

Development of Feminist Movement and Gender Equality in India

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Abstract

Feminist movement, which aimed to raise women's muted voices in order to exercise their right of vote and, later, to elevate their status in a patriarchal society. The legitimacy of feminist discourse in today's globalised society has been evolved in the form of different stages and waves. If we talk about the 'Feminist Fourth Wave' for a moment, in a time when there is no clear definition of what feminism is?, in the twenty-first century entails- in a time when everything from a march against an accused rape to an advertisement for a female sanitary pad can cause a high-heeled feminist to raise her threaded eyebrows - the validity of such a reference is questionable. In due course some feminist ideas and the women's movement came into existence worldwide. India's women movement took cognisance and started realising the issues and developed the close link with each working groups to inspire and better the other. Socio-cultural-political movements, ideas, and moral philosophies that are concerned with issues such as gender inequity and the accomplishment of equal rights for women, among other things, are referred to as feminism in India.

Many issues have been important to the women's movement since India became an independent country in 1947. These include dowry and women's work; price increases; land rights and political participation; Dalit women's rights; growing fundamentalism; and the representation of women in the media, to name a few. Several NGO's have taken this issue up, and a lot of people have also taken this issue up. The history of women's rights activism in India has led to women's studies, which has now evolved into gender studies. Various 'Women's Studies Centres' have been started. Even there is huge work to be done and many barriers to overcome before this ideal can become a reality for the majority of women, the women's movement has brought female issues to the forefront of public debate and increased their exposure.

Keywords: Feminism, Movement, Equal Right, Social, Economic, Political, Development etc.

Introduction

The social reform movement, the women's movement began in the nineteenth century, during the period preceding the United States after got independence from the United Kingdom. These beliefs were implanted into our educated elite as a result of the study of English and other western interactions during this period. Western liberalism was extended to the issue of women's suffrage during the twentieth century and became a movement for social transformation. After independence, the most pressing concern was the country's overall economic development, which was a source of concern for the first several decades. An increase in concern for equity and poverty reduction occurred a decade later, and this was swiftly followed by another decade of prosperity. There were

no efforts that were especially targeted at women because gender issues were absorbed under the umbrella of poverty-related concerns. Feminist movement, which aimed to raise women's previously muted voices in order to exercise their right of vote and, later, to elevate their status in a patriarchal society, has now devolved into a shrill cacophony of hollow sound and anger directed at everything that is not feminist. Some may doubt the legitimacy of feminist discourse in today's fast changing globalised world, while others may claim that it is simply a ruse to draw attention away from an issue that is basking in the reflected glory of its illustrious past. It has been evolved in the form different stages and waves. If we talk about the 'Feminist Fourth Wave' for a moment, in a time when there is no clear definition of what feminism is?, That is what living in the twenty-first century entails—at a time when everything from a march against an accused rape to an advertising for an anti-maleficence product might prompt an affluent feminist to raise her threaded eyebrows - the validity of such a reference is questionable.

"The feminists of today are the equivalent of the whining rich kid, whose parents toiled through great pains to provide them with a future they can't respect or cherish because they have no grasp of real repression, real struggle, and real liberation," wrote KayleighMcEnany in an article titled "21st Century Feminism: An Embarrassment to My Gender" at theblaze.com; "21st Century Feminism: An Embarra Nonetheless, the question of where the movement should go from here, as well as what its primary objective should be, remains unresolved." When a cause is taken to its extremes, it is almost usually met with a counter-balance of sorts; the extremes of feminism have been met with an appropriate but nevertheless kitschy counter-balance in the form of meninism, which has made an oppositional entry into feminist discourse. It is possible that underprivileged males may finally grow a pair, stand up against the tyranny of modern feminism, and cry, "I am a meninist—and I want equality!" in 2015. In the words of Martin Daubney in The Telegraph, "What is apparent is that meninism is not a new phenomenon: it began as a starchy, academic movement a year ago on feminist.com under the clarion call of 'Meninist—equality for all'."

Nowadays, we come across a slew of derogatory phrases that characterise feminism and the difficulties that surround it. In recent years, there has been an upsurge in anti-feminist attitude, and not all of it is baseless. In reality, overzealousness on the part of a few feminists has resulted in some negative publicity for their cause. A common occurrence is the online sifting through the opinions of any public figure who expresses some opposition to any feminist cause.

