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# Feminism Society And Culture

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## Introductions:

Feminism is a philosophy that emerged in the twentieth century that believes in the equality and freedom of women in all areas of the civilized society compared to men. Feminism emphasizes the rationality of achieving equality for women in the society, especially, the equal rights what men enjoy. Feminism claims that women are equal to men. They are not only capable but also no less than men in terms of contribution to the society. Feminism says that there should be no gender discrimination between men and women. Feminism is not against men, it is against patriarchy. Patriarchy has exploited and oppressed women since the past. Patriarchy considers women as the exclusive property of men. In short, feminism is a theory or movement to advance the status of women by achieving political, legal, economic and other rights on an equal basis with men. It is believed that the concept of feminism first originated in Western countries. The word Feminism comes from the French word Feminisme. This means supporting women's rights. Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" and Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel's "Civil Improvement of Women" are the first books in which the concept of feminism is discussed. Other supporters of feminism are Jeremy Bentham, Marquis de Condorcet and others. There was no concept of feminism in India but several women came to the fore for various reasons in the past, for example, Jhansi queen Lakshmibai and Mula Gabharu of Assam.

This research paper focuses on the status of women in society In the light of feminism.

The patriarchy always tries to keep women down. The discussion over the areas in which women have been oppressed is made in the context of India.

## Previous Study Records:

Till date lots of books have been published in the Assamese language focusing on feminism as theme. Prominent among them are- "Naribad: Tatwa Aru Prayog" by Dr. Diganta Hatibarua and "Naribad Aru Asomiya Upanyas" by Dr. Govinda Prasad Sarmah. Noted books on feminism in the English language are-- "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" by Mary Wollstonecraft, "Elements on Women in the History of Philosophy" and "Westminster Review" by Harriet Taylor Mill, "Ancient Society" by American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan and "The Second Sex" by Simone de Beauvoir.

**Significance and Objectives of the Study:**

Discussion and study about feminism is important as women have been oppressed by men for centuries. Both men and women living in modern times consider things rationally. This research paper focuses on the ways how the women have been exploited under the patriarchy or how this tradition is still existing. The discussion of feminism in this paper is conducted by focusing on the context of Assam and India.

**Scope of the Paper:**

The scope of the paper is limited. As the concept of feminism is a broad concept, so it is not possible to study all of it in detail in a research paper. Out of them, the components, which are considered to be important for the contemporary society, is discussed in this paper. This paper is only about the status of women in India and Assam and some contexts of the past.

**Paper Methods:**

The research paper has been prepared in an analytical method. This method is an attempt to consider the things logically.

**Origins and Concept of Feminism:**

The concept of feminism originated in the 19th century. The word Feminism comes from the French word "Femine", the meaning of which is "women". From the 1880 and onwards, theoretical discussions on feminism and feminist thought spread in France. The French writer Christine de Pizan in her book "The Book of the City of Ladies wrote about the equal rights of women. The first pioneering book on feminist concept is A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792), by Mary Wollstonecraft of England and "The Second Sex" by Simone de Beauvoir.

There are many supporters of feminism who have clarified the concept of feminism at various times. According to them,

1. Feminism does not antagonize men.
2. Feminism speaks up for the rights what are judicious to women
3. Feminism opposes patriarchy.

Feminism reiterates the role of women in society and their entitlement. Much has happened to the feminist movement to get what they deserve. Through these movements, feminism was able to spread around the world.

**Types of Feminism:**

There are three types of feminism

1. Liberal feminism
2. Socialist feminism
3. Reformist feminism

1. Liberal Feminism: Liberal feminism is a major form or model of feminism. This view believes that the societal notion that women are weaker than men is false. Liberal

feminists believe that the states should grant women equal citizenship along with other benefits.

2. Reformist Feminism: This is a major form of feminism, fundamentalist feminism. According to fundamentalists, the main concepts of understanding women's status and feelings in society are patriarchy and sexual class.

3. Socialist Feminism: According to socialist feminists, women will continue to be oppressed as long as they are financially dependent on men.

### **Feminism: Society and Culture:**

When we talk about feminism, we automatically talk about women's society and culture. This is because a woman's rights are limited to certain rules imposed by society and women are deprived of their rights in the name of tradition in women's culture. Feminism speaks out against it. The following are the aspects of violence against women:

### **Exploitation on Women in India:**

Gradually, feminists entered India and then the Indian feminists saw that Indian women had been oppressed for centuries. The selling of cigarettes in a university campus because it is not acceptable for girls to smoke. But a boy or a man can. The sale of cigarettes should be stopped because it is harmful to everyone but what kind of policy is it to stop the sale of cigarettes only because women smoke them. Since the days of Mahabharata and Ramayana, women have been placed in a different position and shown in such a way that women are the cause of all problems. Women are oppressed on every page of the Mahabharata. Women have always had to take a virginity test. But it is not a sin for a man to have sexual relationship with more women. The Mahabharata and Manu have always propagated this in the mind of Indian people. If we look at the old architecture, we can see a man having intercourse with multiple women. Moreover, virginity is such a concept in India that forces a woman to exploit herself not only by men.

A girl without virginity is considered unfit for marriage. When a woman is raped, it is said, 'She is finished. This shows that everything is over. This shows that a woman's virginity is everything. The sexual freedom of Indian women is under the control of men. Women are forced to save their virginity until their marriage.

The Ramayana, Lakshmi Charit, Manusmriti etc. have inspired women to be exploited or oppressed throughout the ages.

### **Oppression on Women in the Context of Assam:**

Women have to bear the burden of being exploited. In the context of Assam, the folklore or emotional ideas of Assam are as follows: Women should not be trusted, women are the enemies of women, and women are cowards, no matter how talented the woman is under the control of man. The dreams of women are suppressed under the term "Bowari" (Daughter in law). Women are forced to preserve and retain the culture, not the men. The load of patriarchy is heavy in the Assamese society in comparison to that of the western one

In Assamese society, a man is abused by terming him as 'Maiki' (woman in vulgar sense). Several folklores, phrases and idioms and proverbs of Assam are the factors for the growth of patriarchy and the carrier of patriarchal thoughts. Examples of such proverbs are-- 'Charuk sudhi chaol bohuwa', 'Sowalir magajuto aathut thake', 'Jome nileu niya, jowaie nileu niya' etc. Some parents think of being free from the responsibility by getting their daughter's marriage arranged as early as possible. Like this way, women are oppressed in most cases. Married women are restricted from doing many things. They are said to do the things of their interest before getting married. Actually, women are also reluctant to oppose the patriarchy. If they had paid attention to that, they would have not to be exploited so far. Staying as dependant on men becomes the social norm.

Tribal society, however, is less conservative in this regard. Tribal people do not believe that women cannot drink alcohol in their society. Young girls can go to take a bath in the river in the broad daylight. In such a society, there is no crime like rape. Tribal women do farm works, can go even to hunt together with men. There is no division of labour in their society on the basis of infirmity. Women have more dignity and freedom in tribal societies.

### **Conclusion:**

From this discussion, we found that from a feminist perspective, women have been suppressed from the past to the present. Therefore, the society needs to be changed. Women must become self-reliant. For this, women should not only dream of becoming a typical housewife but also take financial responsibility for themselves and their families. This discussion has led us to several conclusions--

- 1) The traditional society needs to be changed.
- 2) Our folklore and proverbs need to be rationalized.
3. Women must move away from being financial dependent on men.
4. Some ideas given in religious texts need to be reviewed.

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