**FEMINISM:**

REDIFINING EQUALITY

In the 21st century, when women are leading top MNCs around the world and taking power moves for huge economies, many end up on the conclusion that the battle for gender equality has been won. Then why do we still need feminism?

The topic of feminism is **ambiguous** for many as the beliefs are majorly **sculpted over a base of misunderstandings**. Most people tend to believe that the idea of feminism is to uplift women and their status in society.

Some may present the argument that the word “feminism” has its roots in “feminine”, and so the feminist ideals **do not consider the status of men and/or other genders in the society**. The word, surely, was coined at a time when women were not given basic human rights. So yes, around a century ago, the word did refer to only uplifting women and providing them with rights equal to men.

If we talk about that time, feminism was a very much required ideology, that fought back against the patriarchy. Who doesn’t remember the infamous **Rosa Parks incident**? A simple act of courage such as that brought about a revolution and started the Civil Rights movement.

But today, after years of struggle, women have come a long way. So, the present scenario of **feminism is quite the opposite of what it was when the idea was born**. Many people are unaware of what feminism entails today.

Feminism is described by Merriam-Webster as "**the philosophy of political, economic, and social equality for men and women**." This description may come as a surprise to those who believe feminism is all about elevating women above men. The definition does not mention strategies to uplift women, instead just points out **ways to minimize the existing social stratification** among the genders.

With innumerable protests and struggles, feminism has come a long way. Women’s rights have been taken into consideration as years passed by. Today, we do have **constitutional equality** in most scenarios. But is this equality seen in practicality?

The corporate world has seen numerous cases of a female receiving a lesser salary than their male counterparts for the same job profile. In third world countries like India, even today, girls in rural areas are married off before they reach legal age. And not to forget, female foeticide is not something we are unaware of. I live in a very well-developed area of the city, but even today, I feel unsafe stepping out of my house after dark. Does this not point out the **still-existing need for feminism**?

But are females the only ones facing oppression? No.

Men too live in a world of constant aggression. The **act of sharing any kind of emotion** is considered weak which is probably one of the most toxic notions that's prevalent in the society. Problems related to **mental illness** like depression, or eating disorders in men are way less than women on record, but that might not be totally true in real life. Statistically, more than **93% cases of depression or anxiety in men, are not even reported**, and are suppressed. The terms such as "mental health”, “seeking health" are often swept under the rug because it is considered “not manly enough".

Even people who identify themselves as transgender or homosexual, find it difficult to accept themselves for who they are. They constantly live under the **mental pressure** of following the societal standards.

Not to mention, the oppression of rich over the poor, and many such various divisions which still exist in today’s world.

Feminism is one of the **oldest and most powerful movements in history**. But in an ideal society, should we be needing a movement which fights bias based on gender? The domination of one gender over another is certainly not healthy for a community. To reduce this stratification, here are some habits you can inculcate in your life-

* Ask your kids to help you with household chores. This will develop the mindset of equality early in life.
* Fund the education of at least one child, so that they understand the society in a better way.
* Teach your children to respect everyone, and make them aware that they are entitled to equal rights.
* Promote sex education as it helps people realize and accept the differences among various individuals.
* If you are employed in an educational organisation, follow co-education in its true sense so that one gender does not feel alienated by the other.
* If you are an employer, provide equal wages to all the employees, based on their performance and regardless of their gender.
* Make provisions for paternity leaves in addition to the existing maternity holidays.
* Help low-income families to know and fight for their rights by joining programs like Anganwadi.
* Encourage a safe environment for reporting harassment or discrimination.
* Donate to NGOs or other organisations working for human rights.
* Support the right to education for all.
* Report any case of female foeticide to the authorities.
* Adopt zero-tolerance against misogynistic comments/behavior.
* Encourage an environment to break the gender norms.

In today’s scenario, when it comes to leadership and empowerment, the world has seen many icons. The list starts at Greta Thunberg, an 18-year-old activist, but does not end at Indra Nooyi, the CEO of Pepsico. Leading Women are shaping the future of organizational culture. By campaigning for women's empowerment and enlisting male allies offers gender balance

The complex threats to women's rights that exist today, especially in societies struggling with violence, poverty, and inequality, necessarily require leadership that positions a large number of women to lead the way in **changing patriarchal power dynamics**.

Recently, we have also seen transgendered people rise to power, which is, undoubtedly, the highlight of the year.

We need to get to a level where we look at **people as individuals without the label of their gender**. It needs to be understood that we are all the same people with similar abilities and talents and differ only when it comes down to body features.

These are small steps, but if each one of us starts following even half of these, we can together create a much **safer environment for all the genders**. Promoting these ideals to more people is equally as important as following them.

"Life is not a competition between men and women, it is a collaboration ".

The first step toward being more emphatic about how you present yourself is to **cultivate self-respect**. It takes courage to speak out about what is true to the rest of the world. **Be receptive** to what others have to say, and remember that your speech, opinions, and feelings are all equally relevant.

So yes, this battle of feminism is a long one that needs to be fought with patience and consistency. Even with today’s ‘progressive’ thinking, the need for feminism is no less than it was 100 years ago, and in no way does the existence of feminist ideologies demean the male population.

It does not imply that one person's perspective is more valuable than another's. Rather, it is about knowing and recognizing how **injustice affects both men and women** and realizing that we are all in this together.