Because of these challenges and because of their importance, this research study does not aim to minimise them; rather, it investigates the relevance of such topics. Globalization, objectification of women, purification of society, misrepresentation of females in popular culture, new-age feminists' overzealousness and 'toxic' social media, rape culture, and other issues have contributed to this state of things in the field of feminism. Aside from that, the research examines how new-age feminism has transcended its preoccupation with all things feminine in recent years. Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transsexuals are among the topics that new-age feminism has tackled; they are fighting for the acceptability of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transsexuals in society. To give a twist to the storey, only a few feminists have raised the subject of injustice meted out to men, believing that equality should be extended to all people. While many academic papers on feminism focus on real-world issues like access to services that men take for granted, widespread sexism, sexual assaults on women, domestic violence, eco-feminism, and so on; this paper focuses primarily on the issues faced by celebrities and public figures, and the challenges they face. Because of this, we can't deny the fact that these people influence our daily lives. As consumers, we are heavily impacted by what we see

and hear on television, the radio, and publications in today's media-driven world. No matter how hard we try, we can't help but be familiar with and have an opinion on the situations we're discussing here.

Gender disparities and the attainment of equal rights for women are among the many issues that feminism seeks to address throughout a variety of spheres of society, culture, and politics. The feminist movement provided as a basis for feminist philosophy for decades to come. The Centre for Women's Studies has served as a focal point for a range of inquiries into feminist geography, feminist history, feminist literary criticism, and other fields. When it comes to research, the dissemination of particular ideologies, and the creation of social movements in India, there is no shortage of evidence.

Methodology

The descriptive and analytical method used to study the development of feminism and gender equality in India. The secondary sources of data used for gathering the information from books Journals, Newspapers etc.

In order to discuss overall development of feminist movement and discuss gender equality some objectives have been formulated as following.

Objectives

1. To study the origin and development of the different waves and phases of Feminism.
2. To discuss Historic and philosophical foundations of feminist movement.
3. To identify and analysis the role of gender equality in India.
4. To recognise the efforts taken for to bridge the gap between gender equality.

Phases of Feminism

There are three distinct waves of feminism, as seen in the diagram below. Feminism's rising and falling peaks and troughs have been compared to the tides of a river, with a constant cycle of rising, cresting, and finally falling. Feminism's ups and downs over the years inspired this wave comparison (Jane PILCHER; Imelda WHELEHAN, 2004, p. 52). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the first generation of women's rights activists focused on getting women the right to vote. The Suffragettes were a group of British women who fought for the right to vote in the country. Voting rights for women over 30 who owned a property were granted by the Representation of the People Act 1918, passed into law in 1918. Women above the age of 18 became eligible in 1928, when the law was expanded to include all women. "A second wave of protest focused on the discrepancies encountered by women, not only in terms of political rights, but also with regard to family, sexuality, and employment," writes Melanie PHILLIPS (2004a). Since its emergence in the wake of World War II, second- and third-wave feminisms have coexisted.

Cultural and political inequities, according to second-wave feminism, were intimately intertwined. The movement urged women to recognise that portions of their daily life were deeply politicised and reflected a sexist power system, and to take action to change this. In contrast to the concerns about absolute rights, such as suffrage, that predominated in the first wave of feminist thought, the issues about equality, such as the eradication of discrimination against women and girls, predominated in the second wave (PHILLIPS, 2004). The phrase "second-wave" was popularised by

Carol Hanish in her essay *The Personal is Political* in 1971 and quickly became synonymous with the feminist movement and the women's liberation movement (Ellen Carol DU BOIS, 1997).

Historically speaking, the third wave of feminism is defined as a period beginning in the early 1990s and extending to the present. The movement, which began as a reaction to the perceived failings of the second wave of liberation movements, has grown in popularity over time. This movement was also known as the "Occupy Movement" because it was formed in response to the pushback against initiatives and activities that had been established by the second wave of liberation movements. Third-wave feminism makes an attempt to contest or reject what it considers to be the second-wave "Essentialist" wave's ideas of femininity, which they believe have over-emphasized the experiences of upper middle class white women in their pursuit of equal rights and opportunities. Gender and sexuality are fundamental to the movement's third philosophical wave, as is a poststructuralist concept of race, which is also central to the movement's third philosophical wave.

