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Voiceless Voices - Major trends of Feminism in Indian Writings

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Abstract:

The present paper looks at the historical background of the feminism and the rise of feminism, women's movement and gender discrimination in India. Not only in India but overall the world nations there is an interconnectivity among feminism and women movements. The feminism and women movements are each inspiring and enriching each other. In the context of India, while the women movements are relatively an ancient concept but the term feminism has emerged as a new trend. Feminism is a modern phenomenon, which is an amalgamation of political, social, cultural movements, moral philosophical aspects, gender inequalities and equal rights for women. Feminism has been widely discussed subject in world sphere yet it lacks acknowledgment and women are subjected to problems and crave for recognition in various fields of life. In India the pre-independence era throws light on the women's movement began on social reform movement in 19th century. At this time, the western idea of equality, liberty, fraternity was imbibed by Indian educators and at the same time they

study the English and came in contact with west. In a country like India with its deep rooted prejudice of tradition and culture, women play a crucial role in the expansion of the society. Women writers have imitated the western ideas in their writings. Many women writers and feminists like Toru Dutt, Kamala Das, Arundathi Roy had followed the western footsteps where as the 20th century writers like Maheswata Devi, Sarojini Naidu had craved their own alcove in the field of feminism. The major problem in Indian feminist's writers is that they follow the footsteps of western writers. The male domination has taken over with the westernization of the country. The concern for equality and poverty mitigation and gender issues were subsume in poverty. The women movement has concerned with dowry, women's work, price rise, land rights, political rights for women, Dalit women and marginalized women's right, growing fundamentalism, women's representation in media. Various women studies and gender studies and feminist are struggling to attain equal rights. Though there is a need lot to be achieved in the field of women studies.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Key Words: Women movements, feminism, freedom struggle, gender discrimination, westernization, literary feminism.

The present paper looks at the historical background of the rise of feminism and women movement and gender issues. Women the whole time the world had faced tribulations in their lives at some stages of their lives. Women are India raised in a different social and cultural setup than the western countries. Not only in India but all over the world there has been a close link between women movements and gender issues, each inspiring and enriching the other. In general, the Eastern world, especially in India is considered as a conservative and closed system with its conventional views by the westerners, whose system appears to be more an open and less aggressive. By the reading the critical easy by western theorists from the 17th to 21st century, there is more focus on the emancipation of women to a greater extent than any other social cause which appears somewhat similar to narcissism, as the women of west too obsessed with themselves, that they failed to recognize the magnitude of the equality of sexes. There is always a need for women to come out of the clutches of the patriarchal society. The reason behind the birth of feminism in West is that the women tried to prove themselves and also felt that they could possibly perform better than men. This had

led to diverse streams of literature called feminism. More feministic ideas were seeking freedom and individuality. It is a sought of struggle for freedom from the clutches of men.

The concept of feminism is closely associated with women's studies and women empowerment in an assortment of parts of the world – fourfold focus of feminism in general

- an effort to make women a self-conscious category
- a force to generate a rational sensible attitude and approach towards women
- an approach to view the women in their own positions
- an approach to view through own perspectives

The emergence and growth of women's studies in India resembles women's conscious effort in the politics, social, economical spheres of life. Indian feminism has taken into consideration the heterogeneous nature of women community, women participation in all sectors of life, association of feminism to be analyzed in coalition with dissimilar forms of pluralistic emancipator movements, responses as well as comprising of women state issues.

In context of literature we see Eastern countries like Thailand, Malaysia, girl children are strained to become sex workers as they have to feed the family. All the girl children in these nations are subjected to the carnal desires of the foreigners. This makes

RESEARCH ARTICLE

the situation still worse as women have to oblige their parents or superiors. Even the educated women are subjected to this sort of violence at their work places. Women are expected to satisfy the whims and fancies of men in all spheres of life. Women are suppressed in all areas and considered as physically weaker section and treated as a toy to satisfy men. But basically women are the stronger section of the society as they endure suffers bear a lot more than men in the society. Even though an India being a patriarchal society has a great regards for women from the ancient period in Vedic period, right from the religion to the participation in various activities of the country, women were given due importance and respect. The women are worshipped as “Shakti” as goddess of energy. Women are a great source of energy and thus were prone to multitasking nurture their family, serving them as well as earning and assisting others.

