

Crossroads of Change: Women and the Making of Modern Identity

Dr. Kavitha K

Government First Grade College Devanahalli (Rural) Bangalore-562110

Abstract

In the epoch of global events such as World Wars, nuclear crises, space explorations and economic downturns, the evolution of modern values in response to historical crises and advancements, the societal cultures have adapted by prioritising principles like equality, freedom, feminism, and democracy as essential survival mechanisms. This highlights the idea that modernity as not a fixed concept but rather an evolving framework shaped by historical events. The phrase “ensuing new changes as the most intended forms of survival schemes” suggests that societies continuously adapt to challenges by embracing progressive values and reforms. These adaptations become essential strategies for survival in a rapidly changing world. The meaning of modernity constitutes various arrays by historical phenomena. It cannot be prematurely synthesised into a unified zeitgeist. In general, modernity arises out of sensibility articulating the existential tensions of the society, anxieties and doubts of the individuals, solitude and ambiguity of histories, anguish and torment of urban infernos, cultural and social transitions, and consumerian logics which are deliberately connected by the survival schemes of the modern world. Locating women’s role by the pressures of these survival schemes raises various complexities, formulating modernity as a source of interpretation in the modern world. In the evolving landscape of modern society, the concept of individuality has become increasingly significant for women. Individuality refers to the recognition of one’s unique identity, aspirations, and personal choices, free from societal constraints and expectations. Encouraging women to embrace their individuality without fear of judgment is a key aspect of empowerment. Balancing internalised misogyny promotes mutual support rather than competition, and women can collectively and confidently advance in nearer future. Future generations of women will feel empowered to pursue careers and lifestyles that align with their passions and values, without fear of judgment. The future will embrace the diversity of women’s ambitions and dreams. The future of women’s individuality holds incredible promise for the Nation’s development.

Keywords: Women, Identity, Modernity, Modernism, Challenges, Changes, Values, Survival Schemes, Individual Consciousness, Feminism, Women Education, Women Economic Status, Equality, Liberty and Independence, Awareness to Legal Rights, Policies and Reforms, Vision of Future Women etc.,

INTRODUCTION

The snow is melted, The snow is gone, And you are flown:
Like a bird out of our hand, Like a light out of our heart,
You are Gone.¹

The imagery lines symbolize the passing and fading of something once practiced. The repetition of

"gone" reinforces to captures the delicate, bittersweet nature of farewell and pave way for a new beginning. In the epoch of global events such as World Wars, nuclear crisis, space explorations and economic downturns, the evolution of modern values in response to historical crises and advancements the societal cultures have adapted by prioritizing principles like equality, freedom, feminism, and democracy as essential survival mechanisms. This highlights the idea that modernity as not a fixed concept but rather an evolving framework shaped by historical events. The phrase "ensuing new changes as the most intended forms of survival schemes" suggests that societies continuously adapt to challenges by embracing progressive values and reforms. These adaptations become essential strategies for survival in a rapidly changing world. The meaning of modernity constitutes various arrays by historical phenomena. It cannot be prematurely synthesized into a unified zeitgeist. In general, modernity arises out of sensibility articulating the existential tensions of the society, anxieties and doubts of the individuals, solitude and ambiguity of histories, anguish and torment of urban infernos, cultural and social transitions, and consumerian logics which are deliberately connected by the survival schemes of the modern world. Locating women's role by the pressures of these survival schemes arises various complexities, formulating modernity as a source of interpretation in the modern world. The liberation movement (1968-1976) transformed the lives of women, by the rights of equality. The 1980s lead towards the professional opportunities which greatly resulted by competitive challenges between the sexes. The challenges taken by women for victory are sometimes at the cost of either moral and ethical values. Therefore, acceptance for change required the awareness of women's self-consciousness for which feminism argues; modernism as a set of multiple-revolts against the traditional realism favoring cultural pragmatism in the society. **"Its preoccupations might include a commitment to paradox and ambiguity, a tendency towards aesthetic self-consciousness, zest for change, juxtapositions, or a kind of appeal towards the demise of the integrated cultural norms etc."**² These issues exposed greater impact on women identity in the changing landscapes of modernity. In the cultural and social contexts modern values mainly connects to the issues of; equality, freedom, feminism and democracy. Democracy is thought to be a modern concept of governance against rulers and kings of ancient times. Modernity gave rise to democracy, ending aristocracy and the imperialism of the royal powers by liberating many countries from centuries of the colonial rule. However, argued, women have certainly achieved liberal freedom and powers from that of the past but, how free are women intellectually and culturally? Can modernity free women or intend to coerce their liberty in new ways? In this context, significant reference of women's progressive structure and the growing tendency marks for revolution from 1970s to 90s. This article offers an assessment of the women's liberation movements particularly in America and other countries and its impact which assisted for required changes in women's identity by detailing its complexities based on democratic values. To trace these aspects, the evolution of women's individuality makes essential scrutiny for further analysis.

