



Feminism in India: Then and Now

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Abstract: Since Women Are Taught To Depend On Males Exclusively And Are Partnered With The State In Addressing Needs, Feminists Have A Particular Critique Of Social Security And State-Run Programmes. There Are Two Fundamental Principles For Designing Any Socialist Welfare Programme In A Capitalist Society: (1) Improvements Are Feasible; And (2) Breakthroughs That Would Disrupt The Relationship Between Capital And Labour Are Not Achievable Under Capitalism. The Feminist "Disaggregation" Campaign Is A Promising One In This Perspective. Men Should Understand That Feminist Demands Are At The Core Of Any Socialist Approach To Social Policy, And That Feminist Campaigns Require Labour Within And In Alliance With Many Existing Groups.

Keywords: Feminists, Disaggregation, Philosophy, Mobilization.

1. INTRODUCTION

The post-pioneer period is the time after India gained its independence. After gaining its freedom, India faced a wide range of problems. Our indigenous arts had been destroyed, and many periods of provincial dominance had impoverished our natural resources. Women were unable to adjust to the rising demand due to industrialization, evolving technological breakthroughs, ignorance, and a lack of portability, among other factors. Social reformers of the time made an effort to emulate Indian culture by establishing holy and legal norms, protecting women from discrimination, and ensuring equality for all citizens regardless of rank, ideology, religion, gender, or ethnicity. In addition to a wide range of specific moral and political assertions, feminism also introduces new areas of enquiry, new ways of posing and responding to philosophical concerns, and critiques of traditional philosophical theories and methodologies. Entries under "Feminism, interventions" discuss feminist contributions to and interventions in mainstream philosophical discussions. The entries under the heading "Feminism, topics" deal with philosophical questions that come up as feminists present accounts of sexism, criticize sexist social and cultural norms, and create alternative visions of a just world. They are, in essence, philosophical issues that feminism raises.



The word "feminism" comes from the Latin word "femina," which implies to have effeminate traits. Feminism derives its name from the French term feminist. The definition of "feminism" according to the dictionary is "the state of being female." Feminism is defined as "the support of women's rights on the grounds of the equality of the sexes" in the seventh edition of the Oxford Dictionary. It is difficult to determine when it was created. Yet, feminists assert that a French medical text published in 1871 is where the term "feminism" first appeared. It was assumed that those males had effeminate characteristics or tendencies. Let's list a few definitions of feminism for a thorough knowledge of the concept. According to the Encyclopedia of Sociology (2010), "feminism" is a movement that aims to eradicate gender inequality in society and promote social, economic, and political equality between men and women (Ryan 12).

What Is Feminism?

Historical Context

Feminism is a concept with many distinct applications, and its definitions are frequently debated. For instance, while there is disagreement on the precise list of injustices against women, some writers use the term "feminism" to refer to a historically particular political movement in the US and Europe. Other writers use it to refer to the belief that there are injustices against women. In this article, I have tried to briefly summarize some of the key definitions of the term that concern modern feminist philosophy the most. See "Feminism, History of" for a summary of feminist thinking throughout history.

The term "feminism" was first used in the middle of the 1800s to describe "the qualities of females," and it wasn't until the First International Women's Conference in Paris in 1892 that it began to be regularly used in English to refer to the belief in and promotion of equal rights for women based on the theory of sex equality. Some feminists claim that the movement in Europe and the US that began with the mobilisation for suffrage during the late 19th and early 20th century is when the term "feminism" in English first appeared. They regard to this movement as "First Wave" feminism. People who use this history frequently portray feminism as waning between the two world wars before being "revived" in what they refer to as the "Second Wave" in the late 1960s and early 1970s. More recently, "Third Wave" feminism has been used to describe changes to feminism over the last ten years. Other feminist scholars, on the other hand, disagree with linking feminism to these specific instances of political activism, arguing that doing so obscures the fact that there has been resistance to male dominance that qualifies as "feminist" throughout history and across cultures, i.e., feminism is not limited to a select group of women in the west over the past century or so.

The focus on "First" and "Second" Wave feminism also ignores the ongoing resistance to male dominance between the 1920s and 1960s as well as the resistance outside of mainstream politics, particularly by women of colour and working class women. This is true even when only considering relatively recent efforts to combat male dominance in Europe and the US. The term "Feminism" is French in origin and derives from the Latin word femina, which means "woman." As a result, it refers to the promotion of women's rights and the effort to end laws that discriminate against them. It has to do with the idea that women ought to enjoy the



same political, social, and economic rights as men. Feminism has often focused upon what is absent rather than what is present. The term "feminist" denotes a person who supports or engages in feminism and expresses a political viewpoint. Biology determines what it means to be female, and cultural definitions of what it means to be feminine.

