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RISE OF FAKE FEMINISM IN MODERN ERA

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ABSTRACT

The concept of feminism has gained significant attention in modern India, with women fighting for their rights and equal opportunities in various fields. However, there is a growing concern about the rise of fake feminism in India, which has created an illusion of gender equality while perpetuating patriarchal attitudes and practices. This research paper aims to explore the concept of fake feminism in modern India.

This paper starts by defining the term Fake Feminism and what are some of the examples of fake feminism. It also explores its impact in the modern society. It also examines the historical context of feminism by stating the early feminist movements and different phases of feminism. Furthermore, the paper analyses the legal framework for women's rights and the laws enacted to protect Women's rights. This paper also explores some of the legal strategies for combating fake feminism in modern India.

Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the need for a more nuanced understanding of feminism in India and the importance of challenging fake feminism to ensure that legal practices are truly inclusive and gender-just.

Keywords: feminism, modern India, gender, gender equality, modern society fake feminism, women's rights.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the term —feminisml has gained significant attention and momentum in India, with many individuals and organizations advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment. However, with this growing movement has come an unfortunate trend of "fake feminism" - a phenomenon where individuals or groups claim to support feminism but engage in actions or hold beliefs that undermine the movement's core principles. Fake feminism, also known as "faux feminism" or "performative feminism", refers to actions or statements that appear to support feminist principles, but, do not further the cause of women's rights and may even harm it.¹ One example of fake feminism is when individuals or organizations use feminist language and imagery for marketing or branding purposes. This can take the form of slogans, logos, or advertising campaigns that seem to promote feminist values, but, are designed to appeal to consumers and increase profits. This type of "feminist branding" can be seen to co-opt feminist ideals and use them for capitalist gain, rather than genuinely supporting women's empowerment and equality. Another example of fake feminism is when individuals or groups use feminism as a way to advance their own agendas, without actually supporting women's rights.² For example, a politician who claims to support women's issues during an election campaign, but then fails to follow through with actual policies or initiatives once in office. Or, a male celebrity who publicly supports feminism but then engages in misogynistic behaviour or perpetuates harmful stereotypes in their work. Fake feminism can also manifest as performative

¹ Dr Vihan Sanyal, *Women's Day Special: 11 signs that tell your partner is a faux feminist*, *The Free Press Journal* (mar 6, 2022, 10:08 AM), <https://www.freepressjournal.in/lifestyle/womens-day-special-11-signs-that-tell-yourpartner-is-a-faux-feminist>

² Becker Herby, *The Rise of Femvertising: Authentically Reaching Female Consumers*, *Capstone 1*, 19 (2016), https://conserancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/181494/BeckerHerby_%20Final%20Capstone_2016.pdf?sequence=1

actions or statements that do not actually challenge the status quo or work towards meaningful change. This can include things like wearing a feminist t-shirt or posting a feminist meme on social media, but not taking any concrete steps to address issues of gender inequality in their personal or professional life. While these actions may appear to support feminist principles, they do not actually create any substantive change. The impact of fake feminism on the feminist movement can be damaging. It can create confusion and mistrust among those who are genuinely committed to women's rights, and undermine the credibility of the feminist movement as a whole. Additionally, it can distract from the real issues facing women and prevent progress towards meaningful change. Feminism often promotes misandry and the elevation of women's interests above men's, and criticizes radical feminist positions as harmful to both men and women. To combat fake feminism, it is important to prioritize the voices and experiences of women and to hold individuals and organizations accountable for their actions. This means actively seeking out diverse perspectives and advocating for policies and initiatives that address the root causes of gender inequality. It also means being critical of individuals or groups who claim to support feminism but fail to follow through with actual action or change.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF FEMINISM IN INDIA

Feminism in India has a long and complex history that is closely intertwined with the country's social, political, and cultural evolution. Feminist thought and activism in India can be traced back to the ancient Hindu texts, which had many strong female characters such as Sita, Draupadi, and Savitri, who were portrayed as being equal to or even superior to men. However, in reality the women's lives were quite different, as they were often subject to patriarchal norms and practices. The feminist movement in India can be traced back to the early feminist movements that emerged in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These movements were primarily concerned with women's education and social reform, and they sought to challenge the patriarchal norms and practices that were prevalent in Indian society.

Feminism in India spans over several decades, and it has evolved through different phases. The first wave of feminism in India began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was led by women activists who advocated for equal rights and opportunities for women, including access to education, employment, and political representation. This phase of feminism was largely focused on issues of legal equality and women's suffrage.

