism. Over the course of the last several decades, transnational feminism has overtaken Third World feminism as the main feminist position on women from poor countries. Additionally, it has become fashionable to disregard nation-states and nationalism in favour of feminism. By claiming that global feminism may benefit from nation-states and nationalism, as well as the fact that recovering feminism from the Third World is an important concern, this article provides a counterposition to the trend that has been seen.

**Delmar, R. (2018).** According to a large number of individuals, both feminists and non-feminists alike, the question "what is feminism?" is useless. Words such as "feminism" and "feminist" indicate that there is something about their meaning that is self-evident and undeniable. When it comes to understanding feminism, it has become a hurdle due to the fact that it is different, diverse, and heterogeneous. Historical histories of feminism that see it largely as a social movement sometimes concentrate on chronicling the ups and downs of the movement rather than digging into the intellectual roots of the movement. A substantial limitation on the investigation of feminist history is imposed by the assumption that the social movement represents the highest and most favoured form of feminism. Because of the emphasis that feminism places on women, the word "feminist" may be readily abbreviated to "woman" and vice versa. The feminist can also come to represent women, and "feminist history" can be interchanged with "women's history," not to mention other phrases.

**Phillips, R., & Cree, V. E. (2014).** In today's world, feminism is sometimes difficult to define. In spite of this, feminist researchers and academics continue to delve further into the specifics and wider elements of women's life, as well as the ever-present idea of "gender." When it comes to the area of social work, feminist viewpoints continue to serve as the basis for theory, practice, and research initiatives. One possible explanation for this is that the gender gap that continues to exist in the area of social work is a key contributor. In addition, it may be a reflection of the liberatory and "social justice" aims that social work normally strives to strive for. The reality of the matter is, however, that feminism is once again all the rage, and some people even go so far as to suggest that the Internet is the major incubator for this so-called "fourth wave" of feminism in the Northern Hemisphere. Taking into account this fact, the purpose of this study is to provide a response to the following question: how has the fourth wave of feminism influenced or may it affect the area of social work education in the present day?

**Seron, C., Silbey, S., Cech, E., & Rubineau, B. (2018).** Due to the fact that engineering is a sector that is consistently dominated by males, it is often believed that women who work in engineering are at a disadvantage. Using the diaries that were maintained by undergraduate students at four different educational institutions, the authors analyse how women perceive their status within the engineering profession. In addition to providing critical descriptions of their experiences, the findings reveal that

women are aware of the marginalisation they face. These worries, on the other hand, remain largely quiet and unsaid; they do not gather together to critique engineering on a wider organisational or institutional level, nor do they demand that things change. Instead, the meritocracy and individuality that are intrinsic to the culture of engineering are used in order to understand their decisions. Even if they had personal experience with sexism, the majority of respondents continue to retain these attitudes and use them to rationalise the present status and reward systems in engineering, which are not based on merit. Despite the fact that these women take a great deal of pleasure in their femininity, the uncontested assumption of meritocracy and the unseen muzzling repercussions of critiques are reminiscent of a hegemony of meritocratic ideology rather than hegemonic masculinity. In the end, the writers come to the realisation that engineering education is efficient in changing individuals who would otherwise be critics into individuals who replicate popular culture. The purpose of this article is to contribute to the ongoing conversations on diversity in STEM areas by illustrating how cultural reproduction mechanisms impede institutional change. More specifically, the study focuses on the effect that professional culture has on more general patterns of token behaviour.

**Calkin, S. (2015).** The purpose of this study is to analyse feminist narratives of appropriation and co-optation within the framework of gender and development policy. There is still a great deal of dispute on whether or not neoliberal institutions have unnecessarily politicised feminist ideals and terminology owing to the agenda's ambiguity. This is the case despite the fact that women and girls play significant roles in development rhetoric and anti-poverty activities. Does the fact that gender issues are now in the limelight have anything to do with the success of some branches of (neo)liberal feminism, or has anti-feminist policy been used to support feminist goals? I focus on two multinational business initiatives that are a part of the current policy agenda for "Gender Equality as Smart Economics" and evaluate its essential principles and organisational structure in order to explore these contrasting opinions. I do this by focusing on corporate projects that are part of the agenda. According to the conclusion of the article, feminists who are concerned about intersectionality and the connections between gender and economic justice face troubling challenges brought about by the changes brought about by neoliberal-compatible feminisms. This is the case despite the fact that these accounts fail to accurately portray a diverse and dynamic movement.

