



FEMINIST MOVEMENTS IN INDIA: INTERSECTIONALITY, DEMOCRATIC POLITICS AND WOMEN'S AGENCY

Kapil Sarkar

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Author Details:

Ph.D. Research Scholar in Political Science, Department of Economics & Politics, Vidya Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University (A Central University & An Institution of National Importance), Santiniketan, Birbhum, West Bengal, India

Corresponding Author:

Kapil Sarkar

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.70096/tssr.260402006>

Abstract

Feminist movements in India constitute a historically layered and politically dynamic trajectory shaped by colonial modernity, anti-caste struggles, nationalist mobilization, constitutional democracy, neoliberal restructuring, and contemporary identity-based activism. Emerging in the nineteenth century through reform initiatives led by figures such as Savitribai Phule and Raja Rammohan Roy, early feminist articulations centered on women's education, widow remarriage, and resistance to child marriage, embedding gender reform within debates on civilizational identity and colonial rule. During the anti-colonial movement, women's participation expanded under leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, yet symbolic constructions of femininity often limited substantive autonomy. The adoption of the Constitution under the intellectual leadership of B. R. Ambedkar institutionalized universal adult franchise and formal equality, but entrenched patriarchy, caste hierarchies, and economic dependency exposed the limits of legal guarantees. The post-1970s resurgence of autonomous women's movements, especially around custodial rape, dowry deaths, and domestic violence, marked a shift toward grassroots activism and structural critiques of gendered power. Indian feminism subsequently embraced intersectionality drawing on insights associated with Kimberle Crenshaw while grounding them in subcontinental realities shaped by caste, religion, region, and sexuality. Dalit feminist thinkers such as Bama highlighted caste patriarchy's specific violences, challenging upper-caste dominance within mainstream feminism. Democratic decentralization through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments expanded women's participation in local governance, while neoliberal reforms generated both professional opportunities and intensified precarity, prompting feminist critiques of informalization and unpaid care work. Mass mobilizations following the 2012 Delhi gang rape and digital campaigns like MeToo further redefined feminist politics around bodily autonomy, accountability, and public citizenship. Overall, Indian feminism operates as a plural and dialogic field reformist, radical, socialist, anti-caste, and queer continually negotiating tensions between cultural autonomy and gender justice. By leveraging courts, legislatures, protest, and digital spaces, feminist movements have deepened democracy, demonstrating that political equality remains incomplete without social and gender justice in a heterogeneous constitutional order.

Keywords: *Gender Justice; Intersectional Politics; Democratic Participation; Caste and Patriarchy; Women's Empowerment*

Introduction

Feminist movements in India must be approached not as a single ideological stream but as a historically layered and politically evolving field of contestation shaped by the subcontinent's dense entanglements of caste hierarchy, religious plurality, colonial governance, agrarian social relations, and postcolonial state formation. From the nineteenth-century reform interventions of Savitribai Phule who framed girls' education as a radical challenge to Brahmanical patriarchy to the constitutional imagination of B. R. Ambedkar, who warned that political democracy would remain hollow without social democracy, feminist politics in India has been inseparable from the struggle against graded inequality. Rather than unfolding in neatly demarcated "waves," Indian feminism has simultaneously pursued reformist and radical strategies, engaging courts, legislatures, trade unions, and universities while sustaining grassroots mobilizations in villages, urban neighborhoods, and marginalized communities. Legal transformations in family law, anti-violence frameworks, and workplace protections have rarely been gifts from above; they have emerged from persistent agitation, public deliberation, and collective protest. Central to this history is the recognition that gender oppression is co-constituted by caste, class, religion, region, and ethnicity, producing differentiated experiences among Dalit agricultural laborers, Adivasi forest dwellers, Muslim artisans, migrant workers, and urban professionals. This heterogeneity has

compelled feminist theorizing to foreground intersectionality, refusing homogenized narratives of “Indian womanhood” and instead situating citizenship within everyday structures of power and exclusion.