When it comes to "micropolitics," third-wave feminists are recognised for criticising second-wave feminists' beliefs about what is or should be acceptable for women in the workplace or society. "Post-feminism" is a broad phrase that refers to a wide range of beliefs that are opposed to the feminist movement as that movement is characterised by the term. A pushback against the first wave of feminism, known as "second-wave feminism," was coined in the 1980s, and the word "second-wave feminism" was first used to refer to this movement. The theories included in this category include those that argue that postmodernism has destabilised the notion of universal femininity, as well as those that take a critical approach to prior feminist discourses, such as challenges to second wave notions of femininity, which are all discussed in greater detail below (Stacy GILLIS et al., 2007). It was Susan Bolotin's 1982 piece "Voices of the Post-Feminist Generation," which appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, that was one of the first to make official use of the term "post-feminist generation." (Ruth ROSEN, 2000). According to certain contemporary feminists, such as Katha Pollitt, the essential premise that "women are persons" serves as the core of feminism's philosophy. Because their opinions are sexist rather than feminist in nature, the viewpoints voiced by these authors are considered as opposing rather than supporting one another (Katha POLLITT, 1995).

The fact that different stages of feminism may be distinguished does not prevent them from being classified into airtight containers due to a continuous stream of thought and activity occurring during this period.

It is possible to distinguish between two distinct historical periods in the Indian context: the pre-independence era and the post-independence era, which are both referred to as the "pre-independence era." It is feasible to divide the women's movement into three phases: the first, the second, and the third.

1. The Initial Phase (1850-1915),
2. Second Phase of the Project (1915-1947) and
- 3) The Third Phase (1947-Present).

Again the third phase can be further subdivided into three sub-phases, which are as follows:-
The Period of Accommodation (1947-1960s), The Period of Crisis (1960s-1975), and
The Period of Reconstruction (1975-Present)

The Initial –first Phase (1850-1915)

The Women's Movement as a social reform movement began in the nineteenth century, prior to the American Revolution. During this period of change, the study of English and contact with folks from other parts of the world enabled our educated elite to acquire western concepts of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which they had not previously had. It was this Western liberalism that was applied to the Women's Question in the United States, resulting in the formation of a social reform movement in the country. In this regard, it is crucial to highlight that reform movements were not uniform in their objectives and varied widely in terms of the ideals and reforms that were to be advocated. It was their similar interest for eliminating social ills that brought them together, which was partially a response to accusations of barbarism levelled by the colonial rulers. This was a time when colonial ideology wielded hegemonic power and exerted significant impact. This was a period of transition, a period marked by the emergence of bourgeois society and the rise of new kinds of thought and expression.

Colonial influence in India was no longer limited to markets and politics as the nineteenth century continued; rather, it was gradually reaching into areas of our culture and society as well, with the potential to cause adjustments in the social fabric of Indian society at the time. Even a reformer who had been exposed to western values and aspirations in India had recognised and expressed his alarm about this potential threat. As a response to colonial domination and Western ideas about rationality, liberalism, and civilised society, the "Cultural defence" movement emerged in India during this time period. This movement was known as the "Cultural defence" movement because of its focus on reverting to what K. N. Panikkar refers to as "Cultural defence" in order to resist colonial hegemony (K. N. PANIKKAR, 1975). There is a strange outcome to this cultural defence. European rationalism and progress influenced the reformers, who set out to create a new society that was both modern and rooted in Indian tradition.. When they first began, they began by conducting a critical examination of Indian society in an effort to forge an entirely new ethos that was free of all overt social aberrations, such as Polygamy (the practise of having multiple wives), Casteism (the practise of having multiple husbands), Sati (the practise of child marriage), and Illiteracy (the practise of child marriage) (Rekha PANDE, 2009, p. 27). Every social reformer in the nineteenth century agreed that a society could not grow if its women were socially and economically behind. Indian women's position in nineteenth-century India was considered abhorrently poor, and reformers worked to better their lot by enacting legislation, mobilising political action, and promoting educational opportunities for girls and women throughout India (PANDE, 2015). This was primarily influenced by the first wave feminism of the western world, which focused on the fundamental rights of women.

The social reform movement did not challenge the prevailing patriarchal structure of society or call into question the relationship between men and women. They chose only those concerns that the Britishers had identified as indications of degeneration in Indian society for reform. They did not consider any other difficulties. All of the women's establishments and organisations that grew up at this time had no autonomous ideology, instead basing themselves on the ideas expressed by the males in their speeches and writings. The reason for this is understandable, considering that it was mostly the wives and sisters of the reformers who were responsible for the establishment of these organisations in the first place. The reformers' approach and content of change were unanimously accepted by the women's organisations, who did not express any reservations or reservations about it in any way whatsoever. As a result, even when women stood up for themselves, they did it in the language of men, as determined by masculine parameters, rather than their own feminine language.