The second wave of feminism in India began in the 1970s and was characterized by a broader focus on women's liberation and the dismantling of patriarchal structures. This phase of feminism was influenced by the international feminist movement, and it sought to address issues such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, reproductive rights, and the representation of women in the media and popular culture.

The third wave of feminism in India emerged in the 1990s and was characterized by a greater focus on intersectionality and diversity. This phase of feminism acknowledged that women's experiences are shaped by a variety of factors, including race, class, sexuality, and disability, and it sought to address the ways in which different forms of oppression intersect and compound each other.³⁴ The #MeToo movement is a global movement that gained momentum in India in 2018. The movement was primarily focused on bringing to light incidents of sexual harassment and assault in the workplace and other settings. The #MeToo movement in India can be seen as part of the broader third wave of feminism, which emphasizes the importance of intersectionality and the recognition of multiple forms of oppression. The movement had a significant impact on Indian society, with several prominent individuals, including politicians, journalists, and actors, being accused of sexual harassment or assault. The movement also led to the creation of several initiatives aimed at preventing sexual

³ DR. SANGRAM D. MORE, *FEMINISM IN THE NOVELS OF JYOTI ARORA AND NAMITA GOKHALE*

⁴ ,13,14(Dnyanam Publication 2022)

harassment and assault in the workplace, including the formation of internal complaints committees and the establishment of a national helpline for victims of sexual harassment. However, the #MeToo movement in India was also subject to criticism and controversy. Some critics argued that the movement was biased against men and that it focused too much on individual cases rather than addressing broader systemic issues of gender inequality. Others raised concerns about the potential for false accusations and the impact that these accusations could have on the reputations and livelihoods of accused individuals.⁵

Overall, while feminism in India has made significant progress in advancing women's rights and challenging patriarchal structures, there is a need to be vigilant against the phenomenon of fake feminism and to ensure that feminist activism is grounded in a commitment to gender equality and social justice

LAW AND FAKE FEMINISM IN MODERN INDIA

Feminism has gained momentum in India over the past few years, with women speaking out about discrimination, harassment, and assault. However, there has also been a rise in fake feminism, where individuals or groups misuse the principles of feminism to further their personal agendas.

India has witnessed a significant rise in feminism and its associated movements in recent times. Women have come forward with stories of discrimination, harassment, and assault, sparking conversations about gender inequality and the role of law in addressing it. However, alongside this rise in feminism, there has been a rise in fake feminism, where people misuse the principles of feminism to further their personal agendas.

Law is a crucial tool for addressing gender inequality. It sets the legal framework for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, irrespective of their gender. In India, the Constitution guarantees several fundamental rights, including the right to equality before the law and the right against discrimination. The government has also enacted several laws and policies aimed at promoting gender equality, such as the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013, and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

However, the implementation of these laws has been far from satisfactory. Despite the legal protections in place, women in India continue to face discrimination, harassment, and violence. For instance, a 2019 report by the National Crime Records Bureau revealed that there were over 4 lakh cases of crimes against women, including rape, kidnapping, and sexual harassment, reported in the country. Additionally, many cases go unreported due to the social stigma and shame associated with being a victim of sexual violence.⁶

Fake feminism can harm the larger cause of gender equality by diluting the urgency of the issue and providing cover for those who engage in discriminatory or harassing behavior. For example, some individuals may claim to be feminists but may also engage in practices such as slut-shaming or victim-blaming, which are antithetical to feminist values. Similarly, some individuals may use feminism as a way to gain popularity or social status, without actually contributing to the movement in any meaningful way.

One way in which fake feminism exploits the legal framework in India is by deflecting criticism and avoiding accountability. For example, when individuals are accused of engaging in discriminatory or harassing behavior, they may use claims of fake feminism to deflect criticism and avoid accountability.

⁵ Michela Menegatti, *Behind the Lines of #Me Too: Exploring Women's and Men's Intentions to Join the Movement*, *Sustainability*, 1, 4 (2022), file:///C:/Users/Lenovo/Downloads/sustainability-14-12294-v2%20(1).pdf

⁶ UNODC, <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/crime-prevention-criminal-justice/module-9/key-issues/1--gender-baseddiscrimination-and-women-in-conflict-with-the-law.html> (last visited Mar. 17, 2023).

They may argue that they are being targeted unfairly because of their gender or that the accusations against them are part of a larger conspiracy to discredit them.⁷

The relationship between law and fake feminism in modern India is complex. It is important for individuals to be aware of the principles of feminism and to work towards achieving genuine gender equality, rather than using the movement for personal gain. Additionally, there is a need for better implementation of existing laws and policies to ensure that women are protected and their rights are upheld.