At the same time, feminist movements have expanded the normative boundaries of democracy by insisting that electoral participation alone cannot secure substantive equality; meaningful democracy requires accountability in everyday governance, redistribution of resources, and transformation of social norms. The institutionalization of women’s political participation through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments particularly within Panchayati Raj institutions has altered not only policy priorities but also the symbolic architecture of authority in rural and urban India, even as structural constraints persist. Post-1991 economic liberalization has further complicated feminist agendas, generating new opportunities in education and service sectors while intensifying informalization, precarity, and the unequal burden of unpaid care work. Contemporary mobilizations energized by digital platforms yet vulnerable to online harassment demonstrate how technological change simultaneously democratizes and destabilizes public discourse. Across struggles over sexuality, bodily autonomy, environmental justice, disability rights, and communal harmony, Indian feminism continues to challenge both state paternalism and market-driven exclusion, articulating an expansive vision of democracy that is participatory, redistributive, and attentive to structural injustice. In this sense, the trajectory of feminist movements in India illuminates not only the politics of gender but also the ongoing reconstruction of public ethics and collective futures within a plural, deeply stratified republic.

Historical Phases of Feminist Movements in India

The historical phases of feminist movements in India reveal a complex and non-linear evolution shaped by shifting political regimes, social hierarchies, and ideological debates, beginning in the nineteenth century with reformist interventions that sought to confront entrenched patriarchal customs within a colonial framework and gradually expanding into diverse, intersectional, and democratically embedded struggles in the contemporary era; the earliest phase emerged within the milieu of social and religious reform movements, where figures such as Raja Rammohan Roy campaigned against sati and advocated women’s rights to dignity, while Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar championed widow remarriage and female education, and Savitribai Phule pioneered schools for girls and lower-caste communities, thereby linking gender emancipation with anti-caste critique; this reformist phase, though often led by male elites and shaped by colonial discourses of modernity, opened new public spaces for women’s education and social participation, laying the intellectual foundations for subsequent feminist consciousness; the second phase unfolded during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as women began organizing themselves through associations and conferences, culminating in the formation of bodies such as the All India Women’s Conference, which advocated legal reform, suffrage, and educational expansion, signaling a transition from male-led reform to women’s collective articulation of rights; the nationalist movement constituted another critical phase, as leaders including Mahatma Gandhi mobilized women in mass civil disobedience campaigns, salt satyagrahas, and boycotts, transforming them into visible participants in anti-colonial politics while simultaneously framing their participation within ideals of sacrifice and moral virtue, thus generating both empowerment and ideological constraint; with independence in 1947 and the framing of the Constitution under the leadership of Babasaheb B. R. Ambedkar, a new phase emerged characterized by formal political equality through universal adult franchise and constitutional guarantees of non-discrimination, alongside legislative reforms such as the Hindu Code Bills that sought to modernize family law, yet this post-independence period also revealed the limits of legal reform in altering deeply rooted social practices, as personal laws, property rights disparities, and cultural norms continued to restrict women’s substantive equality; the 1970s marked a decisive turning point with the rise of autonomous women’s movements that operated independently of political parties and state patronage, catalyzed by incidents such as custodial rape cases and rising dowry deaths, which spurred nationwide protests demanding amendments to rape laws and criminal justice procedures, thereby reframing violence against women as a structural issue rather than isolated misconduct; this period also witnessed feminist engagement with labor struggles, land rights campaigns, and anti-price rise movements, connecting gender concerns with broader socio-economic injustices and highlighting the role of women in informal and agrarian economies; during the 1980s and 1990s, feminist politics diversified further in response to communal tensions, environmental crises, and debates over personal law, with activists participating in anti-arrack movements in Andhra Pradesh, environmental protests such as the Chipko movement, and advocacy surrounding cases that tested the balance between minority rights and gender justice, reflecting a growing recognition that feminist struggles were inseparable from secularism, ecological sustainability, and social equity; the liberalization era beginning in the 1990s introduced new dynamics as economic reforms reshaped labor markets, education systems, and urbanization patterns, creating opportunities for middle-class professional women while intensifying precarity for informal workers, domestic laborers, and rural women, thereby prompting feminist economists and activists to interrogate neoliberal development models and advocate social protection measures; a significant institutional milestone occurred with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which mandated reservations for women in local self-government bodies, ushering millions of women into Panchayati Raj institutions and municipal councils, fundamentally altering the landscape of grassroots governance and demonstrating the transformative potential of affirmative action within democratic frameworks; in the twenty-first century, feminist movements entered a new phase characterized by digital activism, transnational solidarity, and heightened visibility around issues of sexual harassment, bodily autonomy, and gender-based violence, particularly following mass protests after the 2012 Delhi gang rape, which catalyzed legal reforms and renewed public discourse on consent and accountability, and later through the resonance of global campaigns like #MeToo within Indian contexts, exposing hierarchies in media, academia, and politics; simultaneously, intersectional critiques gained prominence, as Dalit, Adivasi, queer, and minority women articulated the distinctiveness of their experiences, challenging mainstream feminist narratives to confront caste oppression, communal marginalization, and

heteronormativity; thus, across these historical phases from reformist beginnings and nationalist mobilization to constitutionalism, autonomous activism, neoliberal contestation, grassroots democratization, and digital-era intersectionality feminist movements in India have continuously adapted to shifting political and socio-economic contexts while expanding the scope of gender justice, demonstrating that the history of Indian feminism is not a linear progression but a layered and dialogic process through which women have asserted agency, contested structures of domination, and reshaped the contours of democratic life.