Feminism during 21st century

Feminist politics were practiced to engage in discussion in post-colonial India, which was characterized by social hierarchies and the need for an Indian identity in feminist writing from the 20th century. The essay "Feminism in Independent India" examined the linkages and differences between problems like workers' rights and rural land reform. Well-known modern feminist theorists and activists like Gail Omvedt have emphasized the necessity of rethinking the root causes of women's oppression in post-independent India.

But what about the 'Dalits', sometimes known as the 'untouchables' in Western academic and popular inscriptions? The final writing in this series demonstrates how class language cannot be disregarded when discussing gender. The emergence of feminism and the women's movement in India may be divided into two separate periods, the pre- and post-independence eras. The women's movement can be divided into three stages:

1. First Phase (1850-1915)
2. Second Phase (1915-1947)
3. Third Phase (1947-Present).

The third phase can be further classified into three sub-phases:

- The Period of Accommodation (1947-1960s)
- The Period of Crisis (1960s-1975)
- 1975 – to date

Normative and Descriptive Components

Feminism appears to incorporate at least two claims in many of its forms, one normative and the other descriptive. The descriptive claim examines how women are, in fact, viewed and treated and asserts that they are not being treated in accordance with the standards of justice or morality cited in the normative claim. The normative claim is concerned with how women ought (or ought not) to be viewed and treated and draws on a background conception of justice or broad moral position. Together, these two arguments offer justifications for trying to alter the status quo; as a result, feminism is both an intellectual and political movement. Hence, for instance, a liberal perspective of the sort already discussed can define feminism in terms of two claims:

- (Normative) Men and women should be treated equally and with respect.
- (Descriptive) Women are currently treated less favorably than men in terms of rights and respect.

According to this argument, the normative claim is that women and men should have equal rights and respect, and the descriptive claim is that women do not have these rights and respect. Feminists can disagree on the descriptive or normative assertion, for example, on what constitutes justice or injustice for women and the types of injustice that women really experience. Feminists and non-feminists might disagree on both normative and descriptive



statements. For example, some non-feminists concur with feminists on how women should be seen and treated, but don't see anything wrong with the way things are now. Others disagree with the underlying political or moral beliefs.

Emergence of Feminism in India

People typically equate feminism with an aimless movement that promotes radicalism, encourages women to despise males, and destroys the traditional family values. People only view it from a radical feminist perspective or through the radical feminist lens, which is why this is the case. Nonetheless, the truth is that numerous thinkers and theories have developed since the advent of feminism. Although they all had various ways of thinking, they all agreed that a woman should be granted the rights that she is due in society as a human being. The idea that a woman shouldn't be treated like other sex was widely shared. Feminists are against the way society treats women in this way. As a result, all feminists make an effort to understand and address the challenges and issues that women face. Also, they speak out against the long history of abuse and exploitation of women. The intention is to combat subordination, bias, and dominance. They challenge society's conventional and traditional mindset with this movement.

Feminists claim that "women are less valued in compared to men in all civilizations which split sex into different cultural, economic or political realms." The term "feminism" is synonymous with sexual equality as well as a dedication to eliminating sexual ascendancy and transforming society. They oppose sexual harassment and gender segregation of women in the workplace and in the home. They dispute the primacy of man and his propensity for polygamy at the expense of women's subjection. Now that we have a basic understanding of western feminism, one may wonder how far this can be transferred to Indian society and circumstances; it would be riskier to replicate a mistake. Feminism was theorised differently in India than it was in the west, as evidenced by the position of women in the pre-colonial society. When the state requested a report on the status of women from a jury of feminist professionals and activists, the wide range of issues affecting women were addressed. It acknowledged the unfair hierarchy and oppression of women that exist in India. Around this time, popular topics among western feminists, such as violence against women, had an impact on Indian feminists. The argument had to be done extremely creatively to preserve the essence of socio-culture, however, given the socio-cultural diversity and history of our nation. As a result, some of the western concepts were outright rejected.

In India, feminism takes a different form that is very different from that of the west due to the same historical conditions and values. It implies a competitive individualism where "people are supposed to be free but everywhere in chains," similar to the definition of "self." A person is, nonetheless, regarded as a part of the wider social collectiveness in India. It is cherished and admired when individual banks can survive by banding together and sacrificing themselves for a greater good. Via a variety of repressive patriarchal family structures, age, and relationships to men through their families of origin, marriage, and childbearing, as well as patriarchal qualities, Indian women manage their existence. Yet, it should be noted that there are a number of cultures in India, including the Nairs of Kerala and the Shettys of Mangalore, who also happen to have some Bengali families who demonstrate matriarchal inclinations. The oldest lady in the family, as opposed to the older male, serves as the family's



leader. Some of the communities in India that the constitution recognizes as scheduled tribes are matriarchal and matrilineal, making them more egalitarian (Mukherjee 9). Anuj Kumar, the interviewer, claims that "Manipur has a matriarchal society," although this statement cannot be regarded as an objective evaluation or judgement. This is due to the straightforward fact that moms have assumed leadership roles in the majority of social activism. Their culture has a patriarchal structure. Their women's empowerment is evident due to historical factors. Strong dynasties governed Manipur, therefore in order to prevent any invasion or threat of crushing the frontiers, their males had to stand like a rock, protecting the borders, which freed up women to assume leadership in the family.

