



# The Emblematic Narratives of Feminine force - The women in Goa

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This paper titled The Emblematic Narratives of Feminine force - The women in Goa emphasizes on Goan feminism discussing about the position of women in the past and present. The matter will point out at the situations that affected the women.

## Introduction

During ancient times the Vedic era, women had high position and respect. They participated in social matter and would have access to education. Later during foreign invasions in the medieval period, there appeared fear, especially among Hindus of higher caste such as Brahmins, Vaishyas, Goldsmith, about molesting or raping their girl child and women. So somehow with such situations the women and the girl child were deprived of expressing their talents and lacked social status. Kadamba period seemed to encourage women. The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> c. women role saw vast changes towards achieving freedom.

To discuss the matter of feminism, definition of the feminism in general is needed and overall causes which appeared to be important for feminism to come into existence. With the need and time, women's power to express capability of her creative energy aroused that had made her deprived of many things. Thus, birth of feminism took place. Her powerful transformation of her hidden energy explored to achieve right to have freedom in this metaphysical world.

Feminism is an activity on behalf of women's right and interest. It is concerned with the freedom for women, discussing the cultural, social, political and economic women's issues.

Feminism movement has been established to get equal right and opportunities to women (all genders). Feminism movement refers to make efforts to change the attitude in the society by fighting against injustice towards women with breaking away from stereotypes. The goal of feminist history is to explore and illuminate the female view point of history through rediscovery of female writers, artists, philosophers etc.

With the aim to recover anti molest rate, the significance of women's voices and choices in the past. Feminism movement has created greater access to education, more equitable pay with men and right of woman to make individual decision.

### **Trends of feminism**

It refers to equality, freedom and social status. The concept of feminism in India and West differs, Indian feminism is known as a movement " of women, by women, for women". To achieve women's rights, it is also termed as women's liberation movement. The term feminism is indigenous as it has no defined and specific definition. Whereas western feminism believes in economic, political and social equality of the sexes. Indian feminist has difference in historical, social and cultural background in comparison with Western feminist.

### **Western feminism**

The medieval period in Europe denied women of right to own property and to have education, they had been treated illiterate and did not have power to express their wishes. The defense of women became a literary subgenre by end of 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In the west feminism occurred with four waves at different period. 1. Women's suffrage movement (15<sup>th</sup> c to 20<sup>th</sup> c) for voting rights.

2. Women's liberation movement (early 1960) based on legal rights and social equality. Marxist Feminism theory based on empowerment and equality for women.

3. For individuality and diversity (1992) it weakened the notion of womanhood and aimed to celebrate variations in class, race and sexual orientations.

4. Me too movement (2012) It aimed at women empowerment, equal right, beauty in outlook.

The third and fourth wave aimed at freedom in dressing, changed the concept of beauty in physical outlook.

### **Feminism in India**

#### Women in Ancient India

In India freedom for women existed right from ancient times. In Hindu religion women are worshipped as "Shakti" - The reservoir of energy, a great source of energy and thus were prone to multi-tasking, looking after family, assisting others and earning.

In ancient times in India women were respected. They were believed to be symbol of Laxmi, Annapurna - as representing prosperity of the house, who looked after all and her ability towards management of all necessary things needed to run house, family's prestige and outcome in the public.

She had freedom to choose her partner, Royal families arranged "Swayam Var" before marriage ceremony. In some regions in India like Kerala, Assam head of the house was old woman.

Women were considered as "Janani" (which meant mother) in ancient India and were honored by the society.

women were also considered as "Devi" goddess in Hindu scripts.

During Vedic era they were a complete symbol of protector and caretaker of mortality and ideals. The accomplishments of Gargi, Maitreyi, Sita Draupadi and Alapa turned out to be most ideal role for women of this era.

Throughout the medieval history of world both in India and west women were confined to domestic sphere and economic sphere was reserved for men.

In India in the ancient times women power considered to be essential formation of all creation. Mostly in Puranas and ancient texts it is mentioned about the hidden power existence "beyond the creation of this universe which referred to Aadimata: — the feminine force and through her power Goddess Aadimata turned into "Aditi" woman power of creation on this metaphysical world.

The Vedas mentioned the concept of humanity taittiriya samita, women and men were considered two wheels of a chart.

The Rigveda contains hymns composed by women such as Lopamudra and Maitreyi.

whereas medieval period declined the power of women, they had to go through all evil treatments of society. It may be due to many invasions by different rulers. Parents were worried about their girl child so there occurred child marriages, before the girl entered in her puberty period.

The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> c. led women towards expressing freedom.