Intersectionality in the Indian Context

Intersectionality in the Indian context is not merely a theoretical import but an indispensable analytical and political framework for understanding how gender oppression operates within a society structured by deeply entrenched hierarchies of caste, class, religion, ethnicity, region, language, disability, and sexuality, where women's experiences cannot be homogenized into a singular category of "womanhood" without erasing the differentiated realities produced by India's social stratification; while the term intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw to explain how race and gender interact within legal systems, its resonance in India lies in the recognition that caste patriarchy, communal politics, agrarian relations, and labor precarity profoundly shape the lived experiences of women, often determining access to land, education, mobility, bodily integrity, and political voice; Dalit feminism, for instance, has forcefully challenged upper-caste dominated feminist discourse by foregrounding how caste-based sexual violence operates as a mechanism of social control, where the bodies of Dalit women become sites through which caste supremacy is asserted and maintained, and writers such as Bama have illuminated how everyday humiliation, labor exploitation, and exclusion from temple and community spaces intersect with gendered subordination, thereby exposing the inadequacy of frameworks that address patriarchy without confronting Brahmanical dominance; similarly, Adivasi women's struggles around forest rights, displacement, and extractive development demonstrate that gender justice cannot be disentangled from questions of land sovereignty and ecological survival, as development-induced displacement disproportionately affects tribal women's livelihoods and community networks, revealing how state-led economic policies intersect with gender and indigeneity; religious identity further complicates feminist politics, particularly in a plural society where personal laws governing marriage, divorce, and inheritance vary across communities, creating tensions between the pursuit of gender equality and the protection of minority rights, and Muslim women's movements have articulated nuanced positions that demand reform within community frameworks while resisting Islamophobic narratives that instrumentalize gender for majoritarian agendas; class stratification also deeply mediates women's agency, as urban middle-class women may confront glass ceilings in corporate or academic spaces while rural landless women grapple with wage discrimination, bonded labor, and limited access to healthcare, and feminist economists have shown that unpaid care work, predominantly performed by poor and lower-caste women, subsidizes both household survival and national economic growth, thereby linking gender justice with redistributive economic policies; sexuality and gender identity constitute another critical axis of intersection, as queer and trans women navigate stigma not only from heteronormative social norms but also from caste and community structures that regulate marriage and kinship, and the decriminalization of homosexuality has underscored the importance of integrating LGBTQ+ perspectives within broader feminist agendas; regional disparities—between metropolitan centers and peripheral states, conflict zones and relatively stable regions further shape how women experience state power, militarization, and mobility restrictions, illustrating that intersectionality in India must also account for geopolitical and linguistic diversity; importantly, intersectionality in the Indian context is not confined to academic discourse but has informed grassroots organizing, where coalitions between anti-caste movements, labor unions, environmental groups, disability rights activists, and queer collectives have sought to build solidarities across difference while acknowledging asymmetries of privilege within feminist spaces themselves; this framework also compels a rethinking of legal and policy interventions, since uniform solutions may fail to address structural inequalities that operate differently across communities, and it highlights the need for participatory governance mechanisms that amplify marginalized women's voices rather than speaking on their behalf; moreover, intersectionality challenges dominant narratives of empowerment that equate agency solely with professional success or formal political representation, emphasizing instead that agency may manifest in collective resistance, community survival strategies, cultural production, and everyday negotiations with power; by centering multiplicity rather than singularity, intersectionality in India reveals that the struggle for gender justice is inseparable from the dismantling of caste hierarchies, communal polarization, economic exploitation, and heteronormative regulation, and thus transforms feminism into a broader emancipatory project that seeks not only equal treatment within existing structures but also the restructuring of those very institutions that reproduce layered forms of subordination, making intersectional analysis essential to understanding both the challenges and transformative possibilities of feminist politics in contemporary India.

