

A Study on Feminist Ideas of Jainism

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The concept of feminism springs as a wave of philosophy cum a socio political movement in the 19th century and its breeding ground was Europe. Its ultimate aim can be phrased as an aggressive attempt to concretize for women equal opportunities in the matrix of social and economic aspects. The aggression rises against male dominance and imposes later an overall and inevitable influence on the later socio, cultural, political and educational spheres. As feminism thus proceeds as a socio movement it soon reaches as an educational movement into the premises of universities and higher learning institutes. The enlightened women opened their eyes to a bold truth i.e. that society hitherto has been seen through the eyes of men only. This trend went on to beget a new tendency i.e. to begin to view philosophy and religion from the feminist angle. The optimistic picture of the woman in India went into hiding with passing time and its ultimate visage was the Sathi ceremony by which widows were killed. As its opposites, this proposed research wishes to study on feminist thoughts in early Jain philosophy. This study is carried out with the aid of texts as its methodology. Jain female clergy had preceded Buddhist female clergy. It is said that in the Swethambara Jain sect, 4000 males and 36000 females were ordained. The females ordained in Jain sect were twice the number of males. Among the 24 Jain Theerthakaravara, there was a woman named Malli and she was the 19th of them. She was the chief cause of protest around the stand that women cannot achieve salvation.

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