

## FEMINISM, HAVE WE COME A LONG WAY?

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### ABSTRACT

*The research topic was enthusiastically taken by me as I got exposed to an environment where it became a matter of concern as well as of curiosity for me to dig into the burning issue of present time that is condition of women in the society regardless of region, culture of society i.e. national or international scenario .The rationale behind the research topic is to highlight the problems that still exist at the grassroots level and requires a drastic change in the basic thinking process the patriarchal society and male dominated society. The study of the various waves of the feminism with the help of primary and secondary sources. Despite the numerous outcries by the various media sources, papers and magazines that female sex is leading and progressively participating in various field of male dominated work areas or society as a whole, the question rises , Have we really come a long way?...so far.. The paper reaches to a crux that one cannot deny the progress made by the females all over the world so far by making countless efforts , now we see a drastic change in the thinking process of many societies and cultures in the world with regards to the female sex but we still have long path to be covered .Its apparently a never ending journey that would always need efforts to balance the position and role of female in the male dominated society as e see in India as well.*

*Although females have made lot of progress in almost all the male dominated work fields e.g.politics , forces etc Even then the efforts made by the females individually and in groups the contribution of the societies as a whole as well as government is definitely required for this ongoing power struggle and battle of the so called second sex .*

**INTRODUCTION*****“One is not born, but rather becomes a woman”***

Simon-de-Beauvoir French author points out that very strongly in her very popular work Second Sex (1949). It alludes to the notion of a woman that is brought about societal and psychological conditioning. One popular Indo – Anglican Writer has said it rightly that Indian woman wants to be dominated, it has become her conditioned personality to ask her father or husband for everything she wants to do.

**Origin and Achievement: -**

This was very well done by the **first wave** writers (19th and 20th century). The most cited feminist writer of this time was Marry Wollstonecraft, the first feminist philosopher and Wilhelmina Drucker from If we talk about female sex worldwide, we notice that there is not much difference in the social, economic and political conditions of women and it was only with the origin of feminist movement that first-time female became aware of their legal rights such as suffrage rights, and educational rights. Netherlands has achieved the voting rights for female. On the other hand, writer like Charlotte Perkins, wrote short stories like the Yellow Wallpaper, that brought forth the psychological problems of female like postpartum that was not very much considered earlier. This was the crucial time when females have brought out the discrimination related to female suffrage and basic right to education i.e. legal issues.

The great French philosopher Charles Fourier who is also known as a utopian socialist is considered to be pioneer (in 1837) of the term “feminisme” that means feminism. Word “feministe” means feminist first believed to be originated in France and the Netherlands in 1872. Then further flourished in Great Britain in 1890’s and in United States in 1910. India feminism is believed to have arrived in third phase. The first phase that began in 19th century when social reforms started taking favor of women for their educational, political rights and customs related to them. The second phase is believed to be the one when Gandhi involved the female movements with Quit India Movement in 1915 and many women movement emerged afterwards. The third phase is considered to be emerged post-independence when the safety fair treatment with women on workplace and home, abortion related decisions political parity became dominant agenda of almost all the women movements. And nevertheless, currently is in fashion with the same intensity.

Feminism became more popular with the works of **second wave** writers like Second Sex, Room Of One's Own etc. It talks mainly about equal rights and legal protections. According to Friedan's New York Time, "**Women are victims of false beliefs requiring them to find identity in their lives through husband and children**" That is true in case of countries like India till date, this really cause women to lose their own identity in that of their family.

The **third wave** feminism begin in early 1990's, argues that second wave over emphasized experiences of upper middle class, it demonstrates how race, class, ethnicity, gender and nationality are all significant factor when discussing feminism.

It examines the issue of women's lives on an international basis. It talks about the issue of women's reproductive rights such as abortion.

Thus, these three waves played a crucial role in bringing up the issue related to women from their legal rights to social rights.

There is also an emerging **fourth wave** of feminism that is less universally recognized and focused on technology. **#me too** can evolution be an appropriate example for that, every woman came forward breaking the stereotypes of hiding sexual harassment. Now a question arises that do we require a **fifth wave** also? Answer may be yes. Separatist movements are usually destructive, especially if it divides man and women therefore a **fifth wave** may be need of the hours, we need a **fifth wave** that will accept the similarities between the two sexes, at the same time will celebrate the differences.