Feminist Movements and Democratic Politics

The relationship between feminist movements and democratic politics in India is best understood as a dynamic and reciprocal process in which women's struggles have both shaped and been shaped by the institutions, practices, and contradictions of constitutional democracy, revealing that gender justice is not an external supplement to democratic life but one of its constitutive foundations; from the moment India adopted universal adult franchise an achievement deeply influenced by the egalitarian vision of Babasaheb B. R. Ambedkar women were formally recognized as equal political citizens, yet feminist movements quickly exposed the gap between formal political equality and substantive social transformation, demonstrating that electoral inclusion does not automatically dismantle patriarchal norms embedded in family, community, market, and state structures; in the decades following independence, feminist engagement with democratic politics unfolded along multiple axes, including legislative reform, judicial activism, grassroots mobilization, and participation in party politics, thereby illustrating the plural strategies

through which women have sought to democratize power relations; early legal reforms concerning marriage, inheritance, and guardianship signaled the state's willingness to codify gender equality within certain domains, yet feminist critiques highlighted the uneven application of these reforms across religious communities and the persistence of personal laws that often subordinated women's autonomy to patriarchal authority, underscoring how democratic politics in a plural society must navigate tensions between secular equality and cultural rights; the resurgence of autonomous women's movements in the 1970s marked a turning point, as activists mobilized outside formal party structures to protest custodial rape, dowry deaths, and domestic violence, reframing these issues as political rather than private and compelling the state to amend criminal laws and procedural safeguards, thus demonstrating the capacity of protest politics to influence legislative change within democratic frameworks; this period also revealed the importance of public deliberation, media visibility, and coalition-building in transforming gendered grievances into matters of national concern, thereby expanding the democratic public sphere itself; the institutionalization of women's political participation through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which mandated reservations for women in Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies, represents one of the most significant intersections of feminism and democratic reform, as millions of women entered local governance, altering the symbolic and practical dimensions of authority in rural and municipal contexts, and empirical studies have shown that women representatives often prioritize issues such as water access, health services, education, and welfare provisioning, thereby reshaping development agendas from below, even though challenges such as proxy representation, caste hierarchies, and limited financial autonomy persist; feminist engagement with electoral politics has also involved critical reflection on the underrepresentation of women in state legislatures and Parliament, prompting long-standing advocacy for women's reservation in higher legislative bodies and debates over whether descriptive representation can translate into substantive policy outcomes, particularly in a context where party hierarchies and patronage networks remain male-dominated; beyond formal institutions, feminist movements have played a crucial role in defending civil liberties, freedom of expression, and minority rights, especially during periods of communal tension or authoritarian drift, illustrating how gender justice movements often function as guardians of broader democratic norms; the mass protests following the 2012 Delhi gang rape exemplify how feminist mobilization can galvanize nationwide democratic participation, compelling the state to establish committees, revise criminal law, and engage in public dialogue about consent and accountability, while also revealing the limits of punitive reform in addressing structural violence; in the neoliberal era, feminist politics has confronted new democratic challenges, including the shrinking space for civil society, increased surveillance of non-governmental organizations, and the co-optation of empowerment rhetoric within market-driven development paradigms, necessitating innovative forms of organizing that combine legal advocacy with digital activism and transnational solidarity; digital platforms have expanded the democratic reach of feminist discourse, enabling campaigns against workplace harassment and public misogyny to gain visibility, yet they also expose activists to online abuse and coordinated disinformation, raising questions about the regulation of digital public spheres within a democratic polity; importantly, feminist movements have consistently insisted that democracy must extend beyond periodic elections to encompass everyday participation, accountability, and redistribution, arguing that without addressing unpaid care work, labor precarity, caste-based violence, and communal marginalization, political democracy remains hollow; this insistence resonates with Ambedkar's warning that political democracy cannot survive without social democracy, highlighting how feminist struggles contribute to the deepening rather than destabilization of democratic institutions; moreover, feminist movements have fostered participatory practices within their own organizational structures, experimenting with horizontal decision-making, collective leadership, and intersectional coalitions that prefigure alternative democratic imaginaries; at the same time, internal debates over NGO-ization, donor dependency, and representational legitimacy reveal the ongoing negotiation between grassroots accountability and institutional engagement, reflecting the broader tensions inherent in democratic politics; thus, the analytical significance of feminist movements in India lies not only in their specific policy achievements but in their broader redefinition of citizenship, sovereignty, and public ethics, as they challenge the masculinist assumptions that have historically structured political authority and insist that democracy must be measured by its capacity to secure bodily integrity, economic justice, and epistemic recognition for all women across caste, class, religion, and sexuality, making feminist politics both a transformative force within democratic institutions and a critical lens through which the health and depth of Indian democracy can be assessed.

