

## MODERN FEMINISM: A CONTRAST BETWEEN INDIAN TRADITIONAL VALUES AND MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF WOMEN

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### Abstract

*This paper tries to explore meaning and understanding of modern feminism which contrast traditional values of Indian society. There are many interpretations going on modern feminism across the world. After the first, second and third wave of feminism, educated women folk including rural illiterates started to demand their rights and put effort to uplift status equal to men in the society. There are certain issues like partiality, dowry, sexual harassment etc. which are considered as burning issues in third world countries like India. Education is one of the main aspect that changed views of women all over the world and it is a positive sign towards gaining equal status in the society. Empowerment gained by women due to educational facilities provided during British rule and post colonial period in India. Social leaders like Rajaram Mohun Roy, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Savitribai Phule and others who supported women education and struggled a lot for women in India and contributed a considerable amount of knowledge. On the bases of such foundation women education and women empowerment has been realized in India. Women folk have to make few struggles and cooperate to bring sex equity by battling against social disparities somewhat battling against sexual imbalance. Sexual imbalance can't be tested as it is against nature. So battling against a wonder such as this is only a proof of low learnedness. Indian traditional values like family, childhood, motherhood, respect to elders and husband in the society, following certain rules, customs and rituals. Women folks are meant for domestic work etc. contrast to the modern feminism where there is a lot of freedom in the society. Modern feminism supports women to improve their status in society and lead life equal to men. Harassment and violence against womenfolk is the most intolerable apparatus utilized against women that lessens the status of women in that society.*

**Keywords:** *Modern Feminism, Traditional Values, Women, Marriage, Education, Sexes, Status, Equality, Empowerment.*

### Introduction

Perspectives and thoughts of present-day women's liberation it is comprehended that however the before women's liberation battled for balance which a woman merits as she was denied of numerous rights, however, she is additionally a similar individual made like men. Be that as it may, through ages ladies have been subjected to this segregation, and requested women to raise her voice against every one of these outrages and misuse. However, current woman's rights requested this equity on the cost of loss of those associations with which she is identified with men. They neither needed to be a spouse nor a mother. They requested finish nullification of all these social organizations which are the pith of our Indian culture. Henceforth even in India, this idea of present-day woman's rights couldn't inspire the Indian women. Therefore free blending of genders in each circle of life, the pattern of iniquity and wickedness appeared and created. Also, infidelity and sex wound up overflowing. What's more, this offered to ascend to a bold and dishonorable culture which at last ruled out profound quality and stunned the feeling of ethical quality and unobtrusiveness and respectable mindedness was being strangulated. Man delighted in the charms of the female frame, investigating every possibility for creative energy, and her no less captivating voice was misused to pull them towards wantonness, indecency and sin. Women's delineation in silver screen and commercials

was only for amusement and offering their items, they were utilized no not as much as a brightening doll to show their work. Fiction, dramatization, verse and writing in different structures portrayed sex in all its shocking structures and disgraceful points of interest and then going with sensations and interests.

Modern feminism is like a movement which demands equality in male dominated societ. "Feminism comprises a number of social, cultural, and political movements, theories and moral philosophies, concerned with gender inequalities and equal rights for women. The term "feminism", coined by the utopian socialist Charles Fourier, and was first used in English in the 1890s, in association with the movement for equal political activists have been concerned with issues such as individual autonomy, political rights, social freedom, economic independence, abortion and reproductive rights, divorce, workplace rights and education and putting an end to domestic violence, gender stereotypes, discrimination, sexism, objectification etc." ([www.newworldencyclopedia.org](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org)) Arpita Mukhopadhyaya clarified her perspectives on women's liberation and history of use of the word. Women's liberation isn't a solitary or unitary idea, however a polyvalent amalgam of various, multi-layered, complex, and regularly, conflicting thoughts. There are different ways to deal with the issue of woman's rights, which makes it hard to touch base upon any single definition.