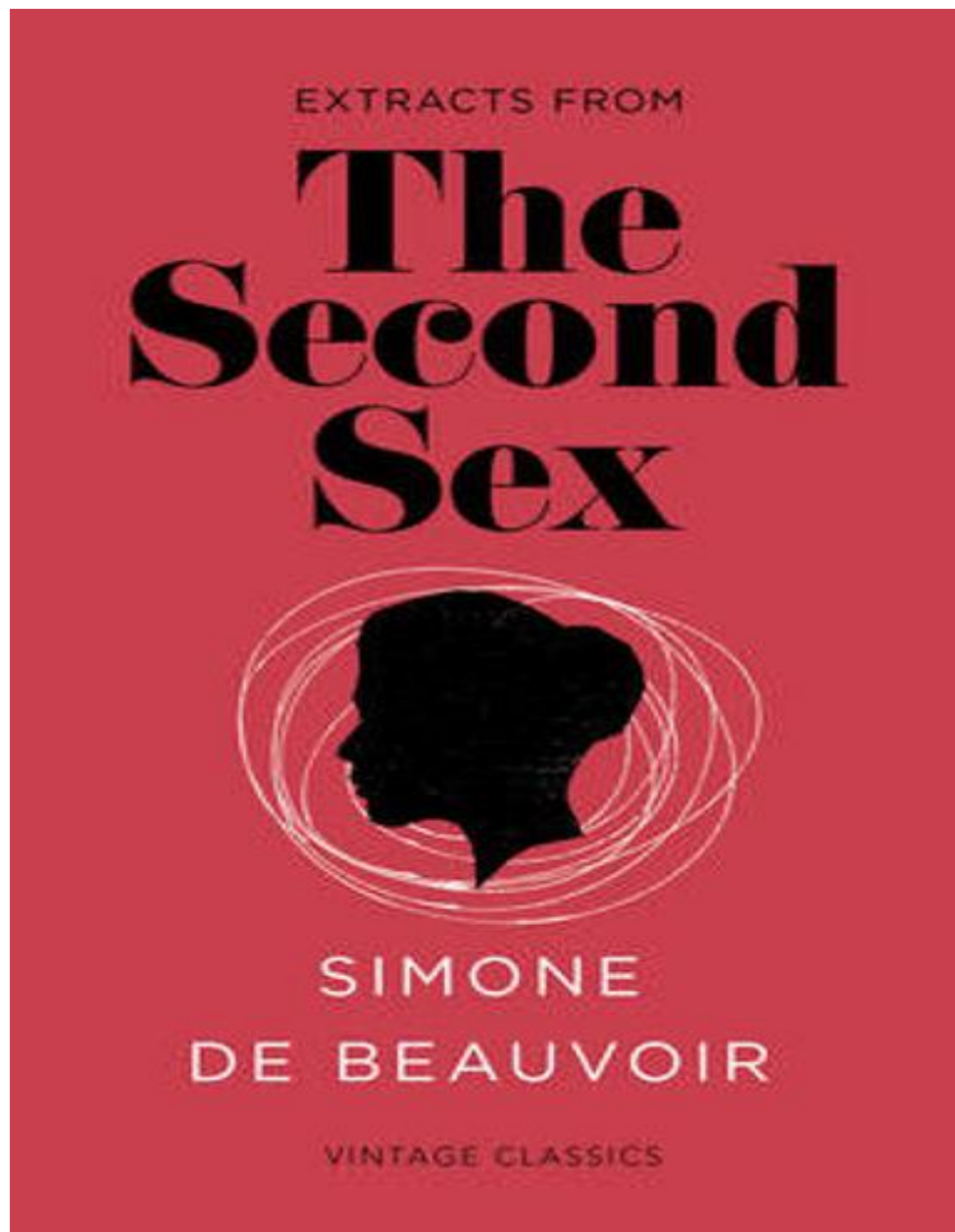
### ***Feminism in India***

If we talk about feminism in India, it came into existence first in Maharashtra and was carried forward by the supports of Women's rights and education. It was our strong woman Savitri Bai Phule who took initiative and opened the first school for girls in India 1848, and India's first feminist text **Stri Purush Tulna** was written by Tarabai Shinde, Devi Chaudhrani is none the less.

In case of western nations, we can say that there is no **patriarchy** now but in India it still exists and is a big barrier in the progress of women. A women's decision related to education, Job, Marriage are still in the hands of male head of the family. Though with the efforts of our social reformers like Ishwar Chand Vidya Sagar, Raja Ram Mohan Rai, we have achieved a lot for women but still there is a lot to be achieved. Indian Society still is not very open for women issues, for example if a man becomes widower, he can get married second-third time but if a woman does the same, she becomes a target and finger is raised on her character. Yes, she has equal work opportunities but it has only doubled her burden, now she works at home also and at workplace as well.

## ***Ground Reality***

There is no doubt about it that our honorable supreme court has provided women with equal right for example **section 497** says that adultery is no more a crime, it criticizes that woman is treated as possession and not as a human being. It gives a woman equal right on her body and mind just like a male, and its justified too because if a man can go out of marriage for physical pleasure or for mental satisfaction, then its equal right of a woman too. A woman cannot be judged for her sexual choices and she deserves equal respect even if she chooses a carrier of sex worker too. Her character mustn't be judged on the basis of how many times she has been divorced and how many boyfriends she had before getting married. But at ground level nothing has changed a woman has no right even on her own body. Feminists respect all sexual choice, from motherhood to porn.



