

## METHODOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FEMINIST CHALLENGES IN INDIAN MINES

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*Abstract:* This paper draws on a qualitative philosophical investigation to examine and create understanding of existing feminist problems in the coal mining industry in modern society. An attempt is made to understand the diachrony of gender stereotype phenomena and provisions that lead to female obstacles on their direct interaction at workplace across businesses by contextualising current occurrences from the Mining Industry. The findings will most likely aid in boosting the percentage of women working in productive capacities and offering answers that contribute to the long-term viability of the business.

*Keywords:* feminism, modernity, mining, hindrances, regulations.

### Introduction

Feminism is a broad concept that can refer to a variety of things, including a movement, a viewpoint, a theoretical approach, an active position, and an identity. Feminism's problematization of gender has given rise to a technique to criticize gender roles in general and masculinity in particular by emphasizing gender as socially and culturally produced rather than as the "natural order of things" (Frey & Bellotti, 1995). As a result, feminism is commonly acknowledged as having a significant impact on many areas of social science theory, policy, and practice.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is referred as emerging one of the most Modern Societies, as the world in itself is getting out of traditional and medieval periods and the world is seeing the transition from agrarian to industrialization, feudalism to capitalism, industrialization, from misconceptions, fallacies, folk tales to rationalization, hegemony to secularization. Succeeded by scien-

tific discoveries, revolutionary ideas, notion of autonomous mind, freedom, lawfulness, vigilance, etc. is the basics for evolution of modern society. The people of this modern society also have come out of shackles of past (who believed on sayings and beliefs) and managed to regulate and evaluate minds through logical processes. Feminism is a true product of Modernity and a component of this rupture with tradition. Relations between the sexes can be rethought when tradition and prejudice are no longer dominant. Some of the early writers established and blamed women their nature as reason for being inferior, questioned her way of life and also made socially accepted principle of dominance. Aristotelian scholastics argued that because of their biological nature they are to be considered as subservient to men, incomplete without men. According to Mill, the continued subordination to men as an isolated fact of modern institutions, a single old-world tradition that is followed in thoughts and practices in every form of life. He also blamed

self-focused action of male as the reason for continued social practices. Poulain juxtaposes female as naturally and culturally produced inferior breeds. René Descartes is typically considered the progenitor of modern philosophy due to his radical departure from established philosophical norms and his emphasis on empirically sound reasoning and critical thinking. According to him tradition and nature are no longer sufficient for a complete understanding of gender; modernity adds observation, debate, and culture to the mix. The concept of gender as an essential component of social construct is perceived as novice and groundbreaking one. However, similar glimpses can also be seen from feminist thoughts of 16<sup>th</sup> or even to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Albeit black lash, forgetfulness, repetitions are some of the very common features that remain always as a part of development of feminist theories. The idea is typically met with resistance, and it is often the target of intellectual and political assaults. Rejection of feminist techniques and epistemologies, as well as rejection of feminist content, are all real problems. Despite feminism's success, the topic of gender is seldom addressed in theories of organisations, despite the fact that it serves as an important organising element. Thus the matter of feminism and problem associated in one of the gendered industry is a matter of study for the current paper. The objectives is to go beyond the critique and dismantling of management and organisational studies canons.

By highlighting the fact that organisations are embedded in larger social systems and are accountable for promoting social justice, equality, solidarity, and caring for others, they go on to developing alternative value systems. They are dedicated to bringing about physical and social transformation in institutions and communities that is consistent with their principles. Still patriarchy persists within us and us in the current paper focuses on Indian Industries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through this paper, patriarchy is examined as problem and specific lenses of society, environment, industry and culture etc. is used to examine feminist status in specific extractive industries. Expanding rapidly, feminism's scope now encompasses a wider variety of concerns. Feminist political theory, more than any other normative theory, sparked a variety of transformational movements and broadened discussions of justice, freedom, equality, and change. There are many

different schools of thought within feminist philosophy, from liberalism to socialism to conservatism to eco-feminism to radicalism. The primary idea is that women should be treated equally and freely and that they are subject to discrimination in public life.

