



Feminism in literature

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Abstract

The word feminism comes from French word *féminisme* and according to the Cambridge online dictionary feminism is “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state.” The term ‘feminism’ itself is used to describe a cultural, political or economic movement aiming for equal rights for both women and men. Nonetheless, the terms ‘feminism’ and ‘feminist’ did not gain widespread meaning use until the 1970s when they started to be used in the public parlance more frequently.

Keywords: feminism, equality, patriarchal, right, women, protest

Introduction

The feminist movement involves sociological and political theories concerning with gender difference issues. The movement has been here for many decades, and British women have started to fight against the oppression during mid 1850s when the first feminists started to advocate their thoughts about inequality and when the first suffragette movement emerged, since then women have started working on accomplishing their goals to have the same rights and to have the same position in society as men have.

The feminist framework also indicates how problems are defined and the kinds of questions to be asked. For example, according to definition in *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development* written by Jane L. Parpart *et al.* inequality results from “the need to establish unequal incentives to motivate the most talented people to do the most important jobs efficiently in society,”⁴ other definition from the same book also says that the inequality results from “the practice of providing differential rewards to keep a less powerful working class fragmented by gender and race.”

One is not born, but rather
Becomes a woman. No biological
Psychological or economic fate
Determines the that the human
Female presents in society; it is
Civilization as a whole that
Produces this creature, intermediate
Between male and eunch, which
Is described as feminine.

..Simone de Beauvoir

God created human beings and divided them into man and women, with a few basic differences in body and mind. It was only civilization who brought this difference to such a level that the principles of feminism have been articulated. The term ‘feminism’ was first used with regard to the issues of equality and Women’s Rights Movement.

Feminism is a movement influenced by the ideas postulated, popularized and precipitated by thinkers and authors like Alice Walker, Naomi Little bear, Judith Felterbey, Michele Wallace, Lillian Smith, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett and others. It is a modern movement expressing protest against the male domination. The aim of feminist is to understand women’s oppression keeping in mind race, gender, class and sexual preferences.

Feminism tends to be thought of as a movement of women, and many feminists absolutely reject the idea of allowing men into it. It is not concerned with a group of people it wants to benefits, but with a type of injustice it wants to eliminate. Two of the most important works of contemporary feminist theory-Simone de Beavoir’s ‘The Second Sex’ and ‘Mary Daly’s ‘Beyond God the Father’ drive their ideological premise from the twentieth-century philosophical movement, existentialism. Toril Moi has used the term ‘post-feminism’ to cover the different configuration of feminism and post-modernism present today. The post-modern feminists are wary of definitions of any kind. According to Alice Jardine:

Who and what, then do we mean by
‘feminist’? That word....poses some
serious problems. Not that we would
want to end up demanding a
definition of what feminism is
and therefore of what one must
do, say and be, if one is to
acquire the epithet dictionary meanings
are suffocating to say the least.

Jawaharlal Nehru once said; “You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.” Women of any nation is the mirror to its civilizations. The change in the status of women in India is a slow, steady and continuing process. It began a century and half ago when Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his followers focused attention on the social evils. He started the first school for the girls in Calcutta in

1825. In modern India, the position of women has changed considerably. There are so many factors like Women's education; reform movements by many social reforms, women participation in politics and much social legislation are responsible for this change in the status of women.

Women's writing gave a new dimension to this social change. The novels of Indian English Women writers consist of the latest burning issues related with women. Shashi Deshpande's Novel 'That long silence' is an expression of the silence of the modern Indian housewife. The protagonist Jaya in search for 'self' identity. Jaya's motive is liberation from her womanhood. Her protagonist represented each and every women in India. 'Small Remedies' make a sensitive portrayal of women's quest for identity in a patriarchal world. She draws the picture of a lonely daughter. Her name is Madhu.

Anita Desai, another novelist who depicted women character perfectly. Women character in her novels have psychological problems which generally Indian Women face in adult age. She can't bear the loneliness. 'In Custody' is a fine example of this Indianness. Anita's women characters collect sympathy and generally they get the required attention which is not the case with the European or American Women.

The modern novels of 80's paid attention to the miserable plight of the contemporary middle-class, Urban Indian Women. They attempted to reconstruct Indian Women hood, which has been characterized as ideally warm, gentle, and submissive and the new that women deserved only to be kept in subordination to the male members of the family. All the feminist writers have distinguish themselves for their boldness in presenting the status of woman in Indian society and for depicting man-women relationship in the fictional form.

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