Lisa S Price, in *Feminist Frameworks: Building Theory on Violence against Women* offers a fascinating meaning of the term. "Feminism is also a method of analysis, a standpoint, and a way of looking at the world from the perspective of women. It questions government policies, popular culture, ways of doing and being, and asks how women's lives are affected by these ideological and institutional practices'. It must be acceded, from the onset, that feminism needs to be understood in the plural; exploring and identifying 'feminisms' is therefore a more authentic approach. Feminism addresses the issue of women's inferior position in society and seeks ways and methods of alleviating the social, cultural, political and economic discrimination that women are subjected to. But the difference in the approach to this central problem contributes to the complexity, diversity, fragmentation and contradictions underlying 'feminisms'. The origin of the term 'feminism' is uncertain and debatable. The term can be traced back to 1871, when it was used as a medical term to define symptoms of 'feminization' of the bodies of male patients. In 1872, Alexander Dumas used it in a pamphlet titled *l'homme femme*, to identify women who believed in a masculine way. And the term had spread through Europe and America by 1910. Thus, 'feminism' as a term had conflicting implications in both medical and political discourse." She further illustrates about the term feminism. "The term is made up of two components 'femme', 'woman' in French, and 'esme', which refers to a social movement or a political ideology. It has been a controversial term and many activists struggling against sexist oppression have even rejected the label. In order to classify the shifting movements in the history of feminism, the paradigm of 'waves' came into use. Thus, 'first wave feminism' is used to signify the feminist movements of the late 19th century and the early 20th century that were aimed at acquiring equal rights for women. 'Second wave feminism' refers to the feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s that addressed issues such as women's employment, role in the family and sexuality, along with their political rights."

According to Cullough. Mc feminism destroy the wall between man and woman in the world. Modern feminist do not allow any discrimination and partiality between man and woman. "Modern feminist's eradication of male and female distinctive is absurd, is illogical, and has eroded one of the most important gifts God has given society, the picture, the symbol, and the presence of a thoroughly non-chauvinistic yet very confident and story man. Again, classic feminism fought for equality. We should all be for

that. Men and women have equal value, but are gifted to make unique yet complementary contributions to society." "Olive Schreiner is the first and foremost in the first wave feminism. She was an active feminist and socialist whose impact on British feminism makes the period from the 1880s to 1920. Most of the major themes of 20th century feminism are systematically argued by Olive Schreiner in *Woman and Labour* (1911), which brings together ideas discussed in her earlier work, which typically combines theorizing with imaginative styles of writing. Schreiner's *Women and Labour* is an important book in several ways. Not only is it the text most often cited by subsequent feminists, for example Vera Britain called *woman and Labour* the bible of the women's movement, but Schreiner anticipates contemporary feminism by arguing that the problem for feminism is men and not women, that relationships between women are crucial, and that consciousness raising is as much part of feminism as the battle for equal rights. Like Virginia Woolf, Schreiner consolidates a progressive new identity for women with the accounts of female psyches and gender differences. In *Woman and Labour* Schreiner outlines that radical theme of women's essential differences from men and consequent superiority is rooted in material differences of experience and consciousness."(Kunjakkan)

Kunjakkan gives examples of an English woman writer Virginia Woolf who wrote about feminism in her literary works. Virginia Woolf comes next. "Woolf is a pioneering figure in feminist literary theory. *A Room of One's Own* (1929), *Three Guineas* (1938) and *Moments of Being* (1975) are Woolf's major contributions the feminist theory. *A Room of One's Own* focuses on the history and social context of women's literary production and the *Three Guineas* focuses on the relation between male power, and the law, medicine, education and militarism. Woolf's fundamental contribution to feminism is her argument that gender identity is socially constructed and can be challenged and changed, and that gender inequality begins very early in the patriarchal family which in turn leads to underpins, fascism." Vera Brittain (1993-1970) and Winifred Holthy (1898-1935) recognized entire heartedly with break even with rights woman's rights and passionately contended the case for meet pay for parallel work and equivalent open doors for women's' in training and to callings. Simone De Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex' (1949) is recognized by different women's activists as one of the exceptional commitment to woman's rights. Shulamith Firestone devoted 'The Dialectic of Sex' (1970) to De Beauvoir, and Betty Friedan embraced De

Beauvoir's thought that lady is the 'other' of man for her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). De Beauvoir's cautious refinement amongst sex and sexual orientation and her case that women's social capacities however not subject to natural givens, enormously affected later authors. The title 'The Second Sex' sums up De Beauvoir's contention that a society sets up the male as a positive standard and 'woman' as the negative second sex, or other. This understanding is in some routes analogues to Virginia Woolf's idea of *Woman as Mirror*. The *Second Sex* works through natural, Marxist, and psychoanalysts speculations to demonstrate how all parts of social life and believing are ruled by this suspicion of a woman as 'other' which, De Beauvoir contends, is additionally disguised by ladies themselves. 'One isn't conceived yet rather turns into a woman'. No organic, mental, or monetary destiny decides the assumption that the human female displays in the public eye; it is progress all in all that delivers this animal, middle of the road amongst male and eunuch which is depicted as womanlike. Just the mediation of another person can set up a person as an 'other'. "Second wave feminism" refers to a period of feminist activity beginning in the early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s. It was a continuation of the earlier phase of feminism which sought legal and political rights in the UK and the US. Second wave feminism has existed continuously since then, and coexists with what is termed "third wave feminism." Second wave feminism saw cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked. The movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their own personal lives as deeply politicized, and reflective of a gender based structure of power. While first wave feminism focused upon absolute rights such as suffrage, second wave feminism was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end to gender discrimination in society, in education and in workplace. The title of an essay by Carol Hanisch, "The Personal is Political," became a slogan synonymous with second wave feminism and the women's liberation movement."([www.newworldencyclopedia.org](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org))