In India even during Vedic times educational/mental states for women were given equal treatment for e.g. Gargi Vachaknavi was the earliest women scientist and Philosopher in the land of Bharat. She was acknowledged by king Janaka. She had rich knowledge in quantum physics, metaphysics astronomy and space science, she had composed parts in Rigveda. A woman of sheer brilliance known to have challenged sage Yajnavalkya's greatness in the court of Mithila and was one of the women who stood for the education of girl. During the medieval period Sati practiced appeared among warriors as self-immolation and it continued to get rid of molestation and rape by Islamic invaders-Muslim Mughals. Society later made women to commit Sati after the death of husband. In 19<sup>th</sup> century, aimed at defending women's right in equality in economic, social and political position. Raja Ram Mohan Roy a reformer stopped the evil practice of sati..

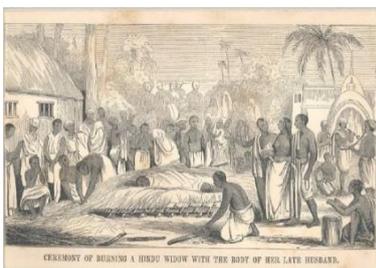


Figure 1 Sati practice



Figure 2 Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Savitribai Phule and Jyotirao Phule opened schools for girls. Dhondo Keshav Karve introduced widow marriages, Babasaheb Ambedkar introduced right to vote for women and made provision for maternity leave. In the West feminism occurred with four waves.



Figure 3 Savitribai Phule and Jyotirao Phule



Figure 4 Babasaheb Ambedkar



Figure 5 Dhondo Keshav Karve



Feminism in Indian Mythology.

Draupadi is a prominent figure in the Mahabharata, due to her strong and assertive character. Feminism in India is a set of movements aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights and for women in India.

Thus, feminism in India and west aimed at freedom/ liberty in rights and changed the attitude towards society. If one makes analysis of the evil practices/crude movements attitudes towards women led towards feminism movement. A woman cannot be changed in her physical body mechanism.

She bears everything and it was society to create all evil and unwanted rules against women. She was deprived of her freedom, against education and sacrificed after children and household works. Woman has the life-giving energy to give birth, to produce new life in this world.

### **Status of women in Goa**

During Vedic times the women were educated in Goa. They learnt Sanskrit, Language, knowledge of counting things and math, chanting mantras.

There was a tradition of thread ceremony for a girl child in upper classes except in tribal community and lower class as they were involved in household and occupational activities.

The women ruling dynasties of the region took keen interest in patronizing learning art. We have example of the queen Kamala Devi of Kadamba period.

The Brahmin women, Saraswat Brahmin women, Vaishya's women were educated. As a child they were provided education facilities by appointing tutor at home after marriage they helped their husbands in their occupation and looked after their children and educating them at home (specially for girl child) and managing all household duties.

Right from ancient times in Goa women had to shoulder the responsibility of rearing children and maintenance of the household. During Vedic times girls were taught Sanskrit language, chanting mantras knowledge of counting (mathematics).

Before Portuguese rule there was a tradition of performing thread ceremony for a girl child but later it discontinued. The women from the Royal families and the elite were taught reading and

writing. Women of the ruling dynasties of the region took keen interest in patronising learning and art.

The chief queen Kamala Devi of Peramodi, Kadamba ruler of Goa was a great patron of learning. Brahmin women were mostly engaged in managing household works and helping their husbands to maintain their rituals and serving food to their devotees.

Vaishya wives / women helped their husband in their business especially homemade items, food products to maintain and sell the products. Saraswat Brahmin women were termed as 'Bhatkanis' they always remained other half of 'Bhatkar' owner of 'kulagaras'-different plantations (banana trees, mango trees, Betel Nut trees jackfruit trees) Besides these plantation their main occupation was owning coconut trees and for their maintenance tribal people were appointed.

Married women were engaged in looking after all these garden treasures, instructing servants and serving food for them and their families. Saraswat Brahmin girls/women were educated at home by appointing a tutor, so they could teach their girl child when young.

During 15th to 20th c. girl child was hardly sent to school. Because of invasion Bahamani of Vijapur, Adilshah Sultanet, Portuguese, mostly child marriages took place among Hindus.

Mostly tribal women were involved in cultivation specially 'Kunbi', 'Velips', 'Gowadas'. Some ST tribe women were involved in making items from cane (these activities were flourished as folk art). Potter women helped their husbands in preparation of mud and making some items from mud.



Figure 6 women making baskets



Figure 7 women making mud pot

The Hindu women nurtured secret hopes of emancipation to achieve freedom. They were allowed only to do household works and married women were looked down with the crude feelings to obey their husband and treated like a product to follow husband's instructions.

They were also afraid of the pyre which would be hit to burn the corpses of their husband as they had to jump into it alive, which was a very cruel treatment for the Hindu women.

The girl child during her marriage would innocently get involved in activities like playing games, collecting flowers fruits, feeding birds, cows not being aware of any responsibility. During her 1<sup>st</sup> menstrual period it was considered her entry in womanhood. It was a tradition where minimum five married women gathered and offered her "ooti". Flowers and fruits, sweetdish used to be prepared to celebrate her womanhood. Now the practice has vanished.