### **Women's Movement in Pre-Independent India**

A social reform movement in India prior to the country's independence was the origin of the women's movement, which began in the 19th century. During that time period, our educated elites were learning the English language and growing their engagement with the West. As a result, they were absorbing the concepts of liberty, equality, and fraternity that originated in the French Revolution. These concepts were spreading beyond the borders of Europe. After some time had passed, the expansion of western liberalism to the issue of women's concerns brought to the formation of this social reform movement. When it came to the reforms and principles that were supposed to be implemented, the reform groups were fairly different. On the other hand, in response to allegations of violence that were made by the colonial authorities, they did have a common objective of eradicating the issues that plagued society.

There are many people who believe that the women's movements that occurred in India before to the country's independence were the first feminist movement. There was a time in history when women were striving for relief via education and legislative change, yet at the same time they were blaming religion and tradition for their predicament. Insofar as they saw sexism as a form of oppression, there were individuals who are considered to be feminists. They advocated for equal representation of women in public life on the basis of their opinion that women were essentially different from males in terms of biology, psychology, and spirituality: they believed that women were inherently different from men. The argument that they made was that women, with their distinct awareness of home and family concerns, may potentially contribute to the enrichment of public policy discussions and formulations. The nationalist urge to involve women in the battle for independence was strengthened by the fact that this worldview was consistent with Gandhi's thoughts on women.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of this movement was that it was initiated by guys, as stated by Suma Chitnis, who provides a description of the Indian reaction to feminist movements. It wasn't until the later decades of the twentieth century that women started to participate in the struggle. Raja Ram Manohar Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Matahari, Phule, Agarkar, Ranade, and Karie are just a few of the many women who have fought for equality and are included on the comprehensive list of female rights activists who have led the fight for equality. Through the wide

concept of Swaraj that he offered, Mahatma Gandhi was able to encourage a large number of women to enter politics and to provide them with a position of respect in public life. Gandhiji responded to a question regarding the need of clinging to traditions by saying, "It is good to swim in them, but to sink in them means suicide." In his opinion, the battle for Swaraj was symbolic of not just a political awakening but also a social awakening, an educational awakening, a moral awakening, an economic awakening, and a political awakening.

### **Women's Movement in Post Independent India**

Even in the latter part of the 21st century, there was still a significant distance to go before women achieved the same level of social, cultural, educational, and economic benefits as men. In many different cultures, women continue to be subjected to pressure because of traditional conceptions of womanly behaviour. These beliefs include being subservient and devoting one's whole attention to the accomplishments of one's spouse. Despite this, it was abundantly evident that a change was taking place, as a growing number of women rebelled against such demands. An increasing number of "new empowered women" were increasingly replacing the paradigms of pain and obedience. "The new woman is aggressive and self-willed, searching to discover her true self," according to Sesharidri. In contrast to the past, women who went through difficult times did it in an open and honest manner during this time period, which is when class-based fiction first started to make its appearance. The feminist movement is challenged with challenges that originate from the tremendous variety that exists inside India. These challenges are a consequence of the inhomogeneity that exists concerning the empowerment of women. The boundaries of Indian feminism may be broken down into four categories: class, caste, sexual orientation, and disability. New problems are arising as a consequence of the expanding differences in social and economic standing. Some examples of these new problems include sexual harassment on the workplace and on public transportation.

Indu Agnihotri, Director of the Centre for Women's Development Studies, asserts that "social parameters are not keeping pace with these transformations" despite the fact that economic parameters are undergoing changes. Feminism in India is still battling a number of challenges that have been there for a long time while also addressing new concerns. Regrettably, the most recent decree issued by the government does not address the issue of rape committed inside a marriage or by members of the armed forces. However, the decree did contain some very positive measures, such as making acid assaults and stalking illegal. The procedure of prosecuting sexual offences is remains excruciatingly sluggish, despite the fact that there has been some progress made in this area since the gang rape that occurred in New Delhi. According to Ashwani Kumar, who served as India's minister of law in the past, there are now 24,000 cases dealing with sexual harassment and rape that are pending in India's Supreme Court and many high courts. This is not an encouraging number.

Nivedita Menon, the author of "Seeing like a Feminist," said that the reason why feminist demands have stayed mostly constant is because there has not been a substantial alteration in the law that governs India. Unfortunately, prominent women in politics and the judiciary have not taken any action to stop atrocities such as acid attacks on women, kidnappings of schoolgirls, molestations, cold-blooded killings of housewives, denial of their rights, public abuse of women, psychological and physical abuse at the hands of family members, and other atrocities. As Gandhiji intended, the only way for all women in India to travel, be, and live in safety is for them to continually be united in a supportive manner with one another. This is true regardless of their economic level, caste, creed, religion, or state.