### Women after the Second World War

Women had achieved a high level of political and legal equality with males by 1945 in the majority of Europe and America. Even in France, where the earlier feminist movement had been particularly unsuccessful, women were finally given the right to vote in 1944, and the Code Napoleon, which explicitly subordinated women to their husbands, was gradually changed. They were no longer barred from political participation, education, and employment, and they no longer lost all autonomy upon marriage. The 1930s saw the continuation of welfare feminism in America, when a group of powerful women under the leadership of the President's wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, were able to significantly contribute to the planning and administration of the New Deal. Although women did not receive state assistance to the same extent as men, their needs could no longer be disregarded, and as a result, Ware claims that "many of women's expectations be met during the 1930s". In England, the new welfare programme based on the 1942 Beveridge Report included paying mothers state allowances for their second and subsequent children; although these initiatives fell far short of achieving complete economic independence, they significantly reduced the burdens of illness and poverty (Laite, 2009). Significant advancements have been made in the job area as well. In Britain in 1943, 80% of married women were engaged in some form of war employment (Hacker et al., 2010) During the war, women not only worked outside the house in record numbers, but they also performed highly skilled and prestigious tasks for which they had previously been deemed unqualified. Despite the fact that many people came home in 1945, the lack of labour and the necessity to rebuild the economy made sure that the upward trend persisted, and as a result, both Britain and America experienced a rise in the number of women in paid employment in the 1950s. Increasingly sophisticated

home appliances and a long-term decline in family size meant that domestic work no longer needed to involve endless labour, allowing housewives to devote themselves more to their children's needs. By this time, many of the women who stayed at home were benefiting from an overall increase in living standards and greater availability of consumer goods. Many believed that a new era had arrived and that most women could now find genuine fulfilment in a home life devoid of drudgery, while the few who wished to pursue a profession could do so with freedom.

Feminism lacked appeal in this setting because it was connected to conflicts that had already been won or to ideals that were unpopular in the pro-family and growingly hedonistic postwar environment. Since "emancipated women" were "frightening individuals in tweed suits and horn-rimmed spectacles with stern buns at the backs of their heads," Sheila Rowbotham in her writings recalls that feminism "was all very prim and stiff and largely concerned with keeping you away from boys" (Kleinberg, 1976). In contrast to past decades, no significant organisation was interested in contesting male dominance in the house or raising doubts about the idealized model of family life that was taken for granted.

While communists adhered to the Stalinist line that earlier socialist attacks on the family had been mistaken and that women's true fulfilment lay in motherhood, those who insisted on a woman's right to a career saw this as an alternative to marriage and motherhood instead of something that could be combined with it.

Although there was no substantial feminist movement, certain movements for formal equality for women persisted, concealing a high level of discrimination in practise. Women continued to be the minority in politics at all levels, were wildly underrepresented in positions of power, and faced discrimination in all facets of the workforce. By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, feminism had gained widespread acceptance, gender equality was regarded as a desirable ideal in the majority of Western cultures, and feminist studies were taught in many academic institutions. Feminism has reached a stage where it can pivot and examine itself, both for the purposes of self-knowledge and self-reflection and for the purposes of requesting acknowledgement and a position in society. It is time to admit that femi-

nism, or gender equality, is as much a part of Western society and philosophy as the belief in the veracity of science, democracy, freedom of expression, and human rights, to name just a few contemporary accomplishments.

## Feminist Challenges and Its Categorization

This study is a detailed introspection and critically analyses of social stereotypes, perceptions, beliefs, taboos, gender differences that resulted into masculinity, patriarchy and hindered women participation. On the basis of primary and secondary data challenges that hamper women productivity (directly as well indirectly) in coalmines have been identified, further streamlined into categories and sub-categories of limiting factors viz. Company regulations, Design, Work-Place environmental facilities, social practices and Perceptions, Physical Ability/Power and lastly Institutional, which are detailed in coming sections.

## Reason for this Study

Industries under the control of government is very keen about welfare of their employees provide equal pay, protection, un-biased deciding upon age of superannuation, etc. but at the same time being perceived very dangerous on their non-compliances (Appel, 2009). On the same lines, talking about coal, with the focus of meeting huge targets of production and profit, minimal efforts have been made towards managing manpower and its composition. There is hardly any reliable data available on challenges confronting female miners in CIL and its subsidiary companies. In 2019, under the Mines Act (1952), (*Ministry of Labour Notifies Rules to Allow Employment of Women in Mines*, 2019) the Central Government allowed women to work in mining industry in Underground and also in night-shifts, above ground. Before going for such a mega industrial change, it is important to know currently where women exist in industry and drawing-out lines for positive change. This paper nonetheless remains focused primarily on evidences of gender discrimination and power and privilege provided to male associated directly or indirectly into this industry. This paper will try to provide

answers to the question like, Is there any difference between existing provisions and its implementation in coal companies? Does any other kind of hindrances exist that is overlooked by management? What efforts are required to be taken by giants to bring wider gender participation and parity. The paper uncovers the multi-dimensional work front gendered problems.

