

DAY: Wednesday

DATE: 15-10-25

Essay:

## "Feminism is not really a third world issue"

### Outline

#### 1. Introduction

- (i) Quotation (Karl Marx)
- (ii) General sentences
- (iii) Thesis statement: In a contemporary world, feminism is not only a third world issue, it's a global paradox struggling with wage gaps, sexual abuse, political and social disparities, intersectional inequalities, glass ceilings, patriarchy and stereotyping.

#### 2. Contextualizing feminism as global paradox

- (i) Exploring feminism
- (ii) Feminism in third world countries
- (iii) Feminism in first world countries

#### 3. Universality of feminism across the world

- (i) Persisting sexual abuse and gender-based violence
  - (a) GBV and high divorce rates in 1<sup>st</sup> world countries
  - (b) 1 in 4 women suffer domestic violence - WHO 2023
  - (c) Sexual abuse, work place, harassment, rapes
  - (d) Poor conviction rates i.e 17%.



## (ii) Existing economic disparities and wage gap

- (a) Globally, women are paid less than men
- (b) Women earn 12-16% less than men - OECD'23
- (c) Women earn 82 cents for every dollar earned by men - Pew research center

## (iii) Marginalizing political representation of women

- (a) Political representation of women make 27.9% of parliaments (inter parliament union)
- (b) In Europe, 35% of women hold parliamentary seats.

## (iv) Lacking access to maternal and reproductive rights

- (a) Maternal mortality declined by 35% since 2000 (WHO 2023)

- (b) Abortion is banned in U.S

## (v) Prevailing psychological and mental health issues

- (a) Patriarchal hegemony promotes fear and anxiety
- (b) Women in global north 1.7 times more likely to experience anxiety and depression by 2 times - OECD mental health data 2023

## (vi) Rising intersectional inequality

- (a) Race, caste, and colour discrimination
- (b) In U.S black women earn 67 cents and Latin women earn 54 cents for every dollar earned by white women - Pew research center



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### (vii) Stereotyping and media objectification

- (a) Setting up artificial beauty standards for females in media industry
- (b) Women make less than 25% of people portrayed as experts in media - UNESCO 2024

### (viii) Encountering the glass ceiling

- (a) Poor representation in executive roles
- (b) Women contribute only 6% to CEO roles and 23.3% of board seats world wide - WB

### (ix) Persisting patriarchy and customary laws

- (a) Exclusion of women from decision making
- (b) Customary laws in African countries prevent women from owning land independently

## 4. Way forward to mitigate the hinderances of feminism

### (a) Combating gender-based violence

- \* Strict enforcement of laws

### (b) Awareness and advocacy for women

- \* Financial aiding to women NGOs

### (c) Breaking the glass ceiling

- \* Equal representation and quota system.

## 5. Conclusion

Re-stating the thesis statement and a liberal approach to assist feminism



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## The Essay

"Human progress can be measured by the freedom women enjoy - Karl Marx"

Human race was created free irrespective of genders but over the time the social construct of society discriminated the genders.

History observed a pattern of patriarchal hegemony that is prolonging till the date.

Even after the developments of contemporary world and rise of feminism, "the second gender" women are struggling with their rights and equal opportunities. Third world

countries are exposed to bigger multidimensional issues other than the rights of women while

the first world countries, the most developed countries have been failed in delivering

equal opportunities to women as well. Henceforth, feminism is not merely an issue of third

world countries. It is a global paradox that is struggling with unequal wage gaps,

sexual abuse, workplace harassment, political and social disparities, intersectional inequalities,

glass ceilings, media stereotyping and patriarchy.



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Before exploring multi-faceted hurdles of feminism, let's discriminate how feminism is not really a third world issue. Third world countries includes the global south, the undeveloped one. These developing countries like India, Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc are exposed to much bigger and multi-dimensional threats other than feminism. Poverty, inflation, stagnated economic growth, population, terrorism, climate change, war threats and many more have diverted the center of attention from feminism to these issues. Contrary to this in first world countries, where economies are stable and war threats have neutralized, the center of attraction is feminism. Despite being strategically and technologically developed, first world countries have failed to deliver the objectives of feminism. Women are still being oppressed and marginalized even in the 21st century. The feminist movement that started in 1950s is still struggling to achieve the



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deliverables as Alice Walker said, "No woman is considered free unless all girls and women across the world are free."