## The Second Sex

*Image Source Google*

Karl Marx has said it rightly,

**“Social progress can be measured by the social position of Female Sex”**

Someone has rightly said that if we teach a boy it enlightens only one family, if we teach a girl it enlightens two families and in fact, many more families by further educating her children. Here we need to mention that girl and boys during their educational phase in school and colleges face some level of stress and anxiety but that has been proven with the help of a study done in District Shimla of Himachal Pradesh a bunch of Government schools the level of anxiety in girls is comparatively higher than boys. Hence proven that female sex requires more physical, emotional guidance, educational guidance and least need for psychological guidance, **as Ms. Snehbansal talks in one of Educational Articles titled as A Study of Guidance Needs in Relation to Gender of Secondary School Students.**

Now here is a man who understands women, **William Golding, British Novelist, Playwright and poet 1911-1993** has described woman somewhat like this, *“I think women are foolish to pretend that they are equal to man. They are far superior or always have been. Whatever you will give a woman, she will make greater. If you give her sperm, she will give a baby. If you give her a house, she will give a home, if you give her groceries, she will give a meal. If you give her a smile, she will give you her heart. She multiplies and enlarges what is given to her. So, if you give her any crap, be ready to receive a ton of shit.”*

Thus, there cannot be a denied to the definition Golding has given about her capability of flourishing anything. So, if we talk in the same tone, a woman when empowered will empower the world and on the path of any kind of development i.e. Economic, social, political, environmental, spiritual. It will grow in abundance. Thus, one should always appreciate and encourage a woman. When she tries to contribute in any field of life. It is her rights to stand equal in every field with man. After all she make the life cycle complete by supporting the world every possible way. Feminism has not only impacted the political, legal and social system but it has also given birth to new trends in various fields like language, stereotypical thinking about the appearance of a female, work restricted fields ,patriarchal traditional virtues and morals, imposed on female, glass ceiling etc. Feminist writers have raised an objection on the language which considers male domination in a society. For e.g. in any kind of job when we talk about few words like ‘policeman’, ‘gunman’ ‘fireman’ and ‘businessman’ etc. why don’t we use instead ‘policewoman’, ‘gunwoman’ or ‘businesswoman’ etc. Language represents the whole society and nevertheless its thinking and culture. Why is it so that while talking about these carriers, the first image that comes in our mind is of a male and not of a female?

We, no doubt, have come a long way but still we have a lot to achieve and one should never give up when it comes to achieve something big and justice for all. And not only this but when we talk about the other carriers like ‘teacher’, ‘nurse’ and ‘homemaker’ etc. the first image that

comes in our mind is that of a female, why not of a male. The truth is that the patriarchal society has engrained such view in our mind to such an extent that even our subconscious mind can't differentiate the social discrimination present even in language itself. Feminism supports gender neutral or gender inclusive language that avoids bias towards a particular sex or social genders like LGBTQA++. The gender-neutral terms, they (feminists) support are; such as 'police officer', 'flight attendant' etc. They have also given us words like 'Ms.' For female sex in place of 'Mrs.' or 'Miss'. They also object that why males remain 'Mr.' throughout their lifespan while females change the prefix from 'Miss' to 'Mrs.'. And, particularly about Indian society why is it a female only who changes the surname after getting married to a person with a different surname and not the male partner. This is worth pondering too. A woman is supposed to wear 'saree', 'mangalasutra', 'sindoor' and keeping 'Karwa' fast for the healthy and long life of the husband etc. to show that she is married and why not a male? He even after marriage remains the same, why all these customs and rules are for females only and males are immune. This further gives all power and support to the male dominant society.

It was the feminist theology only that reconsidered the traditions, and theologies of religions, its practices, the existing texts from feminist perspective. The goal again is to encourage the powerful social institutions like church to increase the involvement of females among the clergy and other religious authorities, to reinterpret the male-dominated social and political jobs. Focused on redefining women's place in different careers. There are various movements for e.g. Jewish, Wiccan, Islam, Christian and Atheist feminism. It was considered that Religion is one of the major sources of female misery, oppression and leads to inequality. In countries like India also till date there are rules for entering in a religious place and where female sex has no right to peep inside the temples ever in lifetime. She is denied from entry in a temple just because she is on her menstrual period that is ridiculous about the society and totally baseless religious belief or one can say, is a way to make a female feel abandoned, vulnerable and inferior to males, almost intentionally. Feminists also target the heterosexuality in the family relationships. The ever-increasing role of female sex at workplace has increased the work burden on females as their prime duty is considered to be of a homemaker i.e. taking care of children and cooking food, washing clothes, doing the dishes and cleaning and maintaining house all the way. If she wants to work outside, she is supposed to manage both the places without expecting any kind of support from male partner/husband. Thus, division of labor within households is also unfair for female sex. In ***Dubious Conceptions***, Kristin Luker discusses the effect of feminism on teenage women's choices to bear children whether in or out of wedlock. And that a poor woman has a low chance of finding a husband who will be able to provide reliable financial support. Thus, bearing child is her social responsibility by default. And thus, from her bodily appearance to her career choice and bearing baby, she already has a pre-decided life social criterion and that is a stereotypical viewpoint towards her that can be difficult to change without a strong revolution towards patriarchal

