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Discussion on Women's Thinking and Women's Freedom

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Abstract

Feminist thought refuses to treat women as second-class citizens. It refutes traditional notions and seeks to re-center marginalized women. Feminist thought is a fight against a patriarchal society that violates women's rights. Despite belonging to different classes, castes, and races, the struggle of women worldwide is similar on the basis of gender, as their struggle is against the patriarchal system everywhere. The current form of women's liberation is the result of the significant contributions of many social reform movements. Despite this, women have not been able to achieve complete independence. Therefore, further reflection on this subject is necessary.

Keywords: Class, Caste, Gender, Society, Feminism, Women's Liberation, Struggle, Race, Exploited, Dalit.

Introduction

Simone de Beauvoir writes that men oppress women at every level. They consider themselves superior and women inferior or second-rate, deformed, insignificant, and incomplete."

According to Maitreyi Pushpa, women's discourse is - "Feminism is women's discourse, discussing the real situation of women is women's discourse."

Gopa Joshi considers Indian feminist thought to be centered around middle-class women. According to Gopa Joshi, "Women's thought in India seems to revolve primarily around middle-class upper-caste women. Some scholars believe that the status of Dalit women is marginalized and almost equal, but feminist discourse ignores the problems of Dalit women's status." Gopa Joshi considers feminist thought to be centered around middle-class work.

Asharani Vohra considers the Indian women's liberation struggle to be distinct from Western feminist struggles. According to her, "Women's liberation in our country is completely different from the women's liberation movement in the West. There, women fought for their liberation over a period of almost a century."

Women fought for freedom from men by standing up to them and enduring humiliation. In India, this fight was fought simultaneously against foreign slavery and ancient customs. In this, women and men were not rivals but allies. Men were the primary actors and motivators. Asharani Vora presents her argument by distinguishing the Indian women's liberation struggle from the Western one. By distinguishing the Indian feminist struggle from the Western one, she views Indian feminism from a new perspective. Even today, treating women as inferior and rendering them meaningless reveals the most horrific face of society. Because male dominance began the work of crippling society by rendering half the population meaningless. In Western society, women, suffering from centuries of slavery, inferiority, oppression, and dissatisfaction, awakened to their struggle for liberation and this was called the women's liberation movement. The first use of the word feminism is attributed to the French philosopher Charles, a utopian socialist, in 1873. The word feminist was used in the International Women's Conference held in Paris in 1892 on the basis of equality between men and women.

The idea of women's liberation in Buddhist society can be seen in the liberation songs of the Therigathas. The Therigathas comprise a collection of 522 songs in 73 Theris. The Therigathas present the story of women's struggle when women were considered nothing more than objects of enjoyment. At such a time, Buddhism granted women the right to live independently and make decisions. Therigathas are the saga in which, for the first time, women are seen as having the balance between rebellion and freedom in Buddhist nuns. According to Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, "Buddhism emerged at a time when women were being oppressed by male oppression. For those who had no personal freedom, the Buddhist era offered a message of eternal compassion. For the first time, women were considered equal to men in the Buddhist era."

The form of Indian women's liberation that we see today has been significantly influenced by the contributions of many movements and social reformers. The status of women has continuously changed since its inception, but even today, women are fighting for their rights, their very existence, and their independence. The current form of women's thought was first initiated by Raja Rammohan Roy in 1828, by founding the Brahmo Samaj and abolishing the practice of Sati. He encouraged widow remarriage, women's education, property rights, and inter-caste marriage. The struggle for property rights for married women began in the nineteenth century and was successful only twenty years later. In 1837, Mahadev Govind Ranade founded the Prarthana Samaj. It played a significant role in promoting women's education, widow remarriage, and the abolition of the caste system. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar championed widow remarriage, proving it to be in accordance with the scriptures in one of his books. Consequently, the Remarriage Act was passed in 1856. In 1848, Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule opened the first women's school in Pune, with Savitribai Phule as its teacher. Fatima Sheikh also played a significant role in this school. In 1857, Maharishi Dayanand founded the new Arya Samaj. This organization promoted education for Indian women and banned the practice of purdah and child marriage. Phule opened educational institutions for Dalit women. This was the first school in the country dedicated to women's education, and its impact spread throughout the country. "Articles 39 and 39(d) of the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution clearly state that men and women should have equal means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work, and freedom from exploitation." In 1882

itself, the book 'Nari-Purush Tulana' by Maharashtra's revolutionary woman Tarabai Shinde was published. In this book, Shinde sharply criticized the patriarchal social system of Maharashtra and its mentality.

