



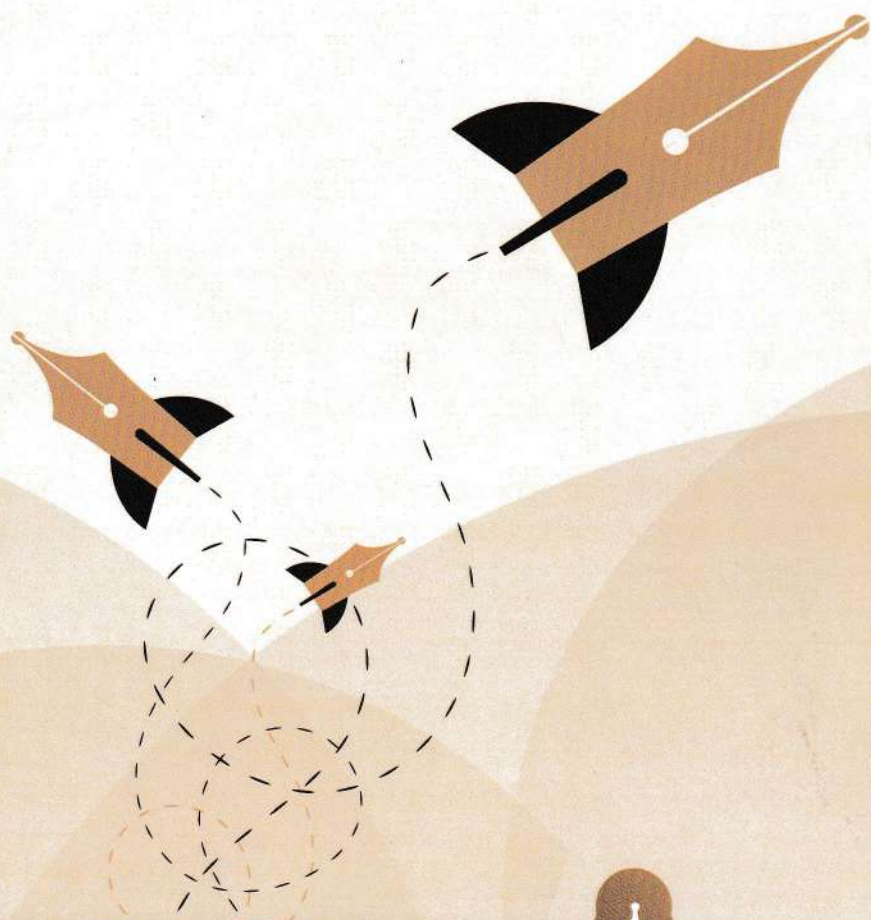
Shodh Sarita

An International Multidisciplinary Quarterly
Bilingual Peer Reviewed Refereed Research Journal

• Vol. 10

• Issue 39

• July to September 2023



Editor in Chief

Dr. Vinay Kumar Sharma
D. Litt. - Gold Medalist



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FEMINISM : MUTATING FROM THE CULTURE OF ABHERRANCE AND VICTIM FEMINISM TO POWER, HEROISM AND SURVIVALISM □ Tshering Lamu Bhutia*

ABSTRACT

The abstract attempts to give a simple overview of what feminism entails and how feminism has mutated through varied orientation. Since mutation refers to the process of transition, changeover, gradation, etc; the paper unravels the dynamics of feminism through successive waves and unfolds the various agenda and rallying cry of each wave. The presentation in particular, lays premium on the transition of feminist discourse from being a "victim" to being 'powered', 'heroic' and 'survivalist' in society. In contrary to the anticipation of decline or death of feminism as accounted by many the concerned paper acknowledges possible resurgence in the activism of feminist circle that will impart a new freshness to this contested and contended "ism".

Keywords : Feminism, mutation, powered, heroic, victim, survivalist, resurgence, "ism".

