

## **Prevalence, Importance & Growth of Women Studies**

Women Studies is a multidisciplinary study of the social status and societal contributions of women and the relationship between power and gender. It is also known as Gender studies. It promotes awareness of the value of all people, regardless of sex. Other than this, Women Studies examines all spheres of life, including the home and family, the workplace, religious institutions, education, government and the media, feminist studies, and sexuality studies, and more broadly related to the fields of cultural studies, ethnic studies etc. Research in this field investigates the nature of gender, and thereby helps society and individuals establish healthy gender-related expectations and models of identity. Women's Studies courses provide a safe environment to explore issues related to women, gender roles, gender identity, sexual orientation and the intersectionality of race and class.

Women's Studies in India emerged out of the conjunction of such diverse forces as the women's and democratic struggles, as well as state initiatives that critically examined the status of women in the country. The past three decades have witnessed the influence of these trends within academia, leading to path breaking feminist research in different disciplines, particularly in the social sciences and humanities. The growth of Women's Studies Centres/ Programmes in different Universities all over the country has demonstrated recognition of the issues that have been highlighted by the women's movement and feminist research over the past many years.

Women's studies is an academic field that draws on feminist and interdisciplinary methods in order to place women's lives and experiences at the centre of study, while examining social and cultural constructs of gender; systems of privilege and oppression; and the relationships between power and gender as they intersect with other identities and social locations such as race, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, and disability. It is not just about looking at the history and interests of women but looking at the world as various forms of oppression and what can be done to address these issues. Much gender-related abuse, discrimination and maltreatment has occurred

throughout the course of history due to a lack of knowledge. Women's studies courses can empower girls, decrease teen pregnancy and bullying, combat gender stereotypes that affect them, end rape culture and can open the door to the understanding of intersectionality, privilege, and oppression.

We strongly believe that requiring all students to learn about the history of women, gender roles, media awareness, rape culture, body image, and healthy relationships would benefit both male and female students. This would start to change the culture of our society that puts men in a position of power over women and other minorities' individuals and sees women as nothing more than sexual objects to be used for the pleasure of men. Children are bombarded with images promoting gender roles, the sexualization of women, and anti-gay and anti-women terminology in popular culture. At home and school, they receive strong messages about what is acceptable behavior for males and females. The curriculum for a required Women's Studies course must include discussions of gender and gender identity, gender roles, the intersectionality of race, class, age, sexual orientation and other categories with gender, privilege and oppression as well as the history of the suffrage and feminist movements, social literacy and media awareness. It must ask students to think critically about how gender is defined and how gender roles are promoted in our society. Once students understand gender, gender identity, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality then the class can move on to learn about the work of women to achieve equality and where work still needs to be done. A more in-depth study of current issues facing women, men, and the community will allow students to apply their knowledge to real-world problems. "A curriculum might cover; public spaces, including catcalling, attitudes to dress and the threat of sexual violence; online spaces and harassment; sex and relationships, including domestic violence and yes, affirmative consent; and work, including discussions of equal pay, work-life balance, discrimination and unconscious bias.

### **Growth**

The concept of Women Studies came from the feminism movement. Feminism is a philosophy, which holds the idea of equality for both the sexes. Although men and

women are different biologically but they are equal. Feminism believes that women are suppressed throughout the history and its commitment is to change the attitudes of peoples regarding equality in the people and giving social, political and economic equality to both sexes should attain it.

Internationally, in 19<sup>th</sup> & early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the **first feminism movement** or wave was started towards women's equality mainly on legal inequalities (especially on voting rights for women). In the **second wave** which was started between 1960-80 the focus was on the cultural inequalities, gender norms and the role of women in society. In this era only, the phase of **Women Studies** was started in America and in 1980; over 20,000 courses were being taught in that discipline on different undergraduate, postgraduate and Ph.D. level. Even it has its own National Women Studies Association and journal too. The **third wave** was started in mid 1990s by Gen Xers, the founder of second wave to solve the unresolved issues of women. Her thoughts were more international, multisectoral and more gender open for getting more freedom.

Feminism in India is a set of movements aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights and equal opportunities for women in India. It is a pursuit of women's rights within the society of India. This movement was started as an initiative in Maharashtra by women independently.

Currently, Women's Studies classes are more common at the university level than in school education and "for many students, it is in their postsecondary education that women's issues are studied for the first time. All students, regardless of their gender identity or biological sex, will benefit from taking a women's studies course. Girls will become more confident and proud of being a woman when they learn about the historical contributions of women who helped develop the country and when they are given the ability to discuss the issues that they face every day. The goal of Women's Studies courses is to change men and the thinking pattern of the patriarchal society. Additionally, the skills girls gain in a Women's Studies course will make them better leaders, more confident and will encourage more girls to enter traditionally male-dominated fields such as science, mathematics, and engineering.

The inclusion of Women's Studies course will be beneficial to both female and male students on many levels and may address many of the social issues faced by today's teenagers, including sexual violence, teen pregnancy, and bullying. This will encourage them to make their own definitions of manhood that do not include the oppression and sexualization of women. Female students will finally be given the opportunity to learn about the contributions of women in the development of the society and to feel that they are not alone in their struggles against discrimination, strictly defined gender roles and negative cultural images of women.

### **Objectives:**

The programme is being designed with a view:

- To spread the awareness about the glorious history of women in India and abroad.
- To remove the social evils related to women in the society.
- To eradicate the problem of gender bias in the society.
- To spread more comprehensive and balanced understanding of relation between both genders.
- To inculcate the good habit of giving honour to the women in the community.
- To make the students aware of their Constitutional rights and duties of Women.
- To enable women to select appropriate role with all grace .

Growth, Scope,