### Feminist Principles and Modernity

The relationship between modernity and feminism is central to the project of critical theory, and yet this relationship has come under increasing pressure in recent years, in particular from postcolonial critics. For feminist critical theory specifically, the demand to rethink the relationship between modernity and normativity can be seen as coming simultaneously from two different directions: both from the direction of a feminist theory that strives to be genuinely inclusive of the perspectives and experiences of all women, by developing an intersectional analysis of the cross-cutting axes of racial, gender, and imperial domination; and from the direction of a critical theory that can only be truly critical if it can take on board a postcolonial perspective. Whilst these principles have been relevant and helpful, it was felt that our approach could be developed further to reflect the way we work, putting an emphasis on our values and culture. We wanted to explore what made these principles specifically ‘feminist’ and how we could better live our feminist values and embed them into the organisation. Furthermore, we sought to articulate a more intersectional feminist approach which focuses on social justice more broadly, while continuing to strongly value gender equality.

### Self-Awareness

Feminist thoughts have always placed significant emphasis on one of its core salient feature of self-awareness. Knowing about self, personal identities will address further inquiries into society and agency. Historically, as claimed by several philosophical thinkers legislation, common practices and cultural norms rejected or eventually suppressed self-hood of women. The modern

construct on the rationale subject that projects feminist self as uplifted from ambivalence, anxiety, abrasion, violence and prejudice, etc. While we cannot deny the importance of things like critical thinking and personal agency, some feminists have argued that these abilities cannot function independently of the phenomena we term the self. In light of this, feminist philosophers have argued that traditional concepts of autonomy and reason are deeply flawed. Feminists contend that the white, healthy, middle-aged, middle- or upper-class, heterosexual, cis-gender, male citizen hidden behind the representations of the Kantian subject and homo economicus. According to Kant, he is a fair judge thinking about how to apply universal principles; according to utilitarianism, he is a cynical trader looking out for his own interests (Hansen, 2009).

### Empowerment

It involves the principles of democracy and shared power. As extractive industries deal with the resources that is not owned by any individual. It is the nature, the nurturer of all the other lives forms on earth. We empower society and nature by facilitating “a participatory, democratic process in which at least some power is shared” (Gregoratti, 2018). Feminist see empowerment in modern society as a concept of power as energy, capacity and potential rather than domination. Increasing the power of all actors, not to limit power to some, will make empowered nation though maximizing individual’s contribution (Garner, 1999).

### Self-Care and Caring for Others

The ethics of caring and compassion are the foundation of feminist leadership. The qualities of respect, nurture, caring, and empathy are crucial to female leadership. The goal is to create a warm and supportive atmosphere. Creating safe places for people to express themselves freely and to really care for one another is of the highest importance, Despite the fact that care givers are undervalued and underappreciated by patriarchal systems, feminist leadership views care as its central tenet (Corral-Verdugo et al., 2021). But it’s crucial to realize that feminist leaders go be-

yond merely sympathizing with and showing sympathy for people who are oppressed. Instead, they strive to upend these structures in ways that will support people who are oppressed and ignored in the current system. Extractive industries deal with rapid and massive exploitation of natural resources with the focus of meeting targets and raising profits. Thus, this practice is the problem of modern society and required utmost rethinking of the approach of mining used from the last decade and finding feminist solutions for the same (Norwood, 2013).

### Inclusion

An important part of feminist leadership is building a culture that promotes equality, diversity, and appreciation of individuality. This principle focuses on being interactive and involves maximum of all parties involved. By accepting people as they are and encouraging them to realize their potential, fosters an atmosphere of safety, confidence and acceptance. Feminist leaders in the real world also need to exercise caution by not relying only on agreement, consultations, and teamwork when making choices. When working together to create something new, it might take a lot of time and effort to hear everyone's ideas and opinions before settling on a course of action. Therefore, should adopt a situational and context-driven leadership style that allows them to adapt flexibly to changing circumstances. Feminist leaders must walk a fine line between leading from the heart and leading with an eye on the situation.

### Responsible and Transparent Use of Power

Contemporary India is witnessing transparency as an important element of change of any form i.e. socio-economical, environmental, geo-political, etc. So is one of the feminist principles is to use power in a transparent way in order to develop better trust among the stakeholders involved. While working in an industry that deals with non-renewable resources, where stake of lives of people involved, it is utmost important to develop a transparent, responsible and power oriented system. If involved in allocating resources and choosing partners, in a transparent way will en-

sure these choices promote ActionAid's values and aspirations.