Despite legislating equal laws for men and women, there persists a void in protection and security of women in third world as well as in 1<sup>st</sup> world countries.

Sexual abuse and gender based violence is prominent across the world. Women all around the world are subjected to sexual abuse, physical and online harassment, domestic violence, social abuse and rapes.

Every 1 in four women is a victim of domestic violence - WHO 2023. A femicide report from 2024 presented that 85,000 women were killed as a result of domestic violence and honour killings. These are just 17% of the reported cases. A huge number of cases are left unreported each year. Sexualizing an individual on the basis of physical features and gender is universal worldwide. Rapes, violence, abuse and harassment of any gender is unacceptable and must be taken into account by legal authorities.



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Economic disparities and wages gaps between male and female is a universal irony. How come two individuals are paid unequal wage for same labour but only on the basis of gender? Women across the world earn 12-16% less than men - OECD 2023. In many countries, being an house wife and nurturer is considered only women's job. When a nanny is paid for taking care of children for few hours and a mother is considered just a caregiver depicts how shallow the narratives of society are. A sociologist named Archlis in his book "Second job" elaborates how women manages her house <sup>free</sup> after her corporate job while a nanny is paid for that. Pew research center showed that a woman is paid 82 cents for every dollar paid to man for the same labour. Feminists highly oppose this discrimination. The wage gap discrimination is not only limited to corporate sector but it persists and extends to Hollywood and Bollywood as well. In media industry,



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male lead is paid higher than female lead co-actor. Thus unequal wage gap creates economic disparities between both genders.

Education and awareness over the time lead women to realise their political rights. But unfortunately women are also marginalized in political domain as well.

Undoubtedly, women have broken the barriers of political restrictions but representation plays a great role in acquiring political power. Around

the world political representation of women make 27.9% of parliament (inter parliamentary union).

Lack of political rights and political marginalization is not only an issue of third world countries. It is significant in first world countries as well. For instance, in Europe 35%

of women hold parliamentary seats. Providing political opportunities and designating political representation are two different aspects. Laws

cannot be executed effectively until men and women collectively identifies the

issues and execute as well as legislate the laws with mutual consultation. History has proved women representation in legal affairs can make an impact.



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Other than poor political representation, lack of access to maternal and reproductive rights is a prominent issue, not only in third world countries but in first world countries as well. A report from WHO 2023 showed that maternal mortality declined by 35% since 2000.

Across many countries, women are abandoned of their maternal rights while in some African countries there are no laws like maternal authority and reproduction rights.

During pregnancy, a female body suffers the most as she undergoes physical transformation, hormonal imbalance and mental health issues. Therefore, reproductive rights allows a female to take decision over pregnancy timings whether it suits her health or not. At the same time, maternal laws allow female to take leading decisions of her children as she plays a role of nurturer. But, these fundamental and key rights are marginalized around the world. For instance, Abortion is banned in USA. In any case, where



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a women's health does not support a baby but she is not allowed to abort in USA.

This creates undermining women rights and hinders their progress.

Other than this, poor psychological and mental health issues in women have been reported significantly. Mental health issues are undermined in third world countries while harassment and patriarchal hegemony in first world countries is giving rise to depression, stress, anxiety and panic attacks more prominently in females. Women in global north are 1.7 times are more likely to experience anxiety and depression by 2 times than men - OECD mental health data 2023. When an individual is exposed to an unsafe environment, continuous workplace harassment, domestic abuse, the human nervous system shifts to panic mode. Resultantly, it leads to anxiety and long-term depression in females. This depression eventually affects the physical health. A famous Hollywood singer Selena Gomez accepted, she was



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suffering from clinical depression. The reason she put forward that her boyfriend cheated and betrayed her. Eventually, male genders creates psychological and mental health issues in females. Feminist around the world demands to end this gender discrimination and specifically males disturbing mental health of females.

In addition to this feminism around the world is subjected to intersectionality and radicalization. Women are discriminated on the basis of caste, colour and creed in first world and third world countries. Colour discrimination is more prominent in global north where black people are considered inferior to white people. That is why world witnessed global protest with slogans of 'black lives matter' in solidarity with black people during mid 20s. This discrimination exist in females as well. Pew research center presented that in U.S black women were paid 67 cents and Latin women were paid 54 cents for every dollar earned by white women. This research unveiled



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a clear picture of discrimination in first world countries. But the supporters of feminism believe that, Feminism is a radical notion that believes all women are people irrespective of caste, colour and creed." This proves how feminism contradicts and oppose intersectionality in gender.