Voices Unbound: Modernity & Women's Assertive Individuality

The journey toward women's individuality has been a complex and transformative process, shaped by centuries of social, political, and cultural changes. Historically, women were often seen as secondary to men, with their identities tied to their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Their opportunities for education, employment, and decision-making were severely restricted, and societal norms dictated their behaviour, appearance, and aspirations. In many cultures, their primary responsibilities revolved around domestic duties, marriage, and child-rearing, with little recognition of their personal ambitions, desires,

or individuality. Traditionally, women's identities were largely defined by familial roles, societal expectations, and rigid gender norms. However, over time, women have challenged these limitations, carving out spaces for self-expression, independence, and personal growth. The rise of education, economic participation, and social movements, women gradually began to assert their individuality and economic independence. The feminist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries played a crucial role in challenging patriarchal structures, advocating for voting rights, property ownership, and access to education and employment. This period marked the beginning of a shift where women started gaining legal and social recognition as individuals with their own voices and aspirations. The late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed even greater progress, fuelled by technological advancements, globalization, and changing societal attitudes. Women now have greater opportunities in fields once dominated by men, including politics, business, science, and the arts. Additionally, the digital age has provided platforms for self-expression, enabling women to share their stories, advocate for their rights, and redefine societal standards on their own terms. Despite these advancements, challenges persist, as cultural traditions, gender biases, and institutional barriers continue to hinder full individuality for many women across the world. Nevertheless, as awareness grows and support systems strengthen, the evolution of women's individuality continues to progress, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society where every woman is empowered to embrace her true self.

The term modernity indicates change of social, cultural, political and economic structures. To observe the complexities arisen regarding women's issues acknowledges that; **"The 'character (istics) of modernity' is to make "a process of rationalization and disenchantment."**³ However, the democratic values which has relevance in attributing **rationalization** to each and every issue, yet, women's issues has always been significantly disenchantment. Lawrence Cahoon argues: **"The democratic government claim(s) to be the essence of modern politics."**⁴ The causes for such disenchantment mainly owe or embrace the modern values of the radical conceptions. The radical democratic vision centralizes the role of women power. This gained revolutionary ideas for the social changes. The radical strategies fostering critical thinking and collective action (workshops conducted elevating women's consciousness) reinforced the modern values which deplored its struggle against unethical issues. It has been seen that for the first time, the American government took affirmative action to activate women's rights of liberty proceeded by the protest against the Miss America pageant started from 1970s. Feminists staged a sit-in at the Ladies Home Journal. In addition, they held speak outs about topics such as; rape, abortion and pornography. These issues were taken seriously for restorative consolidations. Radical feminism aimed to challenge and overthrows patriarchy. Their voice reordered the society. The closing decades of the twentieth century emphasized feminist's agitation increasingly fighting the conflicts of power and sexuality. Shulamith Firestone, Ti- Grace Atkinson, Carol Hanisch, Kate Millett, Germaine Greer etc campaigned for women's liberty. They placed the issues of sexuality firmly on the political agenda. In this regard, the radical feminism gave strong voices for women empowerment and laid a strong zeal for women individuality. **"Literary culture was highly conscious of the raise of "New Woman" concept."**⁵

Radical or the liberation movement embraces not of women lives, but the conceptualized gaze by variety of assortment concerning how far women's consciousness can go in comparison with Modernism. Modernity sometimes represents its values being misunderstood and also misleading of women's actualized progression. However, modern values remain very much consistent favoring freedom of democracy without contradiction; yet, the conflicts with the sexes firmly delineate the boundaries.

Women in such conditions commit themselves to rigid categories with identity crisis. They confronted competitive internal disputes among the sexes. Women impugning to the new changes caused critical repression of the traditional values. “Women who dare to balance traditional expectations with modern aspirations faced harsh repression and their defiance led to consequences in multiple aspects of their lives. Modernity has played a crucial role in reshaping societal structures, leading to greater freedom, autonomy, and opportunities for women. The intersection of education, legal rights, technology, and globalization has empowered women to assert their individuality and challenge traditional constraints. Literature, religious texts, and legal codes reinforced these roles, making it difficult for women to assert their individuality. However, history has also seen strong, resilient women who resisted these norms. Figures such as Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, and Rani Lakshmibai defied societal expectations and showcased leadership, intelligence, and bravery. Their stories, though often overshadowed, serve as early examples of women asserting their identities beyond traditional roles. From sixteenth century to the twentieth century, we have been using the term modernity for all possible changes taking place in literature, society, tradition, and culture. For instance, Euripides’s Medea the ancient Greek play was arguably a modern play. **“Modernity comprises interlocking the institutional, cultural, and philosophical strands which emerged at different times often defined as ‘modern’.”**⁶ By historical perspectives the cultural rupture has been marked as **relativism**⁷ arising out of **“stability, coherence, and discipline...world mastery of development.”**⁸ According to this notion, the mid-twentieth century noticed stable outlook of developments emphasizing on women’s education, emancipation, independence, and self-assertiveness. As awareness grew, more efforts were made to create environments where women can fully embrace their individuality. Education, policy changes, and representation in leadership continue to play a crucial role. The movement towards gender equality is no longer just about rights—it’s about recognizing and celebrating the unique identities, talents, and aspirations of every woman. Empowerment is a process that enables individuals to recognize their own strength, autonomy, and potentiality. It involves self-realization, education, access to opportunities, and collective support.

