

How Can Feminist Theology Reduce Gender Inequality in Religion?

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While judgments that have granted women entry into religious spaces have been hailed as progressive, it must be remembered that religion continues to perpetrate covert forms of inequalities for women.

The recent Supreme Court judgment allowing women to enter the Sabarimala temple has walked a tightrope, in handling the tense stand-off between claims of individual rights and gender equality on the one hand, and matters of faith and religiosity on the other. The judgement has been met with two extreme responses. The Hindutva right is in opposition while the liberals have largely been in agreement with it. The chorus of celebratory voices on women's right to enter religious spaces has opened up several questions of equality, freedom and rights for women by ostensibly challenging gender, and caste-based hierarchies. On the one hand, the Hindutva position of *upping the ante* by disrupting women's entry despite the order is constitutionally perilous and unbecoming of a civilised social order.

It must, on the other hand, be remembered that the overzealousness of the liberals overlooks the critical point that religion reinforces covert forms of inequalities and oppression for women. B R Ambedkar, while agitating for the rights of Dalits to enter Hindu temples, argued that doing away with religious exclusion was an issue of civil rights and