"In the 1960s, several factors worked together to bring about a major cultural revolution. Rebellion against authority, the sexual revolution, the emergence of criticism that doubted the validity of truth and even the ability to assert truth, a shift toward relativism (where nothing is truly right or wrong) affected the minds of an entire generation. These seeds of anti-traditional, anti-orthodox understanding were planted and watered. It was in the context of this backdrop that the central ideas of 'Modern

Feminism' were born."(Cullough) Cullough gives a picture of feminism. "Modern feminist's eradication of male and female distinctive is absurd, is illogical, and has eroded one of the most important gifts God has given society, the picture, the symbol, and the presence of a thoroughly non-chauvinistic yet very confident and story man. Again, classic feminism fought for equality. We should all be for that. Men and women have equal value, but are gifted to make unique yet complementary contributions to society." "Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), an important text of second wave feminism/modern feminism, has been critiqued for its narrow scope of analysis, but it explodes the myth of the 'happy affluent housewives' of America suburbs. She diagnosed the discontent among the housewives who lead restricted lives. Friedan critiques the idealization of the traditional roles assigned to women. Her book was based on her personal experiences and the experiences narrated by real women through questionnaires provided by Friedan. *The Feminine Mystique*, according to Friedan, insists that 'the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity....Beneath the sophisticated trapping, it simply makes certain concrete, finite domestic aspects of feminine existence... into a religion, a pattern by which all women must now live or deny their femininity'. Friedan exhorts these women into initiate a process of self-enquiry to seek what they truly want for themselves, apart from stability in marriages, children, sexual gratification and the security of conventional roles. *The Feminine Mystique* is an important text, which marks the shift from the earlier economic analysis based on Marxism to humanistic psychological concerns. It also traces the continuity of the movements of the 1940s and 50s culminating in the second wave of the women's movement."( Mukhopadhaya Arpita)

Kanjukkan explains about socio-economical status depicted in the work 'Sexual Politics' written by Kate Millet. "Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970) is one the most influential texts of modern feminism. Millet's argument in *Sexual Politics* is that ideological indoctrination, as much as economic inequality, is the cause of women's oppression. This idea opened the way for second wave feminism to think afresh about reproduction and sexuality. She argues that patriarchal power is ubiquitous. There is a deeply entrenched politics of sexuality, beginning with the reproduction of patriarchy through psycho-social conditioning in the family which operates in all economic and social structures. Patriarchy is a fundamental part of individual heterosexual relationships because these are

permeated by male power. The book is a pioneering synthesis of overarching explanation of male dominance was taken up by other second wave feminists, for example Shulamith Firestone, and Millet's attack on psycho-analysis for colliding in women's socialization parallels the work of Phyllis Chesler. Millet's analysis of the way sexist ideologies work in literature paves the way for feminist literary criticism. Millet's fundamental conviction is that women's oppression derives, not from biology but from the social power, and like all social power, sexual power controls individuals both through indoctrination and through violence. Millet's expansive understanding of politics that the personal, sexual life was political- became the fundamental premise of second wave feminism, just as Millet's inter disciplinary, interrogative, autobiographical and moral style gave second wave feminism a new way of writing theory."

Arpita Mukhopadhyaya depicted views expressed by Kate Millet and how she underscores the significance of the women's' developments of the nineteenth century in testing man-centric belief system and guaranteeing a level of lawful, political and financial rights for women. "Kate Millet finds institutionalized patriarchy in all aspects of society. Sexual inequality is deeply ingrained in religious, social, political and economic structures breeding 'interior colonization' and pervasive power disparity. In *Sexual Politics*, Millet depicts the power relationship between the sexes constituted around the power relationship between the sexes constituted around the domination-subordination pattern. She exposes the patriarchal plot that assigns dominant roles to men based on biological difference. Millet underscores the importance of the women's movements of the 19th century in challenging patriarchal ideology and ensuring a degree of legal, political and economic rights for women. This according to Millet, contributed to the progress of 20th century feminist movements. She argues that women have been simultaneously idealized and disparaged, substantiating her thesis by referring to the overt misogynistic attitudes of male writers across time and culture: Freud, D.H Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet. By insisting on the necessity of accepting that 'personal is political', Millet reconciles the apparently irreconcilable. She scathingly critiques phallic writing focused on gender stereotypes and the sexist language used by male writers. This 'cultural programming', she argues, renders woman passive and infantile by concerned patriarchal force. Apart from these 'literary men', Millet also identifies psychologist Sigmund Freud and sociologist Talcott Parson as