Challenges and Backlash

Feminist movements in India, despite their transformative contributions to democratic deepening and gender justice, confront a complex landscape of challenges and backlash that arise from structural inequalities, ideological resistance, institutional constraints, and rapidly changing socio-political contexts, revealing that progress in women's rights often provokes counter-mobilizations seeking to reassert patriarchal authority and cultural control; one of the most persistent challenges lies in the resilience of caste patriarchy, where gender violence operates not only as individual misconduct but as a mechanism of maintaining social hierarchy, and Dalit, Adivasi, and other marginalized women frequently encounter systemic barriers in accessing justice due to local power structures, police complicity, and social stigma, thereby exposing the limits of legal reform in the absence of broader social transformation; communal polarization further complicates feminist advocacy, as debates over personal law, religious reform, and minority rights can become entangled in majoritarian politics, placing feminist actors in a precarious position where demands for gender equality risk being appropriated to justify Islamophobia or other exclusionary agendas, while simultaneously facing resistance from conservative religious authorities who frame reform as an attack on community identity; economic liberalization and neoliberal governance models present another dimension of challenge, as market-driven development has produced widening inequalities, informalization of labor, and the privatization of welfare services, disproportionately burdening women with unpaid care work and precarious employment, even as corporate and state

narratives celebrate selective stories of empowerment that privilege urban, middle-class success over structural redistribution; within institutional politics, the underrepresentation of women in higher legislative bodies and decision-making forums continues to limit substantive influence, and even where reservation policies have expanded participation at local levels, issues such as proxy leadership, lack of financial autonomy, and entrenched party hierarchies restrict transformative potential, underscoring the gap between numerical inclusion and genuine empowerment; feminist organizations themselves face constraints arising from shrinking civil society space, heightened regulatory scrutiny of non-governmental organizations, and the politicization of funding streams, which can curtail advocacy efforts and foster self-censorship, particularly in contexts where dissent is framed as anti-national or destabilizing; the digital sphere, while offering unprecedented opportunities for mobilization and solidarity, has simultaneously become a site of intense backlash, as women activists, journalists, and scholars are subjected to coordinated online harassment, doxxing, threats of sexual violence, and disinformation campaigns designed to intimidate and silence critical voices, thereby reproducing patriarchal control in new technological forms; cultural backlash also manifests in popular discourse that portrays feminism as alien, elitist, or antithetical to tradition, often invoking nationalist rhetoric to defend “authentic” gender roles and stigmatize women who challenge them, which not only delegitimizes feminist demands but also pressures women to conform to prescribed norms of respectability and domesticity; intersectional tensions within feminist spaces constitute an additional internal challenge, as differences of caste, class, sexuality, and region can produce disagreements over priorities, strategies, and representation, compelling movements to continually negotiate inclusivity and accountability in order to avoid reproducing the very hierarchies they seek to dismantle; generational divides further complicate organizing, with younger activists leveraging digital tools and transnational networks while older formations emphasize grassroots mobilization and institutional engagement, creating both productive dialogue and strategic friction; moreover, the persistence of gender-based violence including domestic abuse, honor killings, trafficking, and workplace harassment demonstrates that legislative reforms alone cannot eradicate deeply embedded social attitudes, and the criminal justice system’s delays, evidentiary burdens, and victim-blaming practices often discourage reporting, reinforcing cycles of silence; environmental crises and climate change add yet another layer of vulnerability, as women in agrarian and coastal communities face displacement, livelihood loss, and increased care responsibilities, while policy responses frequently overlook gendered impacts; collectively, these challenges and forms of backlash illustrate that feminist progress in India unfolds within a contested democratic terrain where gains are neither linear nor irreversible, and where each expansion of women’s agency can trigger efforts to reassert patriarchal, communal, or authoritarian control; nevertheless, the resilience of feminist movements manifest in their capacity to adapt strategies, forge cross-movement solidarities, and rearticulate demands in changing contexts suggests that backlash, while formidable, also testifies to the disruptive power of gender justice initiatives, affirming that the struggle for equality remains central to the ongoing negotiation of democracy, pluralism, and social transformation in contemporary India.