### Ending Sexual Violence, and Promoting Sexual Freedom

"A movement to eradicate sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression," is how Hooks (2000) defines feminism (p. 83). Given that ending sexual assault is the ultimate objective of feminist work, we chose this frame of feminism because it calls for action. The goal of feminist principle is to deepen our knowledge of sexual assault from the perspective of the victims. However, when it comes to solving the issue, or at the very least, solving the issue outside of formal institutions, there is a widening gap between theory and practice. Activist feminists mainly aim to upend the existing social order via grassroots organizing of media awareness campaigns, policy formation, lobbying, etc. In the modern society, where world realizes equality as a priority for change and female are allowed to equally shoulder men in day or night, in rough and tough open spaces or small/ closed spaces below ground, It is important to understand the role of individuals in perpetuating an atmosphere that strictly upholds sexual assault. Any kind of oppression, disparities, societal tolerance is to end through education, developing better work ethics. The myths, beliefs and culture associated with the masculine spaces are required to be left behind in order to compete in globally feminist era. It is high time when organizations must realize a workplace free from any form of direct or indirect form of exploitation/harassment.

### Zero Tolerance

As the second wave of feminism emerged in the 1970s, it shattered the taboo of talking about domestic violence and sexual assault by males. This allowed people to see the problem for what it really was: pervasive across culture and society. The 1970s marked a milestone for the feminist conceptualization of men's violence against women, since feminist interventions on the topic reinterpreted it through a socio-political viewpoint, making such violence public for the first time. 21<sup>st</sup> century is witnessing feminist speak



out against any type of discrimination or abuse of power that we see or experience on the job. It is the responsibility of any organization is to develop workplace safety, develop better ethical work culture, provide sufficient support, free from any sort of exploitation, harassment that can add as an encouragement for female workforces.

With special reference to Indian coal industry, which had rampantly developed unscientifically, lacks mechanized extraction of embedded resources and underdeveloped rock mechanist (Ghose, 2003). The overall process of coal mining, required huge manpower with higher capacities of physical strength, endurance and power. Studies have shown that how large proportion of the output were attained by hands using huge labour-force. The industry is considered as highly labor-intensive and power-oriented industry. Some of early instances where sweat and blood of men proved their worth are like leads and lift, push and pull-on rough surfaces through various incline carried out by men for which machines are designed now (De Klerk et al., 2015). Some methods used in early conventional mining for instance undercutting the coal seams with hand tools, manual hauling, loading of minerals like coal in coal-tubs usually called shale-pickers in coal mines. It was in late 90's when single machinery and then blasting and cutting machinery were used in coal mining.

## Methodology

In-depth interviews using structured questions were done with 38 numbers of female employed in mining and its related technical disciplines across CIL & its subsidiaries and informal interactions were done with the approachable female executives, which provided better insight to the hinderances at work place in a Public Sector Undertakings. The study of available secondary data in the forms of booklets, wage agreements issued by different subsidiaries of CIL were done. Further, it helped me in developing various categories identified subcategories of challenges using hit and trial, ignoring few as very minor matters to discuss. One of the very first category is company regulations which covers the rules and regulation that are laid down by government or competent authority to guide organisations, for safety and welfare of coal miners. Secondly, De-

sign is a broad category which includes machinery and the associated tools, etc. Its Shape and size plays key role in its convenient usage and averting unsafe acts. Thirdly, work-place facilities are also very prominent category, in order to contribute maximum by an individual. Its unavailability causes dissatisfaction and increases organisational attrition rate. Fourthly, physical ability that limit male and female to perform differently under same conditions. While identifying the categories, it is incomplete unless social practices and societal perceptions are not taken as part. Society plays essential role in developing perception to its practise. Lastly, other factors such as institutional, outsourcing are also contributing towards limiting women participation in coal mining.

## Uncovering Feminist Challenges at Work - From Theory to the Fields

Gaining idea out of conventions introduced by ILO, like-wise other countries, India regulated and prohibited work by women in mines (mostly underground) as early as in 1924, with few exceptions which were enforced gradually around 1939 (Lahiri-Dutt, 2020).

This regulatory framework of mining companies majorly and directly impacted women participation.