COMBATING FAKE FEMINISM IN MODERN INDIA

Feminism refers to the advocacy of women's rights, status and power at par with men on the grounds of 'equality of sexes'. In other words, it relates to the belief that women should have the same social, economic and political rights as men. It is a crucial aspect of modern society that has brought about significant social change, particularly for women's rights and empowerment. However, as with any movement, there are those who seek to exploit it for their own personal gain. In India, there has been a rise in "fake feminism," which involves individuals and groups claiming to be feminists while promoting ideas and practices that go against the true principles of feminism.

Combating fake feminism is essential for promoting gender equality and women's rights in India. Legal strategies can be an effective tool for combating fake feminism, especially when it comes to addressing instances of harassment or discrimination against women. Here are some legal strategies that can be used to combat fake feminism:

Anti-Discrimination Laws

Anti-discrimination laws are designed to protect individuals from discrimination based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or other protected categories. These laws can be used to combat instances of discrimination against women, including those perpetrated under the guise of fake feminism. For example, if a woman is denied a job or a promotion because of her gender, she can file a discrimination complaint with the relevant authorities.⁸

Harassment Laws

Harassment laws can be used to combat instances of sexual harassment, which can often be a form of fake feminism. Sexual harassment can take many forms, including unwanted advances, inappropriate comments or gestures, or even physical contact. Women who experience sexual harassment can file a complaint with the relevant authorities or seek legal representation to take legal action against the perpetrator.

Cyber Laws

In the age of social media, cyber laws are becoming increasingly important in combating fake feminism. Women who experience online harassment, including cyberstalking, revenge porn, or hate speech, can use cyber laws to take legal action against the perpetrators. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) has provisions related to cybercrime, including stalking, identity theft, and defamation, which can be used to prosecute individuals who misuse online platforms to perpetuate fake feminism.

Defamation Laws

Defamation laws can be used to combat instances of fake feminism where individuals or groups spread false information or make defamatory statements about women. Women who are defamed or

⁷ Shruthi Sundaram, *The Dangerous Rise of Fake Feminism scares shit out of ME, An Injustice* (Aug.13, 2021), <https://aninjusticemag.com/the-dangerous-rise-of-fake-feminism-scares-the-shit-out-of-me-3472e58954be>

⁸ Open Edition Journals, <https://journals.openedition.org/revus/5802> (last visited Mar. 17, 2023)

misrepresented can use defamation laws to seek legal redress. The IPC has provisions related to defamation that can be used to hold individuals accountable for making false or defamatory statements⁹.

Civil Remedies

Civil remedies can be used to seek compensation or damages for harm caused by fake feminism. Women who experience discrimination, harassment, or other forms of harm can seek compensation through civil remedies. This can include seeking compensation for lost wages, medical expenses, or emotional distress.

Legal strategies can be an effective tool for combating fake feminism in India. Antidiscrimination laws, harassment laws, cyber laws, defamation laws, and civil remedies can all be used to hold individuals accountable and seek legal redress for harm caused by fake feminism. It is important to remember that legal action should always be pursued in conjunction with other strategies, such as education and awareness, building a stronger feminist movement, and promoting inclusive feminism, to create lasting change.

CONCLUSION

The fight for genuine gender equality in India requires a long-term and sustained effort from individuals, communities, and the government. It is important for individuals to educate themselves and others on the intersectional nature of gender-based discrimination and to actively work towards dismantling patriarchal structures in their own lives and communities. It is also crucial for the government to take a more proactive and comprehensive approach to addressing gender-based discrimination, including not only legal reform but also efforts to shift societal attitudes and beliefs. Only then can India truly progress towards a more equal and just society. We need to stop looking at feminism in a bad light, giving it a negative tone in the name of ‘feminazi’, and start pointing out fake feminists who spread wrong agendas. Because we need an open world where all the genders are equal; neither do we need patriarchy nor matriarchy.

The Indian judiciary has played a crucial role in addressing fake feminism and upholding the principles of gender equality through landmark cases such as the Sabarimala temple case and the Triple Talaq case. These cases challenged patriarchal attitudes and practices and set a precedent for future legal decisions that prioritize gender justice.

To ensure legal practices are truly inclusive and gender-just, there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of feminism in India. Challenging fake feminism and promoting gender equality requires a collective effort from society, government, and the judiciary. It is only through this collaborative approach that we can achieve true gender equality and justice in modern India.

⁹ Debarati Halder and K. Jaishankar, *Cyber Crime and the Victimization of Women: Laws, Rights and Regulations*, IGI Global, (Jan. 2012),

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278015875_Cyber_Crime_and_the_Victimization_of_Women_Laws_Rights_and_Regulations