Defining means determining, limiting and essentializing. Since feminism defies all the three defining feminism becomes a formidable exercise. As Chris Beasley aptly remarks, 'there can be no final answer to the question what is feminism?' While objectively a feminist theory attempts at giving rational explanation of universality of women's oppression in its endless variety and monotonous similarity, cross culturally and throughout history. Subjectively it is also a way of viewing the world from a women's perspective. It is understanding women's psyche, showing concern for women's issue, sharing her inner stories, lending her a helping hand and many things more. As Charlotte Bunch cites, feminism is not about adding on women's rights but about transforming society so much that feminism maybe called transformational politics. In other words, simply stated it means that feminism can be best comprehended not by definition but through its passage in time and history which is best manifested through the waves.

Though feminist urge and some form of activity dates back to ancient times narrowing down the feminist movement to the modern period seems to be the rule. This

is so because feminism as a continuous and organized awareness of women's condition emerged transiting from France, UK, US and other countries in the 17th and 18th century. Historically Mary Astell is usually described as the first British feminist writer who argued for equal ability of men and women and moved beyond writing by institutionalizing educational centers for women. Astell's dictum: "If all men are born free why are all women born slaves?" (Astell, Reflections, 107) echoed and fired the feminist sentiment during that period. Astell may be said to laid the ground work for the emergence of feminist theory. The Vindication of the Rights of Women published in 1792 is labeled as the first feminist theory and Bible of feminism and its author Mary Wollstonecraft applied the liberal principles to attack the existing notions about and treatment of women. A Vindication of the rights of women thus set the mood and stage for the emergence of the first wave feminism.

The First wave :

The First wave beginning most probably from the mid nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century was mainly fought for political, civil, educational, property

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Certificate of Publication

Ref. No.: SS/2023/SPU3

Date: 15-09-2023

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for the Research Paper titled as

**FEMINISM : MUTATING FROM THE CULTURE OF ABHERRANCE AND
VICTIM FEMINISM TO POWER, HEROISM AND SURVIVALISM**

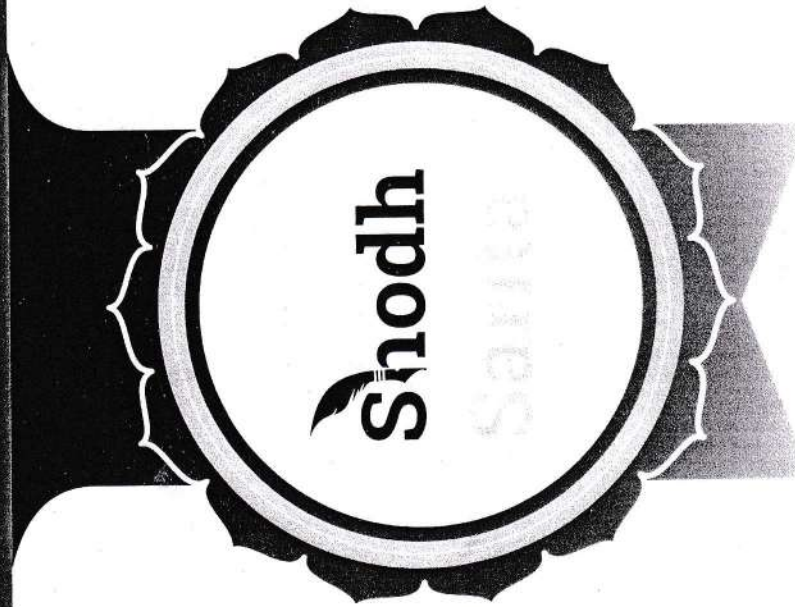
Published in

Shodh Sarita, Volume 10, Issue 39, July to September 2023



Dr. Vinay Kumar Sharma
Editor in Chief

M.A., Ph. D., D.Litt. - Gold Medalist
Awarded by The President of India 'Rajbhasha Gaurav Samman'



PUBLISHED BY



SANCHAR
Educational & Research Foundation

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