Bridging Modernity and Feminist Revolutions

The nature of modernity refers to new consciousness defined as; **“a fresh condition of the human mind.”**⁹ Women’s position with a fresh credo illustrating “personal is political” started in 70s made new philosophy in the political agenda. The practice of cultural values in the social condition pertaining new changes constitutes **“the belief that personal problems result from unfair treatment.”**¹⁰ Modernity neglects traditional and conservative ideals rather than glorifying reason-based on thinking capability. It is true that modernity ridicules conservative notions and claims to champion for change. In this regard, modernity helps to increase the role of rationality in the public sphere. The paradox of modernity revolving through novels of the modern writers: Judith Krantz’s Princess Daisy (1980), Collen McCullough’s An Indecent Obsession (1981), Cythia Freeman’s No Time For Tears (1981), Danielle Steel’s Changes (1983), Barbara Taylor Bradford’s To be the Best (1988), Tom Clancy’s Clear and Present Danger (1989,) and Sidney Sheldon’s novels demandingly explored the women characters with empowered voices. These novels seeking the concept of modern woman shows women struggle in pursuit of success contemplating the competitive world of success. They represent women as courageous and expose them almost, to forget about the tears which were once the only way of showing their impudence to their problems. They were shown undeniably intelligent, finding solutions for their

problems in meaningful ways. Feminists like Rita Felski, Susan Heckman, Ellen Rooney observed that modernity involves a rational autonomous subject of women as **“a unitary conception of truth.”**¹¹ Susan Hekman’s views on Nietzsche, to unite feminism and modernism, finds; **“the meaning of truth itself is woman.”**¹² Hekman discards Nietzsche’s insight on truth and rationality conceived by masculine modes; for opposing women as alien to such adaptability. In fact, Hekman finds Nietzsche’s attitude towards the truth of rational claim women’s **“pursuit exclusively demands masculinity...”**¹³ therefore, Hekman point of view defines **“Feminism indeed is an operation by which women want to come to resemble man, the philosophical dogmatist who insist on truth, science, objectivity-together with the whole virile illusion, the whole castration effect that goes with it.”**¹⁴

In the evolving landscape of modern society, the concept of individuality has become increasingly significant for women. Individuality refers to the recognition of one’s unique identity, aspirations, and personal choices, free from societal constraints and expectations. Throughout history, women have often been defined by traditional roles, cultural norms, and collective identities imposed upon them. However, with the rise of education, economic independence, and social awareness, women today are embracing their individuality like never before. The transformation is evident across various spheres—personal, professional, and social—where women are challenging stereotypes, redefining success, and asserting their autonomy. Movements advocating gender equality, media representation, and digital platforms have further amplified their voices, enabling self-expression and self-awareness on a global scale. Yet, despite these advancements, many challenges persist, including societal pressures, cultural barriers, and institutional biases that attempt to limit a woman’s personal growth and freedom. This discussion explores how modern society has influenced women’s awareness of their individuality, the struggles they continue to face, and the empowerment that comes from self-acceptance and self-expression. By breaking free from restrictive norms, women are not only shaping their own lives but also paving the way for future generations to thrive in a world that values and respect individual identity.

Women in Leadership and Breaking Stereotypes

Historically, women were denied access to education in many societies. However, increased literacy rates and higher education opportunities have allowed women to gain independence and break traditional limitations. Education is one of the most powerful tools for women’s empowerment. It provides knowledge, critical thinking skills, and economic independence, enabling women to make informed decisions about their lives. Educated women are more likely to enter the workforce, achieve financial stability, and support themselves without relying on traditional gender roles. Education spreads awareness about legal rights, social justice, and gender equality, empowering women to challenge discrimination and demand fairness in workplaces, homes, and institutions. Despite these advancements, many women still face barriers to education due to poverty, cultural restrictions, or gender bias. Increasing access to education worldwide remains a priority in promoting women's individuality and empowerment. In the modern era, social media has become a powerful tool for women's empowerment. It provides a platform for self-expression, activism, and awareness-building on a global scale. Platforms to amplify Women’s Voice like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube allows them to share their stories, advocate for change, and challenge oppressive norms. Many women have used digital platforms to start businesses, establish personal brands, and gain financial independence through online ventures. While social media empowers women, it also comes with challenges such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and unrealistic beauty standards. Awareness and digital literacy are crucial in ensuring that women use

these platforms safely and effectively.