Above all what hinders women empowerment in 21<sup>st</sup> century is stereotyping and media objectification. Media objectification between male and female is persistant in first and third world countries. Women make less than 25% of experts in media industry- UNESCO 2024. This is due to gender discrimination that restrict women to lead in media industry. Females are radicalized and abused by society on joining media. Because media is considered as a male-dominant field and hence society create filters and stereotypes for women joining media. While the darker side of media and film industry set up artificial and inhumane beauty standards



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for females. For a successful career, women often in fashion and media industry opt for surgeries which eventually affect their physical health. Therefore, stereotyping and objectification in media hinders women to live an independent life.

Moreover, in first world countries where women are suppose to enjoy equal career opportunities, unseen glass ceilings await them. These unseen glass ceilings of poor representation and smallest quota ratio hinders the potential of women. Women contribute only 6% to CEO roles and 23.3% board seats world wide - World Bank 2023. This reports settles the dust of equal opportunities for men and women. Despite of equal rights, women's are still subjugated to poor representation in legal and executive roles. The patriarchal mindsets around the world keep women deprive of athenitarian roles because their shallow owner and fragile male ego does not support a female in power. These are the unseen glass



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ceilings that women have to encounter on daily basis. But the potential of a female cannot be restricted by glass ceilings. A female can still shine out of the barriers of glass ceilings. As Virginia Woolf said, "Lock up your libraries, lock up your institutes but there is no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind."

The most prominent issue that hinders feminism and women empowerment is patriarchy and male dominant society. In developing countries of world patriarchal mindsets limits the rights of women while in developed countries male dominant societies hinders the progress of women in form of glass ceilings. These patriarchal hegemony empowered by society & traditions exclude women from decision making and deprive them of their fundamental rights. Customary laws in African countries prevent women from owning land independently. The social construction of society has unanimously announced the



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male figures as family representatives and breadwinners. Whereas, a woman is also potentially and physically able to support a family financially and emotionally. This patriarchal society and hegemonic pattern of male undermine a lot of female potential. Equal women participation can add \$13trn to world GDP annually- World bank. By marginalizing women, these patriarchs are not only undermining potential of women but also depriving world to excel socially and economically.

Feminism and feminist movements were initiated to address these deeply rooted ills of society that hinder female potential and development. However, filling up this gender void is not an illusive dream to achieve.

Gender-based violence and sexual abuse is the most significant threat to female existence in society. To eradicate GBV, society needs to legislate and execute strict laws. Combating



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domestic violence requires honest reporting, transparent trials, fair jurisdictions and higher conviction rates. It is a high time that government and state must address the criminals of GBV and rapes. Strict legislation followed by effective execution will limit domestic abuse.

Awareness and education play a key role in constructing mindsets and breaking the traditional norms. Feminist movements were initiated to make women aware of their fundamental rights. Feminism enlightened women across the world that standing up for your fundamental rights and independence is not selfishness. It enlightened the individuality of female figures in society. And when a woman is aware of her rights, society witnesses revolutions. As Brigham Young said, Educate a man and you will educate an individual. Educate a woman and you will educate a society. This awareness was initiated by feminist in 1950s. And today, we must



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facilitate feminist NGOs financially and socially to stand in solidarity with the female victims of gender-based violence, acid attacks and sexual abuse.

The world may argue that it has been succeeded in filling the gender vacuum by providing equal opportunities to females. But the orthodox of contemporary world lies in the glass ceilings created by male dominant society to hinder the female potential. The unseen glass ceilings of unequal representation and small quota in authoritative roles must be shared equally among male and female. These glass ceilings will only be shattered when women around the world are facilitated with equal representation in all social, political and executive roles of society.

Thus, the above discussion encloses the fact the feminism is not really a third world issue. It is a universal stigma and global paradox struggling to diminish gender void in



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21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, in a retrospect, feminism followed by unequal wage gaps, sexual abuse, economic disparities, physical and online harassment, intersectional inequalities, stereotyping and media objectification, glass ceilings and patriarchy is a persistent issue in 1<sup>st</sup> world and third world countries. But every problem has some solution so does the feminism around the world. In modern times, to fill this gender gap and empower women around is not an illusive dream to achieve. As a great urdu poet wrote in his verses,

The heart is not hopeless, only defeated for now  
The night of sorrow is long but it is just a night.

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