In this view, women were deemed passive recipients of more humane therapy, which would be administered by western educated elite males of higher social position, rather than active participants in the treatment. As a result, efforts were concentrated on reforming the women themselves rather than on addressing the social and cultural conditions that prevented them from advancing in society. During this time period, there were no attempts made to alter the power structure or the interaction between men and women in society in any way whatsoever. After all, the only way to effect a change in the status of women was to call into question patriarchal society itself, which was only rational in the circumstances. Ultimately, the idea was to create a new Indian woman who was authentically Indian while also being appropriately educated and instructed in 19th century concepts in order to integrate into the new rising society in which she was raised. The goal of girl's education, then, was not to prepare them to be self-sufficient and independent, or to be emancipated, nor was it to train them to pursue a specific career; rather, it was to prepare them to be good housewives who would be able to take care of their families and be the mistress of their own hearts (PANDE; J. KAMESHWARI, 1987).

People were obsessed with western concepts, which they either wished to adopt or reject; on the other hand, there was an element of revivalism or a longing for a cultural identity separate from that of the British colonisers. The social reform movement, in its own way, was paradoxical. In addition to pushing for legislative reform, education was viewed as an essential strategy for improving women's standing (Geraldine FORBES, 1981). At a time when women's education was just getting begun, the goal was to produce women who would be good wives for the newly emerging elite males of the westernised world (Vina MAZUMDAR, 1972). Although Gandhi encouraged women to participate in the anti-colonialist movement, their labour in the fights was only an extension of their domestic duties. Early on, it was only men who could take up arms, and those who were allowed to do so told of how isolated they felt at times (Radha KUMAR, 1993, p. 4). Colonization had brought new values to India, and as a result, women's duties were being relegated to the past. Traditionally, women have acted as symbols of tradition, and one of the most common ways to alter tradition is to argue about the rights and roles of women in society (Kumkum SANGARI; Vaid SURESH, 1989, p. 90). When culture is threatened, the first response is to force women to continue in roles that are more conventional in character because of this generally held opinion of women.

A secular space for women was created in other sectors as well by the social reform movement, which looked at a number of restrictions that were culturally imposed on women by society and which rendered them incapacitated. Shastras didn't support the practise of "female mutilation," as Raja Ram Mohan Roy claimed. A staunch opponent of polygamy and supporter of women's property rights, he never held back in his criticism. After receiving a memorandum from Ravindra Nath Tagore, the Legislative Council voted to remove legal restrictions on remarried Hindu widows and to create girls' schools in every district of Calcutta. It was Keshav Chandra Sen who played a key role in bringing about the passage of the Native Marriage Act in 1872, which prohibited early marriage between males less than 18 and females younger than 14. In addition, polygamy was outlawed, and widows were encouraged to marry again. Those who claimed to belong to no religious group recognised by the state could marry within their own caste. A prominent critic of early marriage and defender of women's education, Vidya Sagar's efforts were backed by various women's groups, including the Indian Association for the Advancement of Science (IAS). Women's Indian Association (1917) and National Council of Women in India (1920) were two of the many

organisations that were founded with the specific goal of improving women's lives and eliminating the various ills that existed in the country's women's organisations (FORBES, 2000).

Second Phase of the Feminism (1915-1947)

Women's organisations such as the Women's India Association (WIA), the National Council of Women in India (NCWI), and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) were established during the second phase of the movement's development. Following World War I, women were in charge of the majority of the organisations that developed as a result of the war. As time went on, the struggle against colonial rule became more and more bitterly fought. One of the most significant contributing aspects was the growth of nationalist sentiment. Assisting Gandhi's nonviolent civil disobedience movement against the British Empire legitimised and expanded the variety of public acts undertaken by Indian women. Following women's participation in independence movements in the following decades, a number of female-only organisations arose as a result of their activism. Organizations formed by women, such as Saraladevi's Bharat StreeMahamandal, were common. Allahabad, India, hosted its first gathering in 1910. After a short period of time, the organisation had grown to include chapters in Delhi, Lahore, Karachi, Amritsar, and Hyderabad. These chapters focused on a range of concerns, including Purdah, which they saw as a barrier to women's education.