Awareness about leadership opportunities has encouraged more women to step into influential roles, challenging long-standing gender biases in politics, business, and society. Women Political figures like Harris, Jacinda Ardern, and Angela Merkel have demonstrated that women can lead nations and influence global policies. Their leadership has inspired many to pursue politics and governance. The rise of female CEOs and entrepreneurs has broken stereotypes about women's roles in business. Awareness about gender diversity in workplaces has led to more inclusive hiring practices. Women like Serena Williams (tennis), Simone Biles (gymnastics), and Malala Yousafzai (activism) have shown that women can dominate fields traditionally dominated by men. Despite progress, challenges like the gender pay gap, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and societal biases still exist. Raising awareness and advocating for equal opportunities will continue to shape a more inclusive future. More awareness about self-care, therapy, and emotional well-being is needed. Art, literature, fashion, and other creative fields allow women to express themselves uniquely and redefine femininity on their own terms. Encouraging women to embrace their individuality without fear of judgment is a key aspect of empowerment. Balancing internalized misogyny promotes mutual support rather than competition, women can collectively and confidently advance in nearer future. Future generations of women will feel empowered to pursue careers and lifestyles that align with their passions and values, without fear of judgment. The future will embrace the diversity of women's ambitions and dreams. The future of women's individuality holds incredible promise to the Nation's development.

Policy Reforms and Legal Changes: Ensuring Equal Opportunities

For women's individuality to be fully realized, systemic changes are needed to ensure equal access to opportunities, protection against discrimination, and the eradication of harmful practices. Governments around the world will continue to implement policies that promote gender equality in various sectors, including education, employment, healthcare, and politics. Laws prohibiting workplace discrimination, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and human trafficking will be strengthened and more rigorously enforced. Ensuring that all women, regardless of their background, have access to education and healthcare. Efforts will intensify to close the gender pay gap and increase female representation in decision-making roles. Governments, businesses, and organizations will be held accountable for ensuring that women have equal access to leadership positions, and that they are compensated fairly for their contributions. Technology has the power to further amplify women's voices and enable them to achieve their full potential. The future of women's individuality will be significantly influenced by the rise of digital tools, artificial intelligence, and the increasing connectivity of the world. As the digital divide narrows, more women will have access to technology and digital tools. Digital literacy will empower women to engage in online entrepreneurship, education, activism, and creative expression. Women will be able to access platforms that provide a global audience for their ideas, businesses, and talents. Social-media will continue to serve as a platform for raising awareness about gender inequality, social justice issues, and personal empowerment. The tech industry, historically dominated by men, will increasingly be shaped by women as they enter fields like artificial intelligence, data science, and cybersecurity. As more women join the workforce in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, they will be instrumental in shaping the future of technology and creating innovative solutions to global challenges.

The future of women's individuality will be increasingly defined by an understanding and acceptance of

intersectionality—the interconnected nature of social categories like race, class, gender, and sexuality. The feminist movement will continue to be reshaped by an inclusive, intersectional approach that acknowledges and addresses the unique challenges faced by women from different backgrounds. Media representation will become more diverse, with an increasing focus on portraying women from different ethnicities, cultures, abilities, and experiences. This will create space for women to see themselves reflected in ways that resonate with their own identities, empowering them to embrace their individuality and defy limiting stereotypes. A global solidarity will be the future vision of women empowerment ensuring a deeper societal recognition, increased opportunity, and unrelenting advocacy for gender equality. The future of women's individuality is shaped by the ongoing progress in gender equality, technological advancements, and evolving social attitudes. As societies continue to challenge traditional norms and create more inclusive environments, women are gaining more opportunities to embrace their unique identities, ambitions, and aspirations. However, the journey is far from complete. While significant progress has been made, new challenges and emerging trends will influence how women's individuality is perceived and expressed in the coming decades.

Conclusion: A Future of Unapologetic Individuality

The future of women's individuality is bright and promising. As society becomes more progressive, women will have even more freedom to define their identities on their own terms. Whether through education, technology, workplace advancements, cultural shifts, or legal protections, the path to greater individuality is being paved. The key to sustaining this progress lies in continuous awareness, collective action, and a commitment to inclusivity. By embracing diverse identities, supporting one another, and advocating for necessary changes, women will continue to break barriers and redefine what it means to be an individual in the modern world. In the years to come, the message will be clear: Women will no longer ask for permission to be themselves. They will own their identities, their choices, and their futures with confidence and strength.

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