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## LIBERAL FEMINISM, REALITY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTEDNESS

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**Abstract:** Women are empowered and are educated too. Liberal feminism which focused on independent thinking and individualism had its positive and negative impact in society. Empowerment failed to recognize the real power and inner beauty of women that bring out the essence of life. The confidence in women also increased the conflicts in social life. Education has to be enriched by values and knowledge that is relevant and gender sensitive. Violence, corruption, loss of values, indifference, arrogance and so on destroys happiness. If liberal feminism had educated women to establish their strength and identity at the cost of close relationship and a productive life, then feminism has to be re-constructed with a new vision. The methodology adopted in institutions should offer space for gender discourses to remain free from stress and distress. However scientific and philosophical the subjects may be a slot to discuss life is imperative. This can introduce youngsters to the practical reality and inject coping skills to complement and supplement life.

**Key Words:** helpful reality, humanistic individualism, integration, liberal feminism.

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**Introduction:** Women are empowered today and are actively involved in deciding, decoding, deciphering, developing and decorating life to meet the day to day challenges. Feminism that blossomed to add flavour had also fumbled in certain aspects. Women had fathomed feminism as a movement to compete with men and in doing so turned quite aggressive. The race run today is a mad race where one is unable to resist the maladies that multiply morbidly. The multitasking that women have adhered to has effaced the basic need to nurture life and nourish it with values. The constraints and conflicts in the family and society have been overlooked, as individuals are busy keeping pace with the changing times.

Feminism as a movement need not be forced or activated in today's world as majority of the women are equipped to face situations that hinder their happiness. Women taught to fight for their rights seem to force their thoughts and win their ways through trying situations. Yet we find women complaining, gossiping and sulking over many untoward happenings that hamper happiness. Women have today learnt to react against every disturbing situation so courageously that they have gained confidence and mastery over complex conditions. As they manage and restore the conflicts they have also sacrificed tolerance, patience and good will that can brighten life.

Liberal Feminism focused on educating women. Liberal feminism "is an extension of the liberal project of the Enlightenment to include women...Liberal feminists have, therefore, campaigned for the last three centuries for women's rights to enfranchisement, education, employment and property" (Mooney 76). Today, in spite of education, women are not motivated to offer quality education that can help build happy families. Divorce is on the increase. Single parenting, insensitive youth, old age homes, capitation fee, godlessness and so on have corrupted the environment while academic

excellence is imparted vigorously. Education is oriented towards materialistic gains. Values are of no value as they run this race to conquer positions that are sort after.

Education is more technical and media is more mechanical. The personal touch which is the true preservative of positive living is discarded dangerously. The importance of close relationships, bonding, fellowships which facilitated deeper understanding of life and harmony is today without synchronization. The melody and symphony heard resonating from healthy relationships is unheard of today. Education factories are set up and business is bustling in enormous pace that fruitful entities are fast fading. Endurance has been evacuated and exciting entertainments have imprisoned youngsters. Good exercises like a lovely walk is replaced by the internet, face book and computer games. The mind is tuned to a mechanical mode that manufactures and mutes over the magical magnitude of the media

Education needs to be redefined to ensure transformation of the self for "what we need today is a new vision, new ideology, integrating the theory with the social realities, education that is non-discriminatory and participatory. Only radical change in the model of education will bring transformation" (Manohar 30). Standards have to be set so that education extends beyond attitude. Theoretical knowledge may soothe the intellect and suffice the requirements of securing a degree. This may not rightly introduce practical knowledge and emotional intelligence. Harnessing hard reality and handling stress and anxiety with humility are the hall marks of empowered learning. This is nothing else but experiential learning that seeps into our soul and decorates the daily activities and defines life dexterously. Women have the natural richness as they possess the intense and subtle understanding that can replenish the lives of others.

Women's empowerment should strengthen the values in society and trigger positive channels by churning sincere thoughts. Liberal feminism that existed for enlightening women and creating awareness should now work towards integrity and concerns that ought to be cherished by individuals to prove their individuality and strength. This would lead to integration and interdependence and bring people together. Men and women should unlearn many things in order to learn life anew.

Liberal feminism insisted on the freedom of thought and discernment that could cultivate the concerns of women and enable them to cope with the trying situations more effectively. "The liberal belief in the universal and static qualities of human nature meant that the direction of liberal feminist energies is towards reform; and education reform," (Whelehan 35). It was believed that taking care of their privileges and femininity would be worked out with the education reforms through liberal feminism. Unfortunately this move was only partially fulfilled.

Education is an excellent business that encourages materialism. It is a factory producing degree holders. It is a mechanical way of manufacturing graduates and post graduates and research scholars. Gender studies must educate men and women to understand the importance of a woman and also recognize the problems faced by men and women. Revolution in educational institutions can alone embark upon the re-visioning and revamping of theories that have unsettled minds. Gender concepts that are adopted to regulate life should be punctuated with right values that would please the divine. Care and concern that are given without any expectations can replenish and restore the intellectual standards and rectify all unreasonable reverberations set forth by gender issues.