In 1886, Swarn Kumari Devi founded the Ladies' Association. Pandita Ramabai opened Sharda Sadan for women in Pune in 1892, where she worked for women's education and employment. In 1896, Kamini Roy became India's first female honors graduate. In 1916, Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve established the first women's university in Pune. During 1917-1918, he established the Karve Primary School Teachers' and Girls' Training College. The Indian Women's Association was founded in 1917. The National Federation of Indian Women was established in 1925, and the All India Women's Conference in 1927. In 1929, the Progressive Women's Movement played a key role in the passage of the Child Marriage Restraint Act. Annie Besant founded the Theosophical Society and through it advocated for women's awakening. She also advocated for women's equal rights in political suffrage. Sarojini Naidu opposed social evils and considered the women's liberation movement a key component of Indian independence. She was the first Indian woman to become president of the Congress.

Dr. Ambedkar introduced the "Hindu Code Bill" for Hindu women. He emphasized the importance of education, self-respect, and self-reliance for women's upliftment. He believed that without these, respect for women was merely a dream. He believed that the progress of a society was measured by the progress of women and their status. Gandhi recognized the crucial role of women in the freedom struggle. He believed that achieving independence without women would be not only difficult but impossible. Therefore, he invited women to join the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, and women participated in large numbers. The Indian Constitution grants equal rights to both men, whether political, educational, social, or economic. It even grants the right to privacy. But despite these rights, women are still not free; society remains deeply patriarchal, imposing traditions, customs, and beliefs on them and seeking to keep them bound.

"Yatra naryastu puhyante tatra devata" means that where women are worshipped, gods reside there. Here, women are presented as deities. The status of women in India has not always been the same. In some eras, they have been called "Matri Devo Bhava," meaning that mothers are greater than gods, while in others they have been insulted, portrayed as objects of enjoyment, and in others they have been subjected to social evils and malpractices. Gender inequality also plays a key role in women's liberation. For women's identity, they have been presented as objects of enjoyment, while in others they have been subjected to social evils and malpractices. It is a battle to be fought. Discrimination between men and women is called gender inequality. The term gender is a product of women's movements in educational fields such as the 1970s and 1980s. Gender, in essence, emphasizes the importance placed on men's qualities over women's. It reflects the inequality between men and women, as well as the social, economic, and political advantages they receive. It reflects the division of unequal elements. Shubhra Parmar writes, "Gender is not universally the same everywhere. It changes due to cultures and behaviors, whereas sex, a natural gift of human nature, remains the same forever." It can be assumed that gender is culturally defined and socially constructed. Gender-related identities can be altered by society, tribes, and states. Gender manifests in various forms across religions, customs, and cultures. Gender inequality also

plays an important role in marriage. In marriage, men dominate over women. In the name of marriage, women are protected. Rekha Kastwar writes in her article, "Alone Women," that marriage provides a woman with food, clothing, and shelter for life in exchange for her body and labor. The man assures her of security and takes away her self, a self that is not allowed to form even in childhood. It is the result of this unconscious lack of self that, even when educated and sometimes self-reliant, women remain bound by the culture and tradition of depending on their father, husband, and son. In exchange for security and respect, they do not dare to live an individual life."

