

## HAS FEMINISM BECOME SCARY?

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the evolution and shifting perception of feminism from a movement rooted in the pursuit of gender equality to its complex and sometimes controversial interpretation in the society. It traces feminism's journey from the first wave's focus on suffrage to later movements addressing broader issues like bodily autonomy, workplace discrimination, and gender norms. While highlighting feminism's vital role in advocating for women's rights, the paper critically examines how some practices, under the banner of feminism, have sparked debates over fairness, misuse of legal provisions, and emerging concerns around misandry. Through examples from Indian society and global feminist trends, the discussion raises important questions about gender-neutral laws, the misuse of feminist ideals, and the need to balance advocacy with accountability. Ultimately, the paper calls for a reevaluation of feminism's implementation to ensure it remains a tool for equality rather than division.

**Keywords:** Feminism, gender equality, misuse of legal provisions, misuse of feminist ideals.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated annually on March 8<sup>th</sup> every year. It's a day to recognize women's achievements, celebrate progress, raise awareness of gender disparities and to advocate for gender equality, social mobility. Most importantly, this day reminds everyone to encourage the building of a more inclusive society.

Women, the most beautiful beings in this world, deserve maximum respect not only because they are strong but also because they possess characteristics that men don't possess, which eventually helps them in playing the toughest roles in humanity.

**Women – “You are powerful, you are beautiful, and you are enough”.**

The term ‘Feminism’ was coined to advocate political, economic, and social equality of women's rights to foster gender equality. Though it is always stated that: “Equality knows no gender”, women have had to fight to attain equal status in the society in many aspects.

### 1<sup>ST</sup> WAVE OF FEMINISM

The first wave of feminism began in the mid-19th century ie July 1848 to 1920 which affirmed women's equality with men on very basic issues, primarily on securing women's right to vote. Once the amendments were made the fight continued but first wave of feminism slowed down significantly.

The first wave of feminism is traditionally considered to have begun in the United States, with the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 marking its start, though it also gained traction in the United Kingdom.

What an irony!! Indians always believed that patriarchy exists only in India, and discrimination is there only in India. But the blunt truth is that patriarchal system existed everywhere, from the most developed nations across the globe to the animal kingdom.

Another irony is that during that time period United Kingdom was ruled by Queen Victoria. But Queen Victoria did not disguise the fact that she was not a supporter of women's rights. It is truly sad that Queen Victoria who became the successor of the throne after her father's death, and all because of the support of her husband and the then male Prime Minister is remembered as a ruler in a 'constitutional monarchy'.

First-wave prominent feminists were: Mary Wollstonecraft, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Dorothy Day, Lucy Stone. These were the feminists who fought for the rights of women.

**"We know that when women raise their voices it is for equality, for their rights and for the rights of others"**

#### **MYTHS**

One of the most persistent myths about feminism or Sexism is that it's anti-men. But in reality, feminism has always been about seeking gender equality, not female superiority. It encourages a more inclusive society where all genders are treated with respect and have equal opportunities. It's about removing toxic masculine forces that serve very few people and harm people of all genders.

The first wave of feminism was primarily led by white women in the middle class, and it was not until the second wave of feminism that women of color began developing a voice.

This again clears one myth that Europeans and Americans were more liberal and treated everyone equally. The second wave of feminism started in the early 1960's till early 1980s. It was successful not only because it led to changes in the lives of huge numbers of women, but also because the movement evolved over time.

Unlike the first wave, second-wave feminism addressed a wider range of issues beyond just voting rights, including family dynamics, workplace discrimination, and reproductive rights. The fight was demand for a better and more dignified and respectful life than before.

Second-wave feminism didn't only encourage women to aspire to break free from societal expectations for women and gender norms. It also mobilized women to fight for legislation that protected women and secured autonomy.

It dealt with the intra-feminism disputes such as sexuality and pornography. Access to safe and legal abortion was a major concern for second-wave feminists.