- **The Concepts of Feminism and Equality**

Indians had never heard of the concept of "equality" until the early 1800s, when it was introduced to them by Western-educated Indians who had an extensive exposure to the concept. However, the phrase did not have any practical importance or meaning prior to India's independence in 1947 and the emergence of a democratic government. After that, the Constitution of India established equal rights for all people, protected individuals from being discriminated against based on their gender or religion, and guaranteed the freedom of religion. Furthermore, seven distinct Five-Year Plans were specifically designed to address issues pertaining to the welfare, education, employment, and health of women. Even in the sixth Five-Year Plan, women are included as "partners in development" in the development process.

The concept that Indian women are expected to adapt to a western stereotype is one that a significant number of Indian women vehemently disagree with. The word "feminism" is employed within the context of Indian culture, however there is no evident parallel that can be made between Western

feminism and the Indian cultural framework. The phrase "human rights" is a more realistic way to describe this situation when it is considered in the context of India.

In addition, what people from the West would refer to as "oppression" in their culture, Indian women would refer to as "sorrow." Keeping this disparity in mind will assist you in gaining a better understanding of how Westerners and Indian women might approach identical difficulties from very different points of view. There are many examples of sentences like this.

- Hunger
- Poverty
- Disease
- Infant deaths
- Use of their bodies in labor by landlords
- Ruthlessness of custom
- Burden of tradition
- Unrelenting demands of ritual
- Beating without reason

#### **Constitutional and Legal Rights for Women in India**

If gender equality is a principle that is enshrined in the Constitution of India, then why are Indian women regarded as if they are citizens of a lower class inside their own country? The Constitution not only nominally grants women equality, but it also grants the state the right to establish policies that effect positive discrimination that are to the advantage of women. However, the many forms of sexism that Indian women are subjected to are not in any way a positive aspect. Following the passage of an Act of Parliament in 1990, the National Commission for Women was founded with the purpose of safeguarding the rights and privileges of women. India's constitution was amended in 1993 with the 73rd and 74th Amendments, which introduced quotas for women to serve on Panchayat and Municipality boards. The purpose of these amendments was to guarantee that women had a voice in the process of making decisions at the local level.

In accordance with Article 14 of the Constitution of India, equality is guaranteed in all aspects of life, including politics, economy, and society. Based on Article 16, it is assured that every individual will have an equal chance to be appointed to public positions.

An person is prohibited from being discriminated against in any way, regardless of their religion, colour, gender, caste, or sexual orientation, according to Article 15 of the Constitution.

In accordance with Article 15 (3) of the Constitution of India, the government of India is granted the authority to develop one-of-a-kind projects for women and children.

In accordance with the provisions of Article 39(a), the state is obligated to take the necessary steps to guarantee that all individuals, regardless of their gender, are able to obtain sufficient means of sustenance.

In accordance with Article 39 (c), it is assured that equal compensation will be given for equal work.

According to Article 42, the state is committed to provide its employees with working circumstances that are both fair and ethical.

Article 15 (A) (e) of the Constitution states that every citizen is bound to oppose practices that undermine the value of women. This obligation is written into the constitution.

There is another legislation that protects women against what seems to be a less severe violation, and that is Section 509 of the Indian Penal Code. Individuals who have offended the modesty of a woman are liable to retribution in accordance with this legislation. Because to this piece of legislation, it is now against the law to use words that are sexually explicit, to make sounds or gestures that are sexually explicit, or to breach the private of a woman. In addition, the Indian Penal Code, namely Section 354, makes it a criminal offence to insult the modesty of a woman. In accordance with this regulation, a person may be subject to a maximum sentence of two years in prison if they assault a woman, attempt to use illegal force on her, or insult her modesty in any other way.

There are a number of regulations that have been passed in order to protect women from what are usually referred to as "traditional" crimes. The selling of females into slavery, rape, kidnapping, dowry, torture, sexual harassment, and molestation are all examples of these types of abusive practices. With a possible term of ten years in prison, husbands who are found guilty under Section 306 of the Indian Penal Code risk the possibility of conviction.

### Conclusion

The campaign to raise women to the same status as men is one definition of feminism. Another definition of feminism is the battle for women's equitable treatment. As a result of drawing attention to the predicament of Indian women in general, Indian women writers have established themselves as significant voices in the world of literature. It is necessary for there to be a paradigm shift at every level of society in order to accomplish this objective, and everyone of us must become conscious of the inherent biases that are present in our ideas. Changing people's views is the most significant challenge that feminism confronts in the contemporary day. Feminism is just as vital today as it was in the past. It is imperative that the contributions that women play be recognised, and that globalisation be tempered via the use of localization. The only way to make the transition from a nation-state based on a state to a global society that is varied and interdependent is to embrace both unity and diversity at the same time. In a country like India, where goddesses are venerated, it is imperative that women be safeguarded and given enough respect at all times.

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