A huge number of women were drawn into the political arena by Gandhi's efforts to define "swaraj" and aid them in restoring their dignity in public life as well as their place in the national mainstream in the early years of his political career. He gave women new hope and showed them they could stand up to injustice on their own thanks to his diverse opinions on a wide range of issues. The civil disobedience movement attracted many women as a result, especially in the 1930s. There were now many more willing participants in the freedom struggle, including Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, as well as the two ladies listed above. Bengal Provincial Congress Committee collaborated with the Picketing Board in 1931 to develop domestic industries, particularly khadi spinning and weaving, in the province. Lado Rani Zutshi and Parvati, a daughter of LalaLajpatRai, led a procession of 5,000 women through Lahore in Punjab in 1930, marking the beginning of the civil disobedience movement. As the leader of the ladies of Madras, DurgaBaiDeshmukh accomplished a great lot. The production of salt, which was illegal and so perceived as a symbol of rebellion, was considered as a powerful symbol. Because of Gandhiji's efforts to bring this issue to the notice of the general public, a large number of rural women joined Gandhiji in Dandi. Gandhiji believed that because women are naturally peaceful, they would be better prepared to carry out his picketing and noncooperation activities.

When Gandhiji brought India's independence battle to the people, women were among the most engaged participants. When a large number of women joined the liberation struggle, it was only to lend moral support and encouragement. Due to the lack of support for women in leadership roles by males in power, women could only assume these roles when the men were in prison. The majority of us men folk were in prison when a spectacular thing happened, as Nehru notes in his storey of India's discovery. Our ladies were the ones that stepped up and took charge of the conflict. Of course, women have always existed, but in recent years, not only the British government but also the country's male populace have been surprised by the spike in their numbers. Among these women were high- and middle-class women, peasant women, and working women, all of whom defied government command and police lathie by flooding out in their tens of thousands. All ages and backgrounds were represented. Their audacity and daring were stunning, but more importantly, their

organisational prowess was even more impressive than they could have ever expected. A huge number of women were also organised for political objectives for the first time in Indian history as part of a wide-scale mass organisation. In the minds of many women, their battle was a two-pronged one. At the same time that they were fighting the British occupiers, these women were simultaneously combating patriarchy within their own households.

The third phase is from 1947 to the present.

It was only through participation in the liberation fight and female empowerment that women in India were granted the right to vote and were allowed complete equality under the Indian constitution. According to Article 15(3) of the Indian Constitution, it is possible for the government to provide specific provisions for women (1949). While this resulted in the publication of a huge number of policy documents, what actually happened was that a significant gap developed between the theoretical standing of women and their rights as expressed in these documents and what was actually occurring in reality.

In the immediate aftermath of its independence from the United Kingdom, India was presented with a number of problems. However, the joy of freedom was overshadowed by the sorrow of partition, which resulted in the emigration of a large majority of the population and, in Punjab and Bengal, the cessation of sectarian violence. Following this came the Kashmir dispute, the possibility of territorial disintegration, the dispersal of power among 600 princely states, and, last but not least, economic turmoil that would disproportionately affect women and girls in the region. Year after year of colonial authority had damaged our indigenous crafts and depleted our natural resources, and we had been unable to rebuild our society. Women have been unable to acclimatise to the new order in which they have found themselves as a result of industrialization, changing technology, illiteracy, and a lack of mobility, to name a few factors. They were relegated to a rudimentary social standing as soon as their labour was considered unimportant in the productive market, and their role in the household was also judged unimportant, resulting in them having a worsening social status as time passed.

Securing voting rights and full equality for women in India was made possible thanks in large part to those who took part in India's freedom struggle and promoted female empowerment. An article of the Indian Constitution allows for special protections for women under paragraph (3) of article 15 (1949). This led in the production of several policy documents, but the fact was that there was a substantial gap between the theoretical status of women and their rights articulated in these documents and what was actually occurring in practise.. India was confronted with a slew of issues shortly after gaining independence from the United Kingdom. Partition led to mass migration and cessation of sectarian violence in Punjab and Bengal. The euphoria of liberation was clouded by this sorrowful event, which led to mass migration and cessation of sectarian violence in Punjab and Bengal, respectively. An economic crisis that would adversely affect women and girls would follow, as would a territorial split among 600 princely states, all of which would have an impact on women and girls in the region. Colonial rule has ravaged our indigenous crafts and destroyed our natural resources for years, and we had been unable to rebuild our society. Women have been unable to acclimatise to the new order in which they have found themselves as a result of industrialization, changing technology, illiteracy, and a lack of mobility, to name a few factors. They were relegated to a rudimentary social standing as soon as their labour was considered unimportant in the productive

market, and their role in the household was also judged unimportant, resulting in them having a worsening social status as time passed.