"Without the sensitizing familiarity with the subtleties of language, and the insight into the relations between abstract or generalizing thought and the concrete of human experience, that the trained frequentation of literature alone can bring, the thinking that attends social and political studies will not have the edge and force it should" (Leavis 195). Social emancipation through liberal feminism has to alter the pattern of thinking and activate productive changes in all fields. "There is no necessary opposition between the political emancipationist and the humanistic; nor between theory and humanism" (Freadman 195). Yet humanistic values are not imbibed and are deactivated by the theories that remain philosophical and theoretical. Therefore a natural life is not led by the people and there is a vain, conscious, mechanized and materialistic life that is visible. This destructive and conflicting and constricting life remains paradoxical to liberal and social feminism. Freedom is

fettered by fruitless ventures. In spite of education there is this futile diabolic intellectualism that is restricting reality.

We understand that if "ethics has nothing to do with any of the things it has traditionally been thought to be concerned with (subjectivity, self-hood, freedom, interpersonal relations), with what does it have to do? The answer is that ethical judgement and command is a necessary feature of human language" (Freadman 69). The power of expression through education should lie in the dissemination of ethical concerns. Women have to voice their concern at the misuse of media. Education should help in reconstructing life.

Humanist individualism has been shown to rest ultimately on a restricting conceptual system of difference: male *or* female, man *or* woman. Within this binary ordering, throughout long centuries of western history and thought, 'man' has been imposed as the human subject, the norm; woman has been the subordinated term, whatever is 'other' to the norm. This ideology of the unitary (male) subject has been promoted alongside the valorization of 'truth' as unitary meaning. If we stay within this humanist conceptual order we can only struggle to reverse the hierarchies: women instead of men, my 'truth' instead of your 'truth'. Individualism is founded on difference and competition. Poststructuralism aims to undo this thinking: especially it aims to deconstruct the notion of the unified, gendered sovereign subject (Morris 159)

Educated women feel that the feminists are guilty of diluting values and proclaiming advancement and pursuing education that are unmindful of relating skills and basic human concerns. Media and education have merged to facilitate global communication. Hybridization of cultures have hampered the individual's process of thought and understanding that evades clarity. "Striati writes that 'Because of the speed and scope of modern mass media, communications because of the relative ease and rapidly with which people and information can travel, time and space become less stable and comprehensible, more confused, more incoherent, more disunified'" (Holliday 109)

Education therefore should naturally drive in ethical concerns in society. "Feminist aims of undermining and replacing the present rigid divisions of gender identity therefore have as their ultimate goal a new way of knowing ourselves and our world, a new order of meanings and values" (Morris 6). Women who are linked with Nature, birth and bonding, must inject the idea of apt education with the right concerns. This kind of education will help youngsters to reach out to the neighbours and enrich the concerns and culture. The joy of educating will be traced in the measures taken to consciously inculcate this

experience of giving a holistic input despite the subjects of their choice. Value education and religious studies should not be a separate paper that again makes it strange and superficial. Therefore liberal feminists should take liberties to alter the very perception of the members who work and offer curriculum by defining it with a difference. Widdowson feels that meanings are only negotiated through interactions. "The interactional view treats language as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations- for transaction among individuals; the "process" of arriving at a response is emphasized" (Krishnaswamy 96)

Therefore transformation through education must be the goal that has to be set and not limited to academic excellence and research alone. Life without giving care and support is not true living. Women would not be truly empowered and liberated if they are not inclined to redefine liberal feminism with specific objectives that can strengthen women and men who would stabilize society. "Individual identity is always a flux, always a process, never finished. Feminists argue that we should no longer accept this narrowing down of individual energies and possibilities, that our mutual adventure as a species on this small planet cannot afford such accumulative loss of creative and productive power" (Morris 6). Emotional satisfaction and helpful reality to sustain society that can restore love and unity must be the outcome of true education. To be adept in techniques that truly liberate, unobtrusively becomes the strength of an empowered woman. "In the face of the collapse of gender identity as a viable concept in a

postmodernist worldview, a postmodernist feminist has to negotiate a pathway through the idea of a discourse which can be gender neutral"(Wheleham 203).

The true woman or the real woman disappears in course of establishing her identity for "liberal academic feminism is said to silence the 'native woman' in its pious attempts to represent or speak for her" (Gandhi 89). Therefore intellectual discourses help in exposing the hegemonic feminist and indefatigable feminist but not a true feminist. There is some unseen division that separates a powerful conscious feminist from a simple loving woman whose happiness is housed in seeing her loved ones handle life effectively. We get to learn that "it is women's work, in particular, which is serving the litmus test for fundamental changes in the way that we live, a measure of our modernity" (Luckhurst 156). Therefore "This chimeric form of cultural feminism, ubiquitous, powerful, and yet at an end, confronts us with paradoxes" (Luckhurst 157).

Christina Manohar states that "The concept that teacher is the custodian of knowledge should disappear. Feminists' praxis-oriented education include articulation, analysis of experience, critical thinking, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning, cooperative work, antihierarchical and democratic leadership" (31). Education has to thus integrate the views of both men and women. The perspectives should offer radical insight into generating new knowledge that can offer an advocacy role towards a comfortable, constructive and collaborative undertaking.

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