During invasions of Muslim rulers and Portuguese, parents were worried about their girl child and among Hindus, child marriages took place before entering her puberty stage.

When She entered in Womanhood, it was celebrated among family and relatives, her pregnancy used to be celebrated by gathering married women and offering "ooti" to her. The birth of a girl child was not welcomed very happily as birth of a boy.

Kumarika practice – girl child is considered to be goddess and she worshipped in different forms of goddess till she enters her teens before her menstrual period begin.

Married women always considered to be auspicious as Manifestation of "Goddess Laxmi" from ancient times and even today. She is Annapurna as she serves food for her family, she is GruhaLaxmi as she takes care of her family and all the responsibilities of her house.

During Portuguese rule the education was provided in Portuguese language. But Hindu society educated their girl child with basic study in Marathi on Konkani.

Further whoever wished to continue went for further study in Portuguese. Some were aware of impact of English language on education system, so had to go to Dharwad or Bombay for further study.

Most of the women among all communities took responsibility of house works and looking after their children. Though there was an awareness of education for girl child and women, society did not let their women or girl child to go out of their houses for educational learning.

During Portuguese rule, they opened schools in Portuguese language and institutions for further specialized courses in Portuguese language.

Whereas Goan pride was either in Marathi or Konkani language. So, most of the women from upper caste or middle classes completed their education at home later for further study they had to complete matric (earlier XI STD.) Or had to go to Dharwad or Bombay for further study. It was their real achievement, in spite of all these difficulties many of them were able to achieve their education in different fields such as medicine, Art, Literature, Accountancy and So on, and some became Doctor, professor engineer, architect, artist, CA.

Emmeline da Cunha was Goa's first female doctor who had a brief but intense medical career. Dr. Adelia Costa was the first woman neurologist. Maria Aurora Conto was one of the first professors. Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar Goan origin is considered as nightingale of India. Mrs Prafulla Dahanukar one of the best contemporary artists belongs to Goa.



Figure 8 Lata Mangeshkar



Figure 9 Prafulla Dahanukar

It was great honour to womanhood to achieve success in the educational field. They were involved in doing jobs in their selected stream. It was not limited to household work but their educational background made them stand on their own feet. Some rich family daughters or wives were not allowed to do jobs as it was considered as shameful for their family.

During revivalist period in Goa's freedom struggle many Goan women were involved in Goa's freedom struggle. Vatsala Panduranga Kitani "Sudha Madhav Joshi" "Prema Purab" Braganca daughters "Dr Beatriz and Berta de Menezes Braganca, Shashikala Hodarkar Libia Lobo Sardessai, Mitra Bir Sharada Savaikar and So on. All of them were tortured as they participated in liberation movement and were imprisoned.

Present situation in Goa, the women have been impacted both positively and negatively. Positively in the sense women today have excelled in education field and have achieved highest position in different professions also they are treated equal with man and they are enjoying freedom in costumes, outlook and beauty. What has negatively affected is that women have been moved by the idea of western culture completely which has resulted in few women where they have forgotten their strong cultures and heritage which needs to be preserved for the new generation.

Two-three decades back there was also a trend where after knowing the sex of a new born child they had to abort if the women gave birth to a girl child. But today government has banned this.

Today there are many facilities available for women in Goa provided by the government of Goa. Many programs have been launched for women providing them with the support they need. There is a group committee – “Baylancho Aavaz” formed for the protection of the Women in Goa.



## **Conclusion**

Today's Goa is a free individual state of India. Goa has progressed in every field in progressing her status. Goan women today are doing jobs in top most companies in IT field also in other engineering streams. In the field of Art and & crafts. They have specialized in various streams of various fields. Goan women have achieved their power of expressing creativity. Also, it has provided earning source to stand on their feet and support their family. Today they have become surgeons, Specialist in Various fields of medicine. They are aware of traditional roots as well as new modern changes in society.

So together they have channelized their way to bring out their living and children. Today's woman is aware of education system towards bringing out her children as now women are well educated, doing jobs or business, they take care of their children, look after their educational background and progress and also share responsibility of household works. It is not only to instruct them but how to follow new things, whether it is suitable or not, about their behaviour and involvement in different activities. Feminine force has played vital role in society as her involvement in different activities towards progressive steps.

Today's women are compared to the manifestation of "Durga" today's woman are educated doing jobs or business or small-scale business. They are on their own feet.

Today's woman stands as a strong supportive power towards the prosperity of her house which reflects in her home land and they are free in their dressing and fashion outlook. They also boldly perform final rites of their parents, if she is the only girl child of her parents.

Today's Government has organized woman and child welfare society in Goa. All women are respected, so all women have opportunities of maternity and child care facilities.

Today's women are feminist in using freedom and all rights and opportunities. They are on their own feet. Even in art field one can notice the attitude of women in expressing freedom for womanhood.

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