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THE NEW AWAKENED WOMEN: THE JOURNEY OF WOMEN FROM SUPPRESSION TO  
LIBERATION

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ABSTRACT

Women have been facing gender inequality since the inception of civilisation. The society has always been patriarchal propagating ideologies that are conducive to the making of the feminine, a suppressed and subordinate creature to men, reducing women to the marginalised status in all walks of life. In this paper, the author has tried to present how the subjugation of women leads to their down trodden and fallen state and how the sufferings and suppressions eventually give way to their new awakened consciousness and inner strength leading to the emergence of new awakened women who confront the patriarchal society and refuse to be mere followers of the roles assigned to them by society and indeed strive to discover their own identities, assert their rights, decide and recreate their roles in all aspects of life. The new awakened women are not stereotype 'females', lacking male power but are image breakers, self-sufficient, free minded and unconstrained, 'new females' who do not need to depend on any male and thus are free of males.

**Key words:** Suppression, liberation, patriarchal, subjugation, stereotype

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"The Russian revolution, the Chinese revolution- they are nothing at all.  
The real revolution is women against men."( The Golden Notebook 202)

There has been a continuous conflict between the men and the women since time immemorial. Men have always been given the central position in all walks of life be it family, society, religion, politics, economy, society, law and art etc. and women have been marginalized. Men have been associated with all positive and power signifying qualities like being active, dominating, adventurous, rational, and creative while women have been assigned the opposing traits like being passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional, and conventional. The whole human civilization has been constructed, organised and conducted in such a manner so as to establish the male domination and subordination of women in all cultural spheres. Women have always been portrayed and defined in negative reference to the males as ones who lack the male organs or the male powers.

From the time of their birth the feminine making process starts by society. Girls are brought up differently than boys. They are made to internalise in this whole process of growing up that their roles shall

always be supplementary and subordinating to males. They are consciously and unconsciously made to presuppose about male superiority and are conditioned to derogate their own sex and to cooperate in their subordination. They are thus taught in the process to internalise the ruling patriarchal ideology. Although the sex of a person is determined by anatomy but the traits of a particular sex that make them masculine or feminine are by large decided and constructed by the patriarchal biased culture. Commenting on this thus Simone de Beauvoir says in her book *The Second Sex* :“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman....It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature.... Which is described as feminine.”

In addition to this, girls are taught the roles to be performed by them at different stages and aspects of their life. They are assigned these roles from the moment they open their eyes in this world. They are made aware of their differences from boys and thus the different roles assigned to them as per their genders. They are expected to be very obedient in performing their roles as girls and finally as women. They are made to understand that they need to dependent on males for their survival and existence, be it financially, morally, emotionally, physically or intellectually. At each and every stage of their life, be it as daughters, as sisters, as wives, or as mothers they need to depend on their male members of the family, first on fathers and brothers, then after their marriage on their husbands and later on their sons. As far as the choice of profession is concerned they have a very limited choices at their disposal which include as teachers, as doctors, as nurses, as lawyers etc. which are again labelled by society as safe and suitable for girls. They are again expected to take consent of their male members of the family for any important decision which they are about to take regarding them at any stage of her life. It is very much evident from a prominent Greek general Meno's opinion summing up the prevailing sentiments in classical Greece where he states:

First of all, if you take the virtue of a man, it is easily stated that a man's virtue is this—that he be competent to manage the affairs of his city, and to manage them so as to benefit his friends and harm his enemies, and to take care to avoid suffering harm himself. Or take a woman's virtue: there is no difficulty in describing it as the duty of ordering the house well, looking after the property indoors, and obeying her husband.

Women are made to follow these roles very closely and religiously. One who follows and adheres to her roles as taught to her is seen as a perfect and ideal woman. She receives admiration and appreciation for her being so docile and cooperating in continuing the trend of patriarchal dominance generation after generation. She is portrayed to epitomise the virtue of a true and a real woman. Her acceptance of her subordination and her exploitation by male without any complain makes her desirable in society and community. She is compared to the idealized projection's of men's desire the Madonna, the Muses of the arts, Dante's Beatrice, the pure and innocent virgil, the “Angel in the House” and so on. But on the other hand if one deviates from the roles assigned to her by the society and refuses to follow them and indeed decides for her own roles to be performed by her at various stages as well as at different domains of life, she is labeled as a rebellious as well as a fallen women. She is criticized for breaking the typecast image of a woman and showing her power instead of following the expected submissive roles assigned to her. She is seen as a threat to the patriarchal society who has the potential to overthrow the patriarchal dominance and finally bringing it to an end. She is thus subjected to various punishments, abandonment and banishment by society. She is depicted as a sinful woman and compared to the demonic projections of men's sexual resentment and terrors the Eve and Pandora the sources of all evil, the Delilah, the Circe and the like.

These stereotype roles make women passive and render them a position which is no better than that of an object. They make them dependent on male and curb their freedom, the freedom to live their lives as per their choices, without any external patriarchal pressure of society. Further it results in formation of a weak and dependent feminine personality, having an inferior perception of the self in relation to men. This leads to their failure in realising their true potential and contributing to society. Their gender constrains deprive them of their access to many good things in life which are easily enjoyed by men. Moreover women face identity crises, initially when they are young they are known by their father's identity, as daughters of such and such, later after marriage by their husband's identity, as wives of such and such of such and finally by their son's

identity ,as mothers of such and such. Further they are discouraged to protest or raise their voices against the various exploitations that they undergo in the hands of men. Their silence is preferred to their speech. There are also different codes of conduct and justice for the same fault made by them. In case of a sexual exploitation the females are mostly held responsible. All these result in the miserable, downtrodden and fallen state of women.

The sufferings and the suppression of women finally lead to their self-realisation of their pitiable condition in society and awaken their consciousness. The awakened women realise their inner strength and thus take to redefine themselves, their identities, their positions and their roles as women in society. As Simone de Beauvoir speaking for women in her book *The Second Sex* says "What they demand today is to be recognised as existents by the same rights as men and not to subordinate existence to life, the human beings to its animality." This has led to the emergence of a new woman who is not a stereotype 'female' image, lacking male power but is an image breaker, self-sufficient , free minded and unconstrained , new 'female' who does not need to depend on any male and thus she is free of male. She is very much aware of her potential and her rights as women and even knows how to claim it. She is aware of her worth as a woman and is not at all going to make any compromise to tarnish her glory of being a woman. She is determined in making every effort to empower and uplift her own as well as other women's condition in family and in society. She is the new awakened woman who is complete in herself, who knows to raise her voice against injustice, who is not a follower but a trend setter, who is not a confined but a liberated spirit who is free , frank and fearless.

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