Muslims view men and women as being equal, but not in the sense that Westerners do. The Al Quran teaches that men and women have biologically different minds and that these minds function differently. Islam thus distinguishes between the rights of the husband and the wife. Being the head of the household is one of these rights that the wife owes to her husband. India is a nation that is mostly made up of social hierarchies. Age, sex, ordinal rank, kinship link, caste lineage, wealth occupation, and relationship to the governing power are the several categories that these hierarchies fall under. Girls from low-income homes experience twice as much vulnerability and stability when family hierarchies are established based on societal norms and financial requirements.

Girls are expected to be behind their brothers and have less access to the family's financial resources. If we examine the data, the birth ratio is another significant concern. According to the 2011 Census, India has a ratio of 943 available females to every 1000 males. Another example is marriage, where a woman spends the majority of her life making a devout vow. After the age of 18, a girl is thought to be biologically capable of having children. But, in India, girls are frequently married off before they reach puberty. Gandhi created the notion of "Stree Shakti" (women power) to represent the idea of femininity.

In addition to the aforementioned, Dalit groups have criticized Indian feminism, arguing that it favours upper-class or Hindu women of higher castes while ignoring the needs of the underprivileged, particularly Dalit women. Several minorities have criticized feminism for failing to take their concerns and challenges into account. It was suspected that upper class Hindu feminism in India's mainstream ignores the issues faced by minority women. Many of these elements inform us of the differences between Indian and Western feminism.

Snippet of feminism in India

The following is a brief overview of feminism in India:

- **Reformation of upper caste:** Sharmila Rege focuses on feminist reinterpretations that are not brahminical. Her call for rewriting the histories that are only about the upper castes may help us understand gendered India in a more complex and dialectical way. Even though this section is the smallest, with only three essays, it may be the most comprehensive for anyone interested in learning about the major arguments and issues surrounding grassroots feminist organization in modern-day India.
- **The evolution of feminism in English literature:** Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, feminism was explored in English literature as well as outside of it to debate how it is currently understood. One of the most important eras in British history, the 19th century saw great advancements for women, and the 20th century continued in same vein.



Literature has evolved over the 19th and 20th centuries, along with society and women's status in relation to males. Yet, the suffragette campaign was the catalyst for this shift in gender equality.

- **Indian society's beliefs:** The Indian society considers men to be the dominant group in terms of power and culture. Men in Indian society defend their masculinity and view women as unmanly, which is strange because men are not inherently feminine. Through cultural institutions and religious practices, women are sidelined. Movements for feminism have been working to end this marginalization. The 1960s and 1970s saw a significant feminism wave that contributed to theorizing female discourse.
- **British rule modification Indian feminism:** In the midst of this internal conflict, India discovered a prophet in Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who, motivated by English education and their culture, intended to improve the status of women in India. Ram Mohan Roy was a man of intelligence and vision, according to Firoz Alam. He understood the importance of the English language for advancement.
- **General literary trends:** Since India began writing down its history and development, it has been possible to paint a clear picture of an Indian woman and her place in the family, society, poetry, drama, philosophy, religion, art, and literature. To do this, one must delve deeply into the timeline of Indian history. Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, two sites with a rich history of ancient civilization, are located in India.
- **Current perceptions of feminism:** Post-feminism refers to the alleged shortcomings of the second wave and carries on the same ideological battles as the first. The movement's emphasis has, however, slightly changed; now, it is more concerned with the individual self and less with political systems and legal frameworks. The feminist movement has also become more varied; the first and second waves of feminists were largely Western, middle-class, white women, whereas the third wave feminists are women from many racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as those of various colours, religions, and social classes. Since the 1990s, women have gained more social acceptance, not just in the UK but also in other nations throughout the world.

2. CONCLUSION

The post-pioneer period is the time after India gained its independence. After gaining its freedom, India faced a wide range of problems. Our indigenous arts had been destroyed, and many periods of provincial dominance had impoverished our natural resources. Women were unable to adjust to the rising demand due to industrialization, evolving technological breakthroughs, ignorance, and a lack of portability, among other factors. Social reformers of the time made an effort to emulate Indian culture by establishing holy and legal norms, protecting women from discrimination, and ensuring equality for all citizens regardless of rank, ideology, religion, gender, or ethnicity. Feminism in India refers to a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social opportunities and rights for women. The fight for women's rights is taking place within Indian society. As feminists everywhere else, Indian feminists advocate for equal political rights, access to healthcare and education, and remuneration for equal work.



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