Initiatives and Role of Gender equality in India

The women's liberation movement had a significant impact on the context in which Women's Studies was taught. Providing information and analysis on the lives of women was the goal of this project, which aimed to put an end to gender inequalities and female subordination. The research will examine existing knowledge systems in order to demonstrate how and why women's experiences, ideas, and viewpoints have remained mostly buried within the existing academic fields. A large part of the motivation for this movement was the general public's concern about the status and challenges affecting women. That social scientists were unable to inquire into women's issues, that they were unable to question the assumptions, theories, and tools of analysis that they had borrowed from the Western world, that they were unable to bridge the obvious data gaps that could have helped to direct policy changes, were all factors that contributed to the emergence of the field of feminist social science. This arose as a result of the fact that many social scientists and educational planners did not believe it was important to re-examine the concepts and methodological methods in light of the social reality that had been seen in India at the time. When Women's Studies was founded in the 1970s, it was in response to a broader social movement as well as growing social concern among a small number of academics about the growing problems of poverty, unemployment, inequity, and underdevelopment at the time, which were all being addressed at the time. In the end, it became more concerned with expanding understanding of the socioeconomic origins of women's inequities, their marginalisation in development, and their exclusion from positions of authority and power structures. In summary, the evasion or insufficient treatment of the women's question had a key role in the development of an artificial craving for the subject.

The introduction of Women's Studies into our educational system has been hailed as a watershed moment in the field's history by social scientists and other researchers seeking an accurate and balanced depiction of our social reality. Our belief is that the field of women's studies can be an effective tool for fostering social and academic progress by helping the academic community and society at large to better comprehend the many roles played by women and the factors that contribute to gender inequality (PANDE, 2004a, p. 54). Gender imbalance has been a focus of international attention for several decades, and it has resulted in significant societal injustices. Female Studies has been formed in educational institutions all over the world in response to the demand for new information and a body of studies that are centred on women's experiences.

Woman studies researchers have maintained a critical engagement with conceptions of power in all parts of the world, notwithstanding the current political climate, and their work has had a significant impact on the intellectual landscape. As a result of the realisation that knowledge is a form of capital to which certain individuals and organisations have greater access than others, there has been a shift in thinking. Because of this, it is transformed into a source of authority that may be used to exert control over individuals in your immediate environment. As a result of this connection, asymmetries in the generation, reproduction, and diffusion of social scientific knowledge are related with social structural inequalities that are based on race, nation, class, caste, or gender (among other factors) (Patricia UBEROI, 1993, p. 244). In the minds of feminists, women have been barred from codified knowledge, in which men have constructed explanations that make reference to themselves in order to render women invisible or abnormal. This is the underlying premise of their argument.

Female autonomy as a human being is widely regarded as one of the most significant contributions made by feminists to human history: the representation and understanding of women as autonomous human beings (Cheris KRAMARAE; Dale SPENDER, 1993). To better comprehend contemporary knowledge frameworks and practises, it was necessary to place a heavy emphasis on a feminist viewpoint, particularly in regards to who has access to that information, how it was distilled and finally how meaning was encoded, among other things (SPENDER, 1981). Despite the fact that feminist ideas have made critical use of earlier male concepts despite their gender-blindness, the understanding that it was vital to build feminist theories and notions that put women at the centre of thought has been made. Despite the fact that it stated that one should not be satisfied with the status quo, it also suggested that one should make an effort to widen one's perspectives.

a. The First National Conference on Women's Studies was held in Washington, D.C.