Feminism isn't about denigrating traditional roles but rather about giving individuals the freedom to choose the roles that suit them best. Feminists advocate for the option to pursue any career or lifestyle without being limited by gender stereotypes.

The paradox is that women are choosing careers themselves but now they are trying to prove that they are better than their counterparts in all aspects. We are in the midst of a social revolution, greater than any political or religious revolution that the world has ever seen, because it goes deep down to the very foundations of society. Feminists should know that “Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength.”

**Feminism is a requisite**, a belief that women should have the same rights and opportunities as an individual being as men, in this so-called patriarchal world. It is the best thing that can happen in order to transform this struggling society into something developed and beautiful.

It is an irony that traditionally men of our society have been told that women is a commodity. A woman is for their pleasure, to feed them, to take care of their home, take care of their children. It has always been about them – the males. The men were never told even by their parents that to become a good man they need to respect a woman and treat her equally and not degrade her.

For Indians, feminism was a Western concept, which is a myth. The proof is that social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy fought against evils of sati, advocated widow remarriage etc.

Another paradox is that one always refers to patriarchal society but it alone has never been the reason for women's discrimination. In countries like India also one can easily witness that the females who are in dominating positions be it in society or at homes seldom allow other women to enjoy power. We still need to find an answer to this thought process.

### **3<sup>RD</sup> WAVE OF FEMINISM**

The third wave began in the mid-1990s had three central focal points: Inter-sectionality (describes how identities interact), Bodily Autonomy (making choices with one's own body), and The Deconstruction of Gender.

In other words it was the empowerment of women intersectionality or intersectional experiences, and LGBTQ+ rights, focused more on sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture. This wave lasted till 2010 after which the 4<sup>th</sup> wave of feminism set in.

### **But the question is - Is the world really a male-overwhelmed culture anymore?**

Do the habits that few women nowadays practice and demand truly satisfy feminism? Well, they call themselves feminists, but can they be really considered as feminists? So many laws were made to bring them on equal footing with respect to status and authority but when did things started changing in the society one is not really aware of. The realization seeped in when the statistics revealed that how men are now being victimized.

However, making unfair use of any authority will only lead to a more biased and unjustified scenario.

### **IS THE CONCEPT OF FEMINISM BEING MISUSED???**

According to female feminists if a woman smokes and drinks she is always judged, unlike men who are never judged. Why do females think that men are not judged because of their bad

habits? Men too are definitely judged and evaluated, even hated, and steps to change them are being practiced. Both the sexes should be equally judged and evaluated.

There are many other misdeeds which women are practicing in the name of equality or to fight against the male domination in the society. Is practicing the worst habits of men a step towards bringing feminism in society? Practicing such misdeeds will not only harm them but the opposites too. Is this a matured strategy to bring equality in society?

The ideal situation would be where people will judge people irrespective of their genders for practicing bad habits publicly. Will there be equality in the future if everything continues in this way? The numbers of respectful dignified women are falling day by day. Some women are definitely responsible for triggering many ill deeds in the society in the name of feminism and equality.

### **Another privilege enjoyed is : SEATS IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Many seats are reserved for women in public transports, still women misuse their rights and make men stand from the seats not reserved, in the name of feminism even when she is fit and fine and not sick or old or pregnant. This is misuse of rights. During peak hours and heavy rush in metros, local trains, females may feel uncomfortable, at that time reservation of seats is advisable.

Metro Rails in India already have reservation for women in some form or the other. In Delhi Metro, the first coach of every train, Mumbai Metro has reserved half a coach and Kolkata Metro has reserved a certain number of seats in each coach for women. There are even separate ticket counters for ladies. Now isn't this a discrimination against men? It's a paradox that women aggressively state that they are not weak rather they too have physical strength and stamina just like men but when it comes to availing such privileges they don't shy away from accepting the benefits.