Conclusion

Feminist movements in India represent one of the most significant and enduring forces in the country’s democratic transformation, not merely as advocacy platforms for women’s rights but as expansive political projects that have continually redefined the meaning of equality, citizenship, justice, and participation within a deeply stratified and plural society; from the reformist interventions of the nineteenth century to contemporary intersectional and digital mobilizations, these movements have demonstrated that gender justice cannot be treated as a peripheral social issue but must be recognized as central to the ethical and institutional foundations of constitutional democracy, particularly in a nation where universal adult franchise and formal equality were instituted at independence under the visionary leadership of Babasaheb B. R. Ambedkar, yet where social hierarchies of caste, class, religion, and region continue to shape lived realities; feminist activism has consistently exposed the gap between constitutional promises and everyday experiences, compelling legislative reforms, judicial interventions, and policy innovations while also reshaping public discourse on violence, labor, representation, and bodily autonomy, thereby illustrating how social movements deepen democracy by holding institutions accountable to their normative commitments; at the same time, the evolution of intersectional frameworks within Indian feminism has underscored that women’s experiences are not uniform and that meaningful emancipation requires confronting caste patriarchy, communal marginalization, economic precarity, heteronormativity, and regional disparities simultaneously, transforming feminism into a broader emancipatory vision that seeks structural rather than merely symbolic change; the incorporation of women into local governance through constitutional amendments has altered the landscape of grassroots democracy, demonstrating that political participation can recalibrate developmental priorities and challenge entrenched authority, even as limitations of representation and persistent patriarchal resistance reveal that inclusion alone does not guarantee empowerment; moreover, contemporary feminist movements have navigated the ambivalences of globalization and digitalization, leveraging new technologies for mobilization and solidarity while confronting online harassment and ideological backlash, thus reflecting the adaptive capacity of feminist politics in an era marked by rapid socio-economic change and contested public spheres; crucially, feminist struggles have also contributed to the defense of broader democratic values freedom of expression, secularism, minority rights, and civil liberties particularly in moments of polarization and authoritarian drift, highlighting the interdependence between gender justice and democratic resilience; the challenges that persist, including gender-based violence, economic inequality, institutional inertia, and cultural resistance, do not diminish the transformative impact of feminist movements but rather underscore the unfinished nature of democratic deepening in India, reminding us that rights must be continually asserted, negotiated, and reimagined; ultimately, the trajectory of feminist movements in India affirms that democracy is not a static constitutional arrangement but a living process sustained by collective action, critical reflection, and inclusive participation, and that women’s agency expressed in protest, policymaking, scholarship, art, labor organizing, and everyday negotiation remains indispensable to the creation of a more just and egalitarian social order,

making the future of Indian democracy inseparable from the ongoing pursuit of intersectional gender justice and the persistent effort to transform formal equality into substantive freedom for all.

Acknowledgment: No

Author's Contribution: *Kapil Sarkar:* Data Collection, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis, Drafting, Referencing

Funding: No

Declaration: Not Applicable

Competing Interest: No

References

1. Agnes, F. (1999). *Law and Gender Inequality: The Politics of Women's Rights in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. pp. 23–45, 112–130.
2. Chandra, U. (2017). *Liberalism and Its Other: The Politics of Primitivism in India*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. pp. 98–120.
3. Chakravarti, U. (2003). *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens*. Kolkata: Stree. pp. 15–38, 89–110.
4. Crenshaw, K. (1991). "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), pp. 1241–1299.
5. Forbes, G. (1996). *Women in Modern India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 1–25, 134–160.
6. Jayal, N. (2006). *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. pp. 89–115.
7. Kabeer, N. (1999). "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment." *Development and Change*, 30(3), pp. 435–464.
8. Kumar, R. (1993). *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800–1990*. New Delhi: Kali for Women. pp. 54–78, 167–190.
9. Mazumdar, V. (1994). *Emerging from the Margin: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. pp. 15–40.
10. Menon, N. (2012). *Seeing Like a Feminist*. New Delhi: Zubaan. pp. 3–28, 105–140.
11. Rege, S. (2006). *Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonios*. New Delhi: Zubaan. pp. 1–32, 210–225.
12. Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York: Knopf. pp. 87–110, 189–203.
13. Omvedt, G (1994). *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*. New Delhi: Sage. pp. 145–170.

Publisher's Note

The Social Science Review A Multidisciplinary Journal remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published data, map and institutional affiliations.

©The Author(s) 2026. Open Access.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>