

Feminism

Helphen India

Vellore Institute of Technology, India

Abstract: *The Feminist Movement is the biggest movement in world. It is also one of the fastest growing movements in the world. Even though we see new social issues in our society every passing day, feminism remains one of the most hotly debated topics. Millions of people in our country, men and women alike, have fought for equal rights amongst the genders. But how successful have they been? This paper takes a look at some of the major challenges faced by the feminist movement in India and how to overcome these challenges. The Feminist Movement is the biggest movement in world. It is also one of the fastest growing movements in the world. Even though we see new social issues in our society every passing day, feminism remains one of the most hotly debated topics. Millions of people in our country, men and women alike, have fought for equal rights amongst the genders. But how successful have they been? This paper takes a look at some of the major challenges faced by the feminist movement in India and how to overcome these challenges.*

Keywords: Feminism, Gender Equality, Gender Discrimination

1. Introduction

The Cambridge dictionary defines feminism as “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state”.

In most developing countries, females are considered biologically weaker and are deprived of social, cultural, political and even economic equality. In extreme cases, their right to freedom is also withheld, without access to basic amenities and luxuries that their male counterparts enjoy.

To achieve gender equality, we must solve the problem of gender discrimination. Our study is focused on gender discrimination in India. Women in our country have faced indelible discrimination, regrettably one that still continues. The study was conducted through interactive analysis with the foremost goal of decreasing gender discrimination by raising awareness.

2. Relation between Gender Discrimination & Feminism

If it is “positive”, it is acceptable in our society. So, what’s “Positive Discrimination”? Positive Discrimination includes factors like gender, religion, color, race, religion and sexual orientation into consideration in an attempt to address the oppression of minority social groups. This idea was first expressed by US governmental policies in the 60’s that were aimed at demolishing race-based discrimination in the American labour force.

Coming to gender discrimination against females, poverty, illiteracy and social attitude remain the major reasons behind gender discrimination. All these reasons lead to female infanticide, foeticide and violence against women. These are against feminism. Basic human rights to gender equality-are the extremes of feminism’s spectrum. One of the most effective ways of achieving gender equality is to educate school going children about these issues. These children are the future of the world. So, we need to guide them in the right direction to ensure that there will be no gender inequality in the future. But we won’t be able to do

that till we abolish gender discrimination in the education sector.

1) Gender Discrimination against Females in the Educational Field

Women have to face several hurdles in their lives, including right to equality in education. They have to overcome several barriers some of which include:

- Limited resources and a patriarchal society favour education of boys over girls.
- Misconceptions and social stigma deprive girls of education.
- Burden to quit schools is higher on girls as they are forced to take on the household responsibilities at a young age.
- Limited number of schools’ force children to travel long distances and safety concerns make it difficult for girls to attend school.

This study analyses gender discrimination in the education sector. The questionnaire used is as follows:

2) Do you treat your male friends and female friends equally?

This question was asked in order to find out if gender discrimination existed between friends. Our study found out that there was a difference in their behavior in the presence of different genders. People were more direct in expressing their minds to their male friends. In general, people were apprehensive in the presence of the opposite sex.

3) Is it feasible for women to quit their jobs after marriage but not for men?

Both men and women must take equal responsibility of the household. However, the society has varied opinions. Women are generally pressurized to choose their household chores over their careers. In this male dominated society, women are paid lesser for the same work and with the same qualifications.

The perspective of the society we live in needs to change. Responsibility of the household and children must be borne equally by both the partners. Only by supporting equality, women will be able to live a better life, with more opportunities to make valuable contributions to change the world and its thought processes.

4) Why are men preferred for field jobs more than women are?

It is commonplace for men to be hired over women despite equal qualifications because some jobs seem “better suited for men”. Research showed this is due to the prejudice that men performed better at certain tasks. This sexist attitude has caused male workers to be treated better than women.

Another reason is perception. People perceive men to do a better job than women. Seeing a woman as weak and stereotyping them into an image where they lack strength is not uncommon.

One more reason is that some fields are physically strenuous. Military recruits are forced to meet strict physical requirements and it is infeasible to balance the numbers of male and female students in such cases however hard universities attempt to promote it.

3. Conclusion

The term gender inequality has been used widely in history, but recently, the transformations of gender-based relations have become “one of the most rapid, profound social changes” (Wright & Rogers 2009).

In the relationship between economy and education, people cannot underestimate the importance of education. To flourish the economy, people have to give emphasis to schooling. Setting up gender-sensitive schools is a crucial step in making a sustainable environment for learning and teaching. Helping women feel more confident in studying and improving a gender-sensitive curriculum reflects on the national policy for gender equality (Clarke 2005, p.11)

The goals of feminism cannot be achieved only with political and administrative reforms. The gender inequality that still persists in the society will not disappear overnight. We need to realise that the fight against gender inequality is not a skirmish to be fought, but a war to be waged. Awareness about these issues need to be raised. Women who bow down to patriarchy and men who embrace patriarchy need to be educated. We should start with the schools. If we wish to create a future where nobody is discriminated on the basis of their sex, then It is necessary to abolish gender inequality in schools. School students should be taught about the importance of equality in society and they should be encouraged to practice equality in their classrooms. If we take the right steps today, we can ensure that our sons and daughters will live in a world where the genders are treated as equals.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to **Dr G. Viswanathan**, founder and hon’ble Chancellor, VIT, Vellore, for his constant support and encouragement. We want to express special thanks to **Miss Evangeline Priscilla B** for her constant motivation and help.

“A woman is like a teabag; you never know how strong it is until it is in hot water. – Eleanor Roosevelt”