

# RELIGIOSITY AND CONSERVATISM INFLUENCING WOMEN'S DESIRE FOR SOCIAL FREEDOM

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**Abstract:** -Freedom, generally, is having the ability to act or change without any constraint. Something is “free” if it can change easily and is not constrained in its present. There are many types of freedom. One among them is social freedom. It simply meant there is pressure or restrictions from the social institution as well as other social organizations. We feel free to behave without any fear or favour. Our all behaviour in society is not free; we have a lot of inhibitions and restrictions, that affect our personality.

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The idea of social freedom can be traced back to the writings regarding individual and social freedom by Mill [1907], ‘On Social Freedom’ In this, Mill discussed the importance and inevitability of restrictions on individual freedom, that rises out of our living in the social sphere. According to John Locke,—

**“We are born into perfect freedom, We are naturally free. We are free to do what we want, within the bounds of the law of nature.”<sup>1</sup>**

For Thomas Hobbes, freedom consist of unimpeded power. To quote him—

**“In a social context, a free man is he, that in the things. Which by his strength and wit he is able to do is not hindered to do what he has a will to do.”<sup>2</sup>**

Further, M. Wertheimer gave two concepts—non-predicative social freedom and predicative social freedom her better understanding According to him,—

**“Social freedom is the absence of social constraints or interference with actions or potential actions.”<sup>3</sup>**

Here, he refers to the absence of social constraints or interference imposed by person and not those constraints, that may be natural, physical, biological or psychic.

K. Kristjansson defined in a different way. According to him,—

**“Social freedom is the responsibility view of freedom.”<sup>4</sup>**

According to this view, an obstacle can be considered as a constraint on someone’s freedom only if, there exists another agent, who is morally responsible for the existence of the obstacle.

Kolm explained that social freedom exists in the society, where no individual is forced for anything by the

other individuals, groups or institutions. Individuals can interfere or intervene but in a non-forceful ways followed by voluntary exchanges and agreements. S. Walch defined it in a different way. To quote him—

**“Social freedom is the freedom to choose and act with and through other members of community.”<sup>5</sup>**

Hence, it is concluded that social freedom is the freedom of choice without any discrimination based on race, caste or class.

With the rapid growth in education and vocational opportunities women throughout the world have become conscious of their rights, justice and freedom and as such they have revolted against the conventional norms and values. The conscious women are not prepared to accept either an inferior role or less wage than their male counterparts. They demand equality in true sense of the terms in all spheres of life. One vital component of the present study is women’s desire for social freedom, which refers to women’s desire to be free from social taboo, conventions, rituals and rule, that provide them with lower status, as compared to their male counterparts at least in Indian society. For centuries women have been treated weak, shy and timid partner of men and they have been forced to enjoy an inferior status in the society. In recent years, desire for social freedom among women has manifested itself in protest and revolt against the traditional social and moral values, which place them in inferior roles and status as compared in their male counterparts. In the Indian context, women’s desire for social freedom is manifested in more explicit forms.

Several investigations have shown that in recent years roles, functions and status of Indian women have undergone some remarkable changes. To quote Neera Desai and Promila Kapoor respectively in this regard—

**“Now women is no longer, locked upon as a child bearing machine and a helot in the home. She has acquired a new status and a new social structure.”<sup>6</sup>**

**“..... The changed socio economic conditions, particularly after independence have widened opportunities for women’s education and have provided them with new avenues to express and assert their equality.”<sup>7</sup>**

Another component of this research work is religiosity. The term is first used in 1799. According to Merriam Webster—

**“The quality or state being religious is called religiosity.”<sup>8</sup>**

Cambridge Dictionary gives another definition. To quote—

**“The quality of being very or too religious, or reminding you of religious behaviour, often in a way, that is annoying is called religiosity.”<sup>9</sup>**

According to Oxford Dictionary, the definition of it matches something to that of Merriam Webster. To quote—

**“Strong religious feeling or belief is called religiosity.”<sup>10</sup>**

Thus, religiosity refers to the religious faith held by the people belonging to different groups and communities. India has been a very fertile soil for germinating growth and preservation of religiosity.

Several studies have been conducted in India and abroad relating to religiosity and conservatism. Sonam (2009) found cultural affiliation is significantly related to conservatism. Anita (2009) found conservatism significantly influencing the ego-strength and religiosity. Kumari and Kumar (2007) found that working and home making women differ significantly in terms of personality factors including conservatism. Rasmi (2009) reported that depression is influenced by caste prejudice, religiosity, SES and sex. Thus, we find that several Indian studies have been carried out relating to the variables under study but they are not direct. So, undertaking the problem is justified and narrated.

### **Objectives : The Study Intends**

1. to ascertain examine whether religiosity is significantly related to women’s desire for social freedom.

2. to examine the effect of conservatism on women’s desire for social freedom.