In 1981, the first National Conference on Women's Studies was held at SNDT University in India, which is now known as Delhi University. It is true that the term "Women Studies" is used as a catchall for the study of women's experiences, problems, needs, perceptions, and so on in the context of development and social change; however, it is also a critical tool for enhancing our knowledge of society, which is currently incomplete and biased, projecting only a view of social reality that is only partially accurate based on our current understanding of society (SNDT, 1981). The study of women's experiences in the Indian context is known as Women's Studies. There is no way to rule out the idea of women having existed or being studied in the past, though. Everything here is different because it has been recognised as a scientific study, and this investigation has taken an approach that is markedly different from all past investigations because its goal is separate from that of previous investigations. Because of a rare convergence of circumstances, women's issues have moved to the forefront of public debate, and this objective has emerged as a result (Maithreyi KRISHNARAJ, 1988).

b. Workshop on Women's Studies and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

In response to the publication of the Status of Women in India Report, a flurry of activities, both by public-spirited organisations and by government agencies, have sprung up, with the goal of understanding and analysing the suppressed status of women, tracking its origins and manifestations, and devising remedies for it. Among the most important areas of action identified was education, both in terms of increasing women's literacy and understanding, as well as in terms of teaching women about their own challenges and social standing in the community. Several of these difficulties were brought to light at the First National Conference of Women's Studies, which was held in Bombay and also attempted to clarify what women's studies actually was. Additionally, the Indian Association of Women's Studies was formed as a result of this meeting, which is a national organisation dedicated to bringing together academics and activists as well as policymakers and administrators who are all committed to the growth of women in society. Since then, it has tried to draw the nation's attention, particularly that of educational institutions, to the significance of creating a broader knowledge of women's issues and the challenges that affect them. It was at the 1982 UNESCO Meeting of experts on women's studies and social sciences in Asia, which was held in New Delhi, that it was decided that women's studies should be defined in terms of the goals that they intended to attain rather than the subjects that were studied. The efforts to present a more complete

and fair assessment of our communities and how they are responding to the process of transition were among these endeavours, among others. Also included were suggestions for assisting both men and women in better understanding, appreciating, and paying adequate attention to the true responsibilities that women and men played in the workplace and in society as a whole. In addition, Moreover, such studies should aid in the assessment of the causes of disparity, which should involve an examination of structural features as well as attitudinal and cultural factors. Furthermore, it was designed to aid women in their struggle for equality as well as for a significant presence in all elements of society and economic development. At the end of the day, these studies should make an attempt to draw the public's attention to the invisible women, especially those from the most disadvantaged social strata (UNESCO Report, Samya Shakti, 1983).

c. Institutionalization of Women's Studies Centres and Groups

One year later, in 1981, a letter was sent to all of the university vice chancellors in response to the recommendations of the First National Conference on Women's Studies in Bombay that year and a workshop organised by UNICEF in 1982. We recommend that a Women's Studies programme be established and that social science curricula include Women's Studies subjects for both teaching and research. There were a number of conferences, workshops, and discussion groups convened to generate clear criteria that would help universities, colleges, and other institutions of higher learning establish new units of women's studies and revitalise existing units and centres of women's studies.

An Indian definition of "Women's Studies" isn't "studies on women," but rather an important tool for social transformation and development in the framework of Asian social reality. It is possible that studies of women could help us better comprehend social inequities and imbalance. A more critical, balanced, and comprehensive picture of social reality can be gained by studying women, taking into account issues such as women's contributions to the social process, women's appraisal of their lives, and women's understanding of the broader social reality. It is also the goal of this institution's Women's Studies programme to investigate the root reasons and structural injustices that have resulted in the marginalisation and exclusion of women from many aspects of society and the country (PANDE, 2005a, p. 125). While at the University of Georgia from 1983 to 1986, a few steps were taken in this area as well. The University of Guelph established a permanent committee on women's studies in addition to presenting a number of seminars. An action plan and exact organisational structures were developed by this standing committee in December 1985 in order to kick-start some coordinated initiatives for women's studies at universities and colleges across the United States. It was decided that a number of Indian universities would assume leadership roles in the areas of curriculum, materials, and human development. At these universities, research was also done (Standing committee, UGC, 1985, p. 8). There have been a total of 22 centres and 11 cells sponsored by the UGC since 1986. UGC report acknowledges that there is still work to be done in this subject, though (UGC, 1997, p. 4). Poverty eradication and anti-discrimination efforts are expected to benefit greatly from Centers, according to the report. According to the current arrangement of the centres, the age groups, abilities, placement within the university in terms of the institution's own priorities, and leadership and management of the centres are all significantly different. To this day, the major role of these institutions is to absorb and transmit knowledge through a variety of methods including classroom instruction and instruction in the field. A wide range of duties connected to and complementary to academia, activism, policymaking, and policy implementation are delegated to them by these groups (PANDE, 2005b, p. 126).

