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CONSCIOUS FEMINISM

Name of the author - Anuradha Halder (M.A. in English, B.Ed.)

Designation of the author- Ex-Teacher of Kendriya Vidyalaya,C.R.P.F.,Durgapur, Member of IACLALS

City- Durgapur(West Bengal)

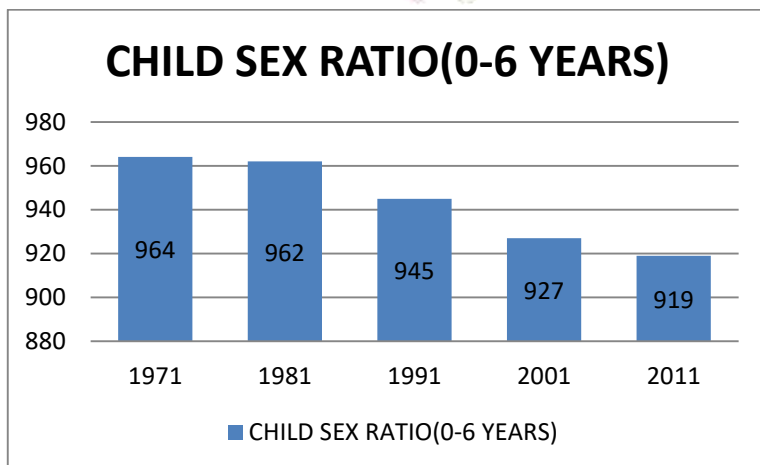
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Abstract- This article is intended towards the pioneering role which a woman can play in her own empowerment. It articulates the need of arousing the consciousness of a woman concerning her potentialities in bringing immense social change. This article aims to evolve the ideology of feminism in the contemporary social order.

We celebrate International Women's Day every year on 8th March and appreciate the contributions of women and confer about women empowerment. Nonetheless there is a need to retrospect on the renewed part that a woman can play now. Feminism as an ideology has been revolutionary. It has traversed a long way from promoting women's right to vote to struggle for legal and social equality. In the decades of 1990s the movement took its turn to defend a woman's individuality and in the present it has spread its wing as Cyberfeminism.

There are various Constitutional and Legal rights to protect and safeguard the rights of women in India. Feminism as a movement has played an important role in it. The campaign has brought to light many oppressive traditions against women which have become a social construct. The Constitution provides us with the Right to Equality and also there are various Directive Principles of State Policy to ensure equal pay for equal work [Article 39(d)], securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief [Article 42], renouncing practices derogatory to the dignity of women[Article 51-A(e)] and many more. There are various legal rights too which act as a shield for women against denigratory practices like Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (1994), Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act(1956), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) to mention some of them.

However, still now we are miles away from achieving the target of equality, respect and dignity for women. Thousands of girl children are killed in the womb. The NPR of 2011 confirms, the child sex ratio is 919 females for every 1,000 males. Domestic violence affects around 27.5 million women over their lifetimes in India according to a study in *The Lancet* of 2014.



Source- NPR 2011

A lot of discussion has been done on the factors behind it. My concern in this article is not to blame the social factors or measure the success of the implementation of laws or by any means to grade the liberalism in attitudes of our male counterparts. My objective is to stress on the positive and constructive role the woman should play in this scenario. Feminism has still now struggled to ensure external rights from the society and support from the other members of the society. However, the movement should start within the consciousness of a woman. The struggle should shift from external to internal. We have to expect more from ourselves- what we can give to ourselves and the women around us. This swing is CONSCIOUS FEMINISM.

Few examples will substantiate the concept. Tears rolling down the cheeks of a mother due to the birth of her second girl-child expunges the very existence of the baby. The societal and family pressure for the birth of a male child cannot be denied. Yet, it has to be questioned if the mothers are really happy with the birth of their girl child. Women have somehow allowed her consciousness to accept the reality that is forced on her and subdued the voice of her conscience, her education in some cases even. Despite lower literacy rates, the scheduled caste households have higher sex ratio of 933 and the tribals possess the highest i.e. 957 according to the NPR (National Population Register). A woman should come forward and endow the female child with the right to bring happiness to her family and society as that birth of a male child. The legal act against foeticide saves the girl child from physical death but the tears of pain of her mother at her birth brings to dust her very being.

Conscious feminism is about awakening the consciousness of a woman not only towards her capabilities or towards the importance she holds or the responsibilities, roles and functions that she performs in a society but also towards the consciousness towards her existence itself.

The role of a woman in supplementing the dowry system cannot be negated. The mother-in-law should stand in opposition to dowry which she might not have done as a daughter. She allows the daughter-in-law to wallow in the same mud in which once she has been. The mother-in-law should be a benefactor to her daughter-in-law and perform an important role in defending her from domestic violence. In most of the cases she accomplishes her part as the mother of a son and the wife of a man and not as the *woman*. It cannot be refuted that women themselves to a large extent perpetuate the struggle from which they want to escape.

The able, the literate and the economically and financially stable women should take the lead and the pain in continuing the chain of awakening the rest towards their responsibilities. We have to win our fears and our limitations of the mind.

When a woman herself accepts that she will not marry if dowry is asked, she exhibits freedom of choice. If a mother stops being crestfallen at the birth of a girl child, she bestows a free life to the newborn. When a mother accepts her daughter after she is sexually harassed, she protects her integrity. If a mother-in-law refuses dowry, she saves her son from being bartered. If a woman organizes a team and takes steps against sexual harassment towards any of her fellow employees in the workplace, she rescues herself from sexual harassment. If a mother allows her daughter to opt for the profession of her choice, she gives flight to her own dreams, if a mother teaches her son to respect women, she herself earns it in return. If a wife takes care of her in-laws, she gets the blessings of her own parents too. If a woman loves herself, she evolves the society, gives birth to a conscious woman, happy and free at her own existence.

Feminists have taken a great pain to fight for our rights for equality. However along with it, a new wave of conscious feminism should complement it. The external strive for rights should be reciprocated with the internal movement.

References

- 1) NPR (National Population Register), 2011
- 2) *The Lancet*