Feminism is a concept and belief that is accepted by all rational and educated men all over the world but when women in the garb of feminism attack men and indulge in character assassination than it is not a level playing field.

### **WOMEN USING FEMINISM TO HATE MEN --- OR TO SCARE THEM**

The word 'feminism' has become a threat to society these days. Women file fake complaints. In India alone, 73% fake rape cases were reported in the year 2013 approx. 23% fake dowry complaints every year is a proof of the misuse. Nowadays according to Indian men - "To be born a man in India is a crime and to marry an Indian girl is a heinous crime". This is because of anti-men laws and laws to safeguard women in the name of laws to protect women."

Women exaggerate and fabricate stories of violence in order to seek vengeance against their husbands and matrimonial families. It is being observed that anti-dowry harassment laws are being used by disgruntled wives as weapons rather than as shields.

The Dowry Prevention Law (Section 498A/ 406 of IPC) was enacted to protect the dignity of a woman. But it is one of the most misused provisions of law in India, which is used to harass and blackmail their husband and his family. Yet no modifications seem to have been made in

it over the years. Women use this law as a weapon to extort money out of their husbands at the time of divorce. Small incidents of little consequence are exaggerated in a large number of complaints.

According to a survey conducted by Fight against Misuse of Dowry law has revealed that 98% of the cases filed under section 498A are false. Women rights are given for protection but these days women are using it as a shield to make the victim sound as their culprit. Even if there are women who have misused dowry laws, it does not mean that the countless women who suffer harassment because of dowry demands should not have a mechanism that can help them.

**In India especially, there are NO GENDER-NEUTRAL LAWS:**

Feminism or demand for equal rights should then mean that both men and women will be answerable to any misdeeds. Laws should be such that offenders and criminals should be punished irrespective of sex, profession, caste, creed, religion, etc. Though the judges claim that woman are filing inaccurate claims of domestic violence, rape, dowry and custody cases etc. but do these judges ever realize that the woman is maybe harassing a man?

The revolution or the fight now should change from FEMINISM to SEXISM.

We suggest and expect a neutral way the judiciary should deal with such cases and not empathize with women only. The victim can be anyone. The judges aren't making the laws gender-neutral. Again, an act which proves that men support and accept feminism but women are misusing the concept. If using the rights given by the Indian constitution for threatening somebody, and still being safe is women's right, then FEMINISM is really scary.

According to a survey, a total of 58.95% of the respondents said that men were threatened by laws for protecting women. These are just mere instances which show the privileges enjoyed by a woman and discrimination against men.

**Yes, discrimination or sexism exist against men and boys as well.** The feminists may claim that all females are not like this, the same logic applies to men that all men are not male chauvinists or bad. History says, there were men who protested and stopped the society from many cruel deeds against women proves that all men are not same. Chivalry still exists.

**Another example of poor gender-neutral law:**

A notion, a feeling and a belief very prevalent in any society is that women have the natural disposition to care for kids and a child needs a mother's gentle disposition while growing. Even studies suggest that women are still far more often the primary carers. But this is gender bias .

Feminists argue that It's the actions, not the gender which decides the case or the custody. Surprisingly, even in most advanced nations of the world like America the divorce laws are not in favour of man. But, in the UK, the laws are *entirely* neutral - they do not mention genders. Consider gay marriages, how would that work with two men, or no men?

## 2. CONCLUSION

When womanhood is as dignified and independent as manhood, in and of itself, and labor equally honorable for both, woman will not marry to escape the odium of being called old maids, or to live by the bounty of another. The misuse of feminism is multifaceted. It manifests

in various forms: from presenting feminism as an ideology that advocates for women's supremacy over men, to misrepresenting the movement as a tool to divide rather than unite.

However, if we become successful in understanding feminism properly and start practicing it everywhere, then we may build a different world soon enough. But misusing it will kill all our dreams eventually. We must be able to accept the truth that while both genders are distinct, they bring unique strengths to the table.

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