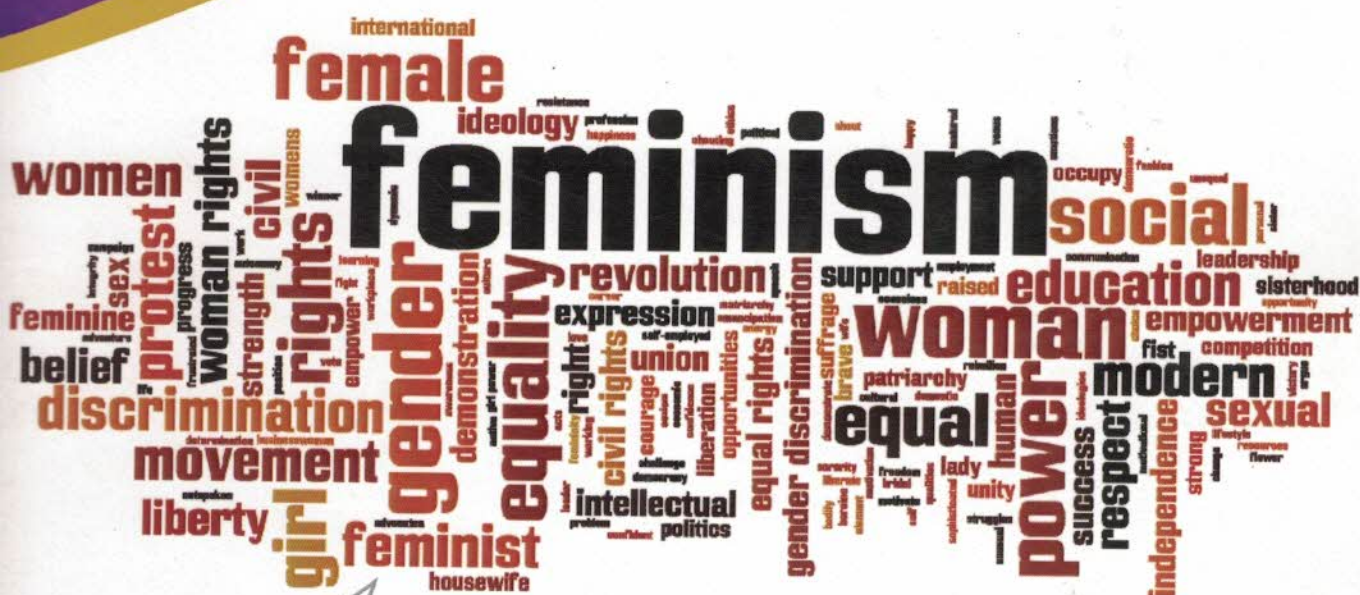


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A PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIETY, FEMINISM AND FEMINIST LITERATURE

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Abstract

'Feminism' has become a buzz word in the 21st century. Women empowerment is one of the crucial policies of various governments across the globe. In the patriarchal system women are not even treated as human beings. It means half of the human society was neglected by our social living norms. The paper discusses perspectives of feminism and society and what is covered in feminist literature.

The word 'feminism' has been misunderstood while believing one has understood it correctly. Hence most of the women writers also mention that they are not 'feminist'. What is and is not 'feminism', if it is clear once, we can proudly refer ourselves as feminist.

1. Women's agitation should not be seen as a revengeful act against men. Women want justice; and they know it very well that injustice cannot be resisted with injustice. Subduing cannot be answered with another subduing.
2. Feminism doesn't blame men, it surely blames patriarchal system. Patriarchy instills in men that men are superior to women, women are subsidiary and are the objects of the man's gratification.
3. Battle between men and women is unlike the battle between two countries, two communities, two religions or two classes. Because in this battle one doesn't want to defeat other and be victorious. Here both of them want win win situation, they are involved in the beneficence of each other. Both members should shoulder their family responsibilities in an equal way. Hence shifting the power to women and keep them at the center is not the aim of feminism. Peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding is at the base. Respect towards each other based on equality are the prerequisite.
4. Women don't want to become men. There is nothing shameful in the biological features of women. Women don't deny their biological responsibilities endowed upon them by the Nature.

5. Though men and women are biologically different, being human, an equality can be established in their relationship. At the beginning men were the symbols of freedom hence they were imitated.
6. Feminism is not limited to the women who are actively involved in the movement or the women involved in the academic or theoretical writings of feminism. Also it is not limited to the adjective -'feminist'. There is proper inclusion of the women who are working at the root level and at all spheres of human life. Sisterhood as expected by feminism goes beyond the boundaries of class, country, community region and religion. Women's emotional, psychological, ethical, economical, linguistic and the issues of the self-esteem are the same across the world.
7. Feminist women means the women who break the family, or believe that freedom means to be frolic, or the cynical ideology adopted by the women who didn't have successful married life. These are the disinformation of feminism. Lack of desire or phobia to know the new ideas is the reason behind this. Men are afraid that they may lose their dominance in the family or society. Feminism thinks about every woman as an individual human being. Hence Gandhiji maintained that feminism is associated to every woman in the world. Hence, feminism is not only the movement of women's issues but an ideology aiming to change the mindset of the men.
8. Feminism is not the western ideology. The fact is our own lifestyle has now become western. From the nineteenth century, a group of reformers wanted to make women 'lady' like the British. Now the world has come so closer that imitation of impressive or dominant ideas has become very normal. From the Indian perspective, feminism is not altogether a western thought. Mahatma Phule, Savitribai Phule, Gopal Krishna Agarkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Dada Dharmadhikari, V K Rajwade, Dr B R Ambedkar have talked about the noble ideas of men women equality and women's liberty. The fact is we couldn't practise it.
9. Virginia Woolf says, "As a woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world". The ideology of feminism is not limited to the urban region. Today also, India is a country of villages. Due to poverty in the rustic area, illiteracy, lack of awareness, caste system, customs and traditions, blind faith in rituals and superstition, it will take some more years for feminism to reach all the women in the Indian society. There is a substantial growth in the awareness of feminism in the society after offering 50% reservation to the women in the local self-government organizations. Through Saving Groups and Self-help Groups, women could understand their