A patriarchal society merely subjugates women. The freedom women today talk about is from within a patriarchal society. Men have always asserted their dominance over women. Rajendra Yadav writes, "With all this literary and cultural rhetoric, the thing that man has killed, crushed, or tamed in women is their freedom. Man has always feared the independent power of women and has deliberately made it the focus of his attack. In her integrity and completeness, woman is formidable and invincible. There, she is a power that is free and uninhibited, wild and capricious. That is why man has broken her. Only by breaking can one be weakened and tamed." To subjugate women, they are enslaved in the name of cultures and traditions and shackled by various customs; in a way, they have been imprisoned in the name of these cultures. For generations, women have been burdened with traditions in one way or another. They have been cheated. Women's liberation is often considered to be limited to the freedom of their bodies. Some people associate women's liberation with the body. Manoj Pandey writes, "The question of women's liberation is not limited to the body; it also relates to the economic structure. Despite the sexual exploitation, oppression, and exclusion women face, they have found a new place for themselves. They have realized that their primary responsibility is their freedom to exist. Today's women have realized that their development is impossible until their economic status improves."

Status of women in religious texts - In the early period, women had respectable positions in religious texts. The history of thinking in India is very old. In ancient times, women were given equal status as men. No work was possible without women, not only in the society but she was also the creator of the hymns of the Vedas, she also read the Vedas and performed religious rituals along with her husband, she had the right to education equal to men, the source of this is that many women composed Vedic hymns, among them were Lopa, Ramasha, Apala, Gargi etc.

The feminism movement, from Western to Indian, is a struggle for women's liberation. The status of women has been changing from ancient times to modern times; they have been labeled everything from goddesses to slaves. From Vedic society to the modern era, the image of women has been constantly changing, but even today, male dominance persists in society. This needs to be uprooted. Society may accept women as mothers, daughters, wives, and goddesses, but not as human beings. Women need to be recognized as human beings, not goddesses. Granting them human status would solve half the problem. While in the Vedic era, women were revered, in the Bhakti period, they were called a form of illusion and a deceiver. In the Ritikal period, they were considered objects of pleasure and were described as adorned from head to toe. Modern women are beginning to forge their own distinct identities.

Women's thinking does not only mean crossing the four walls of the house, but only through struggle can women achieve their freedom. Women's thinking is the campaign of women's struggle against male-dominated power. Women's thinking may have started with the right to vote, but even before this, the ideology of ancient Greek philosophers towards women was not very good. In our Indian society, the condition of women is full of contradictions. There has been a lot of difference in the condition of women in every era. In myths, she was considered a power, but in common parlance, she was called weak. Today, women are fighting for their liberation. Women are struggling. Feminist thought cannot be labeled as separatist because it breaks boundaries and calls for liberation. Feminist criticism is a fight for women's identity. Modern women have been, and continue to be, rebelling against the patriarchal social system to protect their existence and assert their rights. Male writers writing on women's status are fully aware of their conditions and believe that women have their own independent existence. Women's discourse is about philosophical, rational women who are not only exploited, oppressed, and persecuted in a patriarchal social system, but also possess the capacity to rebel against this exploitation. Women's only helplessness is their shame and suffering, and men, considering this shame and suffering as their weakness, display their arrogance. Women passionately reject the conservative mindset of society and create their own image. The status of women in the West and India has been described. Some people believe that feminist discourse means opposing men, but within feminist discourse, there is a need to oppose the mindset in which feminist discourse means opposing men. The aim is to raise questions related to women's identity and to analyze conservative traditions, mindsets and the process of socialization related to women. Seen in the current social perspective, the feminism movement has not been able to completely change the traditional image of women, that is why even today women are being exploited in the society and women are struggling for their liberation.

Conclusion

Independent Indian society guarantees gender equality, but even in the twenty-first century, society's perception of women can be seen in the context of the current society. While on one hand there is a struggle for women's liberation, on the other hand, exploitation of women continues in one form or another within the same society. Indian society has been a multi-class society, but society's conservative mindset towards women is gradually changing. The image of women that emerges in today's increasingly capitalist society is not very good. Just as advertisements have reduced the female body to an object of display, if women want to change their image in today's society, they themselves will have to come forward. If society is to change, it's essential to first eradicate the conservative mindset that's growing among people. Until this conservative mindset is transformed, women will remain unassisted. To achieve this, women must become self-aware and fight against the forces of the status quo. The struggle for women's liberation is a significant struggle in itself, with the primary objective of women being to break the dominance of the patriarchal social system.

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