Hypermasculine industry and so their men lead trade unions do not give enough importance to female participation nor to their feminist issues in agenda. Talking about CIL and SCCL, all the employees covered under "coal wage provisions". The provisions related to wage, allowances, welfare, social security and other conditions of service are formulated under the recommendations of the joint settlement of Bi-partite Committees. It came into effect from 15<sup>th</sup> August 1967 and completed tenure of tenth coal wage agreement on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

Coal India Limited and other big market players have come up with the option of Special Scheme for voluntary retirement for their female employees (Guha, 1996). Organisations issue time to time sweetened guidelines to replace huge female population with male as their son and not to daughters so far. Although, the purpose is requirement of technically skilled manpower or any other for better production, but fe-

male is replaced by skilled male in an industry is a matter to ponder upon. It is also admitted by some senior management that these categories of women cannot be employed gainfully due to the mines act that limited deployment of female and better engagements (Sengupta, 2014).

Female is inadequately reflected in leadership positions within trade unions and in the negotiating teams that conclude collective agreements (Venkata Ratnam & Jain, 2002; Bose, 2004).

The probable reasons for their lower participation are giving extra time, attending union meetings which are generally informal using rough sexist languages and occurs in night time, family responsibilities, lack of education, etc (Venkata Ratnam & Jain, 2002). Adding to it, coming long way with the sense of dominance and stereotypes, the male counterparts also resist to be guided or controlled by a woman Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh (2013) and lacks the lead-opportunity.

Corporate Social Responsibility is a new concept of the century is highly appreciated by corporates. While dealing in non-renewable resources, the responsibility of mining industries even grows more. However, companies are just meeting the minimum requirements of compliances by spending in routine type of activities such as conducting sewing classes, adult literacy classes, A I D S awareness programmes, with no innovative and act of difference.

Machineries with high tonnage capacities are generally big and require proper technical training, strength while driving on haul roads. In general, equipment used were very heavy, historically designed by men for their usage as per their convenience and sized long considering the average height of the man. Studies have shown that Women possess about half of a man's upper body strength and three-quarters of his leg strength (Janssen et al., 2000). A woman's lifting strength is two thirds to that of a man's and the muscle cross-sectional area of the biceps brachii was higher in males than in females (Alway et al., 1989). Thus, female find operation of machinery and equipment associated as tough.

Mining operations are mostly done clearing forest or in abandoned areas. The people employed generally face problem of cut-off from social life, urban facilities with very limited sources of entertainment and socialisation. Such outskirts and rough locations with hazardous na-

ture of work are generally considered unsafe and perceived as not suitable for female employees. Female considers 'physical withdrawal' as the most effective way to escape out from any unwarranted male behaviour on fields (Hinde, 1997). For extra caution, it is found that authorities even after knowing female technical knowledge and potential, mostly places them in headquarters and try to involve them in desk job, rather than interior field locations to avoid any unacceptable conduct. The remoteness and relative isolation of mining sites make women more vulnerable to such violence. Women working in mines consistently report unwelcome physical, verbal and non-verbal behavior that affects their chances of success and advancement in the workplace (Botha, 2016).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper draws on modern concepts of the feminism as a movement of change that break caste, gender and other hierarchies to reduce social inequalities. These concept challenges traditional patriarchal industrial (mining) conceptions with masculine traits such as dominance, aggression and discipline. It opens up the space to reimagine modern ideas of feminist leadership in the new millennium as feminist leadership is non-hierarchical, relational, inclusive, and embraces emotionality, care, collaboration, and respect as the essential core principles.

The purpose of understanding extractive industries from a feminist critical lens, drawing on challenges associated with females at actual workplaces. The purpose is the greater good of society in seeking to end oppression, domination, injustices, and inequalities based on gender and alike. In practice, there are several challenges to the females in mining industries such as social, environmental, societal, institutional, etc. identified using a methodological approach. Despite these challenges, I argue that feminist leadership offers a significant alternative to traditional hypermasculine notions of leadership that promises to be more inclusive, participatory and transformative change. Extractive industry stands and shines on the strong shoulders of coal miners and "miner" were never a gendered term. But while evolving, the role of women, the better halves in the field of mining has gone unrecorded, under-

valued and denigrated for a long time by government, policy formulators and society. In the new era, where India needs an evolving and growth oriented mineral mining plan, increasing women participation by providing ample support at various dimensions can foster systematic and sustainable growth in the economy. I aim to present feminism as an inherent part of Modernity and demonstrate and make visible a philosophical continuity of thought. I have tried to illustrate that feminism is a modern practice of thought in its own right. Seeing feminism as a larger enterprise, and not small isolated attempts here and there by daring and exceptional individuals, will give us a more coherent understanding of how different developments that has taken place.

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