The female scholars like Iopamudra, Gargi and Mytrayei existed during the Vedic period which is evident through Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Thus, in ancient India there are women who played a crucial role in all walks of life and they enjoyed liberty and equality. Women are given equal importance in family and society. During the Vedic period, there were female priests who performed yagnas and other poojas which clearly shows the women empowerment.

The writings of Indian feminist, such as Toru Dutt, Mahaswetha Devi, also made their presence felt by the world nations. Feminist always created a space for the women to fight against cultural impositions and religious precincts, which underline and reinforce the economic, social, political and psychological suppression. Indian feminism more focused on the taste and interests of upper class women rather than indication the interest of the masses.

Taraasha Chopra, an Indian psychologist remarks that feminism that prevails in present scenario as - the more education one receives, the more aware oneself will become, the conversation of feminism changed. The problems of the under privileged women became nothing more than just facts and figures on the paper. The feminist discourses become more nuanced and we moved on to talking about issues such as socialization, subtle messages of rape, discrimination, gender issues, culture etc. So the focus of his feminism is towards the privileged urban and educated women who were struck in traditional roles while having modern mindsets. (“The Ugly Truth about Feminism in India”).

Feminism in the pre colonial period also experienced rapid change, were women actively participated in the freedom moments such as Jhansi Rani, Velu Natchiyar is few of mention. Women excelled in various fields which include

RESEARCH ARTICLE

teaching, medicine, military, business etc. only in post colonial period there were foreign invasions and the importance of women has diminished slowly and men gained supremacy over women in all fields. Women were crumbled to play the role of homemaker and servant of men. The women are treated as second gender and gender identity crisis has emerged as inferior to men. Hence a lot of freedom movements emerged as a result of suppression.

Status of women during colonization had a great trend setter as Bibi Dalbir Kaur, fought against Mughal forces. Similarly Rani Rudramadevi in south was the first women to hold the rebellion against the British.

The present generation of women writers like Kruttika Susarla, a Delhi based writer who focuses on the Indian feminist movement, by using an alphanumeric character each day to represent different facets of life. She wanted to bring out the more feministic aspect and realities sand experiences of women and minorities in India the issues surrounding women minorities are more complex mixed with religion, cast, sexuality and majority of public discourse. Vandana Srivastava, other prominent feminist writes on moral self-reflection, conquering of inner fears and a realization of self worth.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni one of the prominent writers opines that the Indian style observes that independence with

social acceptance, success and autonomy that set its boundaries but not requires a break from the traditional, extended, semi feudal family structure. Chitra observes in one of her conversation with Indian friend that Indian women were able to balance both professional life and personal life. Women in Eastern countries find difficult to balance both the roles that turns to be major reason for divorce. The family system in India where the grandmother and in-laws would take care of children which helps young mothers to work and perform their duties. According to Kanchan C Bhattacharya, if you want change in women you should change her psyche.

In the present scenario, the women have learned to survive in the present world, needs a lot of self confidence and will power. They need an unchanging will and strength to face the world. Indian women are efficient as any other women in the world.

Conclusion:

Much early reforms of women were done by men folk. Women participation in attaining independence has helped them to gain importance in all spheres of modern life. In literature, women struggle and need for their freedom was explored through ages. Women of past from mythological characters of Sita from Ramayana, Kunti and Draupadi from Mahabharatato the women of modern era who perform the dual role at home and at

RESEARCH ARTICLE

work places. Women are expected to perform role of wives, sisters, daughters, mothers balancing the cultural expectations of society. The writers from past to present also depict the women issues and feministic perspectives in their writings in an impacting manner. It is women movement in India that has been the force behind the struggle of women's advancement from subordination to gender equality. The struggle of feminist and literary feminism has led to advancement of women's empowerment. The women had raised their voice against the discrimination that had led them to new insights into country. In the process, women secured many rights and attained more freedom, equality and fraternity. Feminist writers had made the women issues more visible and communicate contributing immensely towards women's freedom and independence.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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