### **Hypotheses—**

1. Women’s religiosity would have significant differential effect on social freedom regardless of other factors.

2. Conservatism would have significant differential effect on women’s desire for social freedom irrespective of other factors.

### **Method of Study—**

(a) Design— Between comparable group design was used. Desire for social freedom was the sole dependent variable. The religiosity and conservatism were the independent variables.

(b) Tools used—

(1) A PDS was used to seek the necessary information about the respondents.

(2) Bhushan’s Women’s Desire for Social Freedom was used to measure women’s desire for social freedom.

(3) The Religiosity Scale by Singh and Prasad was used to measure religiosity of the respondents.

(4) Mohsin’s C-Scale was used to measure conservatism of the respondents.

### **Results**

#### **Table-01**

Mean, SD and ‘t’-Value showing the significance of difference between the high religiosity group and the low religiosity group of the working women in terms of their desire for social freedom.

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Subject	N	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	p
High Religiosity Group	100	13.11	6.17	.62	6.21	238	<.01
Low Religiosity Group	140	18.45	7.05	.60			

The results displayed in Table - 01 clearly indicated the significant effect of religiosity on women’s desire for social freedom in the case of working women. The low religiosity group of working women have shown more desire for social freedom (Mean = 16.45) than high religiosity group of working women (Mean = 13.11). The difference between the two means is found significant (t = 6.21; df = 238; p < .01). Thus, the hypothesis 4. (i) is retained in respect of the effect of religiosity on social freedom in case of working women. The finding is interpreted in terms of more liberal views regarding religious traditions, norms and values

prevailing in the community to which he/she belongs. The more religious women were found with more superstitions, close mindedness and conservatism than their counterparts belonging to non-religious group or less religious group.

**Table-02**

**Mean, SD and ‘t’- value showing the significance of difference between the high religiosity group and the low religiosity group of the home making women in terms of their desire for social freedom.**

Subjects	N	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	p
High Religiosity Group	190	12.11	5.97	.43	4.95	238	<.01
Low Religiosity Group	50	15.87	4.42	.62			

The results displayed in Table-02 clearly indicated the significant effect of religiosity on women’s desire for social freedom in the case of non-working women. The low religiosity group of working women showed superiority in social freedom over their counterparts belonging to high religiosity group of respondents. The difference between the two means is found significant (t = 4.95; df = 238; p < .01).

Thus, the finding relating to home making women is consistent with those relating to working women. Ground of the interpretation of the finding remained the same as mentioned in case of working women.

**Table-03**

**Mean, SD and ‘t’- value showing the significance of difference between conservative and liberal groups of the working women in terms of desire for social freedom.**

Subject	N	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	p
Conservative	60	11.71	5.54	.72	6.44	238	<.01
Liberal	180	17.38	0.82	.54			

From the results displayed in table-03 given above it is clear that liberal group of working women (Mean = 17.38) showed superiority over conservative group of working women (Mean = 11.71) in respect of desire for social freedom. The difference between the means is found significant beyond 0.01 level of confidence (t = 6.44; dt = 238, <.01). Thus, hypothesis No. 2. (i) relating to the effect

of conservatism on the desire for social freedom in the case of working women is confirmed. The superiority of liberal group of working women over conservative group of working women might be interpressed on the ground of better ego-strength, better self-concept on the part of liberal respondents than conservative response leading to have

stronger desire for social freedom in liberal respondents than conservative respondents.

**Table-04**

**Mean, SD and 't'- value showing the significance of difference between conservative and liberal groups of home making women in terms of social freedom.**

Subject	N	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	p
Conservative	168	13.53	6.07	.47	4.24	238	<.01
Liberal	72	16.67	4.96	.58			

From the results displayed in the above Table-04, it is evident that liberal group of home making women were found superior over with mean value of 16.67 over their counterparts of home making women belonging to conservative group with a mean value of 13.53 in respect of the desire for social freedom score. The difference between the means is also found significant ( $t = 4.24$ ;  $df = 238$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Thus, hypothesis No. 2. (ii) relating to the effect of conservatism on the desire for social freedom is confirmed also in the case of home making women respondents. This finding is also in agreement with the findings of table-03. Here, the finding might be interpreted on the same rational as mentioned in case of working women as mentioned in table — 03.

- 7) Promila Kapoor, 'The Changing Status of Working Women in India, [Vikash Publishing House, New Delhi, 1970]
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- 9) Elizabeth Walter, 'Combridge Dictionary', 4th Edition, [Cambridge University Press, Combridge, U.K. 2013]
- 10) W. C. Minor & J. Murray 'Oxford Dictionary', 7th Edition, [O.U.P., London, 2012]

### CONCLUSION

1. The low religiosity group of women respondents have shown more desire for social freedom than high religiosity group of women respondents irrespective of working and home making dimensions.
2. The liberal group of women respondents have been shown more desire for social freedom than their counterparts belonging to conservative group of women respondents irrespective of working and home making dimensions.

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