conservative mindset. Many Indo- Anglican female writers like Anita Desai, Kamala Suraiya, and Arundhati Roy etc. in their popular works like *Cry the Peacock*, *Confessions*, *The God of Small Things*, *Breast Stories* etc. Amrita Pritam, Krishna Sobti, Mahasweta Devi and many more are popular second wave writers. Arundhati Roy, one of the golden stars in the sparkling sky of Indian fiction expressed the reality of the society for average women in Indian society, to discuss one such work on feminism, *The God of Small Things* written in 1997, portrays a very plight, struggling and miserable condition along with her insecurities, anxieties and undeserved submissions and humiliation of average female sex, in the male dominated society where even one woman can harass other women to get an upper hand in family and society. The novel shows the real world of female and her lifelong struggle and marathon for seeking her 'identity' in this absolutely averse, cruel and envious society. The novel describes through the life of four female characters about all the ups and downs, and all ifs and buts an average woman goes through in Indian society. The main character Ammu takes a fatal decision just to balance her personal world (fulfilling basic bodily instinct needs) and at the same time taking good care of the children; "Love by night the man her children loved by the day." p77. To get rid of a problem different solutions can work well according to the requirement of particular area or person or scenario, a tailor cut approach is best to be adopted, similarly is the case with Black women and their specific struggles and social needs and political or economic requirements. While talking about the various issues taken up by feminists, we just cannot ignore one important feminist variant that is related specifically to the sufferings of Black women, popularly known as **Black Feminism and Intersectionality** that took place in America, due to the realization of the inefficiency of the popular feminist movement for these Black women. **Black Feminism** represents the need of equality for colored women not only in American but for all over the world including African, Italian etc. **Intersectionality** is a term coined by **a Black legal scholar in 1989**, meant to demarginalizing the intersections of *Race and Sex*. It is a concept that describes the multiple ways of oppressions are experienced by the color women. Black women are, according to, Crenshaw: "Often not fit neatly within the legal categories of either 'racism' or 'sexism'\_\_ but as a combination of both. So how come the remedy for the disease could be similar to that like woman in India or the struggles of English women, here one can say that Black Feminism only can raise voice for the women of color worldwide.

Writers like, Susan Brown miller also through her work ***Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape***(1975), outshouted the male upper hand in sexuality and biological gentile part to use to rape and frightening the female sex, she writes, "When men discovered that they could rape, they proceeded to do it....From prehistoric to the present, I believe rape has played a critical function." Thus, she is of the view that physical differences between man and woman, is also an aspect to keep women in a state of fear. Betty Friedan's ***The Feminine Mystique*** (1963) also outcries the main idea of feminism mystic is a false notion. Germaine Greer in ***The Female Eunuch*** (1970) deals with the issue of suppression of women sexually in almost all kind of



families i.e. "traditional", suburban, consumerist and nuclear as well, and that devitalizes them, using her as a female eunuch.

### **To Conclude**

*This research paper is an overview of the situations and conditions of female sex, its struggles, achievements and the progress it has made so far; whether it's just real or just assumption.* The paper throws a bright light on the aspect of feminist journey and ensures that we have come a long way but there is still an ongoing journey to be completed. Feminism with the other nations has given a lot to Indian women also but still there are many inequalities in the society for examples Property rights for girls, dowry, sexual harassment at work place, rape and marital rape, remarriage etc. In literature field itself Indian female writers have to suffer a lot for their openness about social taboos, like sex, extra marital affair and male domination. There are numerous examples like Kamala Das, Taslima Nasrin, Anita Desai etc. who had been boycotted by family and society because of their openness about unspoken problems of females. Patriarchy is still an obstacle in the progress of female sex in India. Male child is still a priority for most of the families in India. Lowest sex ratio in states like Haryana displays it very well. But still there are many examples where women have proved that they are not less than males when it comes to perform in any field, Manushi Chhillar, Marry Kom, Geeta Phogat, Babita Phogat and Vinesh Phogat; to count a few, are the milestones on the development path. But we still have a long journey to be covered. The quote below beautifully expresses the power of woman's determination:

***"There is no force more powerful than a woman determined to rise."***

■ BosaSebele

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