economical strengths and financial management. Women are encouraged and supported enough for getting education for their all-round development. Women have been, strongly and systematically, opposing patriarchy through their writings in dalit, folk, rural and adivasi literatures.

10. The relation between society and literature are very complex and manifold. Literary writings of any era have a profound impact of social happenings, traditions and customs prevalent in that era. Similarly literature criticizes deformities in the traditions and customs to bring awareness for reformations in the social living. The men and women in this world should follow the values of equanimity to make it sedate. Feminism opposes the oppression of women by men and wants to create society as Gloria Steinman an American feminist believes where everyone recognizes the equality and full humanity of women and men. And all feminist litterateurs follow this tenet.

The year 1975 was declared to be the International Women's Year. And in the following decade till 1985 women's issues were given focus. As a result of it, women's questions, which were oppressed and neglected since many past decades, came front through various feminist movements. Women's liberation, women's freedom and feminism these term were coined during this period. In the patriarchal social structure women were subdued and subordinated. Religious, social, economic, cultural, linguistic and intellectual norms, customs and traditions exploit women. People became aware of this fact and the feminist movement to reform this deteriorated condition of the women was emerged. It opposed patriarchal system and not the men. It believes 'I am a feminist. I don't hate man'. In the patriarchal system women were treated like object and the private property of men. They were treated like cattle and not the human beings. Hence feminism, in the words of American feminist Cheris Kramarae, is the radical notion that women are human beings. It aims at bringing political awareness among women about their capabilities and power. A male is a 'man' and a woman is his part is the traditional view has been challenged by feminism and tried to explore civil rights and the privileges of women. Through movements, agitation, rallies, debate, stage show, public talks, books and literature, conferences and seminars, discussion forums, women's study centers at universities the feminist movement was strengthened shattering the patriarchal system across the world. And tried to get the powers and rights back from the male dominating structures. Feminism has changed it nature in accordance with the time. Religious customs and rituals, traditions in class and caste structures, psychology, sexuality, education, ideology and inculcations changed the nature of

feminism. But man woman equality is at the base of feminism and it remains the same across the world. Feminist ideology is originated due to religious, social and political injustice with women. Religion has a significant share in this discrimination.

Sigmund Freud an Austrian psychoanalyst believed, "women oppose change, receive passively and add nothing of their own". Freud sarcastically stated that we cannot understand what a woman wants. Similarly, Pat Robertson, a media mogul in USA quotes, "Feminism is a socialist, anti-family, political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians". Simone de Beauvoir opposed Freud's view and comments that by offering incomplete explanation about women's wants, men are playing a game. Instead of knowing the women's psychodynamics properly, a systematic mystery has been created about it. If men come to know about women as it should be, they will be disappointed and will come to know that man is also alone like a woman. Man is alone in his desires, expectations, fear, love and hollow pride. Until we understand women accurately, peaceful social co-existence of men and women is not possible.

The reason of mystery around women is their economic and social dependence on men. As all parathetic men hide something from their masters, similarly women hide themselves from the men. Patriarchal system makes men think themselves to be superior to women, hence they feel it substandard to listen and understand women. Psychology feels that, in the same set of circumstances and situations men and women react alike. Their gender doesn't make any difference. There is a traditional tendency to evaluate things with the help of differences rather than similarities for which prevalent inherent social norms are responsible. Men possess all types of powers which bring them money, social status, leadership and control over others. Powers help them to rule and be masters. Men are powerful and women nothing. There is constant control over women's existence which can cause changes in women's experience, emotions, expectations and imagination. Differences caused due to gender difference has been restudied by feminist movements. Differences between men and women were measured by keeping man as 'normal', the change between them was considered as women's weakness and lacking. Whatever a man has is superior and whatever the women possess is inferior. How to grow up male and female children? Sexual relations, pregnancy, menstruation, and child's birth are women's exclusive biological experiences. What are the emotional experiences of women when they are in the roles of a woman, mother, and wife, how the exclusive issues like sexual exploitation, rape and domestic violence, can affect the psychology of women has also been studied by feminists.

This study helps us to know how women are being looked down in the society. It proved the need to study women's psychology. How do women feel as women in their unique biological experiences, what do women feel about their representations and images in literature and fables, how does it affect women's psychology, how women's life did change during last fifty years, how did women resist and reject their old traditional ideals? All these concerns are at the crucial study are of both psychology and feminist literature.

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