'163' Centres for Women's Studies are now in operation in the United States of America. University of Guelph professors have acknowledged the Centres' significance in integrating gender perspectives in a range of areas including research, policy development and implementation, and classroom instruction and training. It was decided to create a network of women's studies centres to act as a catalyst for the advancement of women's studies in academia and beyond. Acknowledging their significance in helping to raise public awareness of women's issues, these centres tried to blend scholarly knowledge with socially relevant theories, as well as bringing together specialists from different professions to open up the conversation in multi-disciplinary collaborations (PANDE, 2013, p. 6).

We'll go into more depth later, but in the meanwhile, there have been some new developments. Circulars lately handed out state that Women's Studies Centre funding will end after the 12th Plan. It was announced on March 29th by the University Grants Commission (UGC) that all existing Plan schemes would continue for the fiscal year 2017-18, easing fears about what would happen after the 12th Plan expired in March of this year (as well as concerns about the end of such plans in general). According to a revised UGC announcement (dated June 9th), the Plan Head's continuing initiatives will continue, but only until September's end, and that the UGC will not accept any more expenses. The UGC plans to shut down these organisations by September 2017 by withholding or suspending funding for them. A lot of attention has been given to this issue. There will be a strong delegation from the Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS) in parliament during the rainy season, bringing with them MPs from all political parties in order to push back against this decision. It is imperative that these institutes are supported financially and intellectually rather than being abruptly cut off.

Put another way, the Indian women's movement has been the driving force behind the advancement of women from subordination to gender equality and finally women's empowerment over a lengthy period of time across the subcontinent. Female liberation was first advocated for by male intellectuals who had been exposed to liberal thought during their college years. Following World War I, the majority of the battles were fought by men, with a small number of women joining them. Only after Gandhi's entry into politics, when the nationalist movement under his leadership grew from a middle-class movement to a mass movement, were women able to speak out against their physical and mental limitations, as well as against British control and patriarchal society. After going through this procedure, females gained an array of new liberties and rights, including the opportunity to vote and serve in elected positions. Despite the fact that gender equality remains a long way off, the women's movement has elevated women's issues to the forefront of public debate and increased their visibility. The battle for gender equality has benefited significantly as a result of this, while much more work needs to be done in the future.

Conclusion

As a result of the Indian women's movement, women have gone from subservience to equality and finally to empowerment over the course of a century. The first males to argue for women's rights were those who had been exposed to liberal views. Until the early 20th century, both men and women were participating in the fight for equality. After Gandhi's entry into politics transformed the nationalist movement under his leadership from a middle-class movement to a mass movement, women began to question and resist British control as well as patriarchy. Because to the procedure and many extra privileges granted, women earned a wide range of freedoms and rights. The women's

movement has pushed women's issues to the forefront and made them more apparent, which has greatly contributed to the fight for gender equality. However, there is still much to be done and different obstacles that prevent this reality from being available to a wide part of women. A difficult process has always existed when dealing with a subject that has only recently emerged and cannot be definitively predicted. Feminism in the twenty-first century is a long cry from the feminism that has been found in nineteenth and twentieth century's, for instance. Feminism is something we talk about; we read about it; and we write about it, but the tangible presence of feminism as it was observed in previous eras is difficult to come by now. The term "feminism" is often used to refer to the third or fourth wave of feminist movements (particularly third wave eco-feminism), but it is rarely used to refer to the fourth or fifth wave of feminist movements (if they are ever discussed). We have seen how feminism is losing its significance in terms of its trajectory outside of academia, as we have seen in the past. However, as we have seen in the newspaper, feminism can take many forms. It is a topic that ought to be discussed because women continue to suffer at the hands of patriarchy, despite the fact that much has changed in recent years compared to earlier centuries. Women must take a position against what is not acceptable, and being referred to as a feminist should be considered an honour rather than a derogatory label. Women are now included in the definition of feminism, which is equality for all—men, gays, lesbians, transsexuals, intersexual, and queers.

Being that we have only recently entered the twenty-first century, we have a very limited comprehension of feminism; we will have a more complete understanding of it in the coming years, at the very least, to keep things simple for the time being.

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Note: Some quotes have been cited here from various social media platform AKSHAT S