responsible for the perpetuation of the myth of feminine inferiority. Millet, however, offers an affirmative possibility of a future without the malaise of the sex-gender dichotomy. Her vision of an androgynous existence is not simply an amalgam of traditional attributes categorized as 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Thus androgyny is not just a combination of 'docility' and arrogance, but an amalgam of ideas and virtues that go beyond gender." "Third wave feminism has its origins in the mid-1980s, with feminist leaders rooted in the second wave like Gloria Anzaldúa, Bell Hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, and other black feminists, who sought to negotiate prominent space within feminist thought for consideration of race-related subjectivities. The third wave of feminism arose in the early 1990s as a response to perceived failures of the second wave, and a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. Third wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second-wave's "essentialist" definitions of femininity, claiming that these definitions over-emphasized the experience of upper middle class white women and largely ignored the circumstances of lower class women, minorities and women living in other cultures. A post structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality is central too much of the third-wave's ideology. Third wave feminists often focus on 'micro politics', and challenge the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females."(www.newworldencyclopedia.org)

Lengerman Madoo Patrica discussed about several debates held in this regard. "While historically the concept of "difference" has been at the center of several theoretical debates in feminism, we use it here to refer to theories that describe, explain, and trace the implications of the ways that men and women are or are not the same in behavior and experience. All theories of gender difference have to confront the problem of what is usually termed "the essentialist argument"; that is the thesis that the fundamental differences between men and women are immutable. That immutability is usually seen as traceable to three factors: (1) biology; (2) social institutional needs for men and women to fill different roles, especially, but not exclusively, in the family; and (3) the existential or phenomenological need of human beings to produce an "Other" as part of the act of self-definition. There has been some interest in sociobiology by respected feminist scholars, most notably Alice Rossi (1977, 1983), who have explored the thesis that human biology determines many social differences between men and women. But overall,

the feminist response to Sociobiology has been overwhelmingly oppositional. The three theories of gender difference are: cultural feminism, theories of institutional requirements, and theories based in existential or phenomenological philosophy," According to Kunjukkan, "Liberal feminism has a long and familiar history, dating back from Mary Wollstonecraft's classic feminist text *A Vindication of Rights of Women*, 1792. Their main argument is that women should have the same civil liberty and educational parity with men. They campaigned for equal pay for women but do not campaign for alternative to traditional forms of gender relations as hetero sexual marriages." It is necessary to make few struggles and cooperate to bring sex equity by battling against social disparities somewhat battling against sexual imbalance. Sexual imbalance can't be tested as it is against nature. So battling against a wonder such as this is only a proof of low learnedness. On the off chance that we need to bring sex equity we should battle for otherworldly and scholarly rights as opposed to battling for bringing uniformity by disregarding the sexual distinction amongst men and ladies. Almost certainly ladies have defeated their physical shortcoming in numerous fields. It is likewise calculable however every lady can't beat this shortcoming. Henceforth we should grow such a procedure to battle this sex disparity which ought to be adequate and workable regardless of their physical capacities.

### Conclusion

Indian traditional values like family, childhood, motherhood, respect to elders and husband in the society, following certain rules, customs and rituals. Women folks are meant for domestic work etc. contrast to the modern feminism where there is a lot of freedom in the society. Modern feminism supports women to improve their status in society and lead life equal to men. Harassment and violence against womenfolk is the most intolerable apparatus utilized against women that lessens the status

of women in that society. Henceforth it is vital to address this issue truly. For this, our family framework can assume imperative part to limit such coldhearted conduct of men towards ladies. In the event that each mother shows her child to regard ladies like he regards her mom and tends to the nobility of her sisters, he would doubtlessly grow up as a man who won't just regard ladies yet in addition battle for her poise and shamefulness. A family which was considered as the perpetrator of disparity by present-day women's activists, ought to be where ladies can be guaranteed full equity, be it is the family before marriage or after marriage. A little girl ought not to be segregated with a child for accomplishing great training, sustenance, great medicinal services. In spite of the fact that we can't change a few conventions like a young woman abandoning her maternal family after marriage. In any case, the family in which a woman enters as a spouse and little girl in-law or sister-in-law ought to be regarded, regarded as like some other individual from their family. This would bring about no endowment harassment and share passing. The guardians of a child should approach to prevent any sort from securing an endowment for their children particularly the moms should approach for such a change as she ought to always remember her own particular presence as a woman.

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