

## FEMINISM - A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

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The word Feminism differs from person to person, basically it is a kind of a protest against social and economical restriction on women. From the beginning, women are fighting to free themselves from male oppression. In America, feminist are outspoken. In France, it refers to sexual restrictions and in Britan, feminism implies equality among men and women. "*Feminism in English Fiction*", is an article written by Chaman Nahal. In it he defines feminism as:

***a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome. There is a dependence syndrome: whether it is the husband or the father or the community or whether it is a religious group, ethnic group. When women free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materialises.***

Women are marginalized from the time in immoral. Society and tradition only keep women under control. In such scenario, it is interesting to quote Simone de Beauvoir:

***One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.***

She considers that women gain equality in terms of intellectual and professional, though they lose their dignity. Feminism has gained momentum by writers like

Michele Wallace, Kate Millett, Elaine Showalter and Alice Walker. It is not a movement expressing protest against male domination but they are ready to provide strategies for change. They keep oppression of women in terms of race, gender, class and sexual preference. Many people, today, feel that feminism has lost its charm. The reason is, that women have won the battle at all walks of life like political, social and economic horizons with men. But, this movement is going very strong in all parts of the world with the hope of getting stronger in future. The origin of women is seen in the form of subordination. In Hinduism, Manu, the law giver, was responsible for women to gain marginalisation. The same situation can also be witnessed in the religion of Islam and Christianity, and even the so-called great thinkers like Sartre, Nietzsche and Freud viewed women as subordinates.

When Simone de Beauvoir says that, "The situation of woman is that she is a free and autonomous being like all human creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other" (P 301) it creates ripples

on them. On such situation, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* come as a solace to feminist writers.

Feminism is a philosophy that makes women to fight against gender bias in the form of masculine and feminine. It says that it won't put women in their proper respective. Feminist say that the word feminism should be understood in proper perspective, which may help anyone to know about the intense awareness of identity on women.

The struggle for equality emphasises more on the value of women. Though they are valuable as men, the lack of equal right or the differences that pave way for them to fight. It is pathetic to see that when feminism sees the worth of women as women, it is sad to see that women under patriarchy are treated as inferior. Julia Kristeva, says as quoted by Sushila Singh:

***A third space for feminism to operate – the space which deconstructs all identity, all binary oppositions. But again, in deconstructing patriarchal metaphysics, the risk of deconstructing the very logic that sustains the two forms of feminism – of sameness and difference –cannot be avoided. And so the three 'spaces' of feminism are logically and often strategically incompatible.***

In 1630's and 1650's, radical sects had a strong support for religious equality. This had its impact on women to be liberated from patriarchy. During 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century feminism helped women to gain political rights also. Today, feminist show their wrath against social institution and are responsible for various school to exist like Liberal, Marxist, Radical, Existentialist, Psychoanalyst and Postmodern theories etc.

Liberal theory, aims at doctrines of justice, liberty and equality to women. Mary Woolstonecraft, Betty Friedan and John Stuart Mill are the forerunners of this theory. Marxist theory brings out the relations between class and sex, where women are treated as a property and helps them out of exploitation. Radical theory, insist on the independence of women. It says that they are not for child-bearing. This theory rejects family and marriage. Psychoanalyst theory believes that sexuality is male centric and so women suffer . This view is propounded by Freud. Existentialist theory considers that women are oppressed because of her otherness. Post modern theory believes that women must develop feminine writing to change the world which is defined by men. So, the term feminism has come to them for political and economical rights with men.

Once Jawaharlal Nehru, as it is quoted by Swati Sharma, said "you can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women" (P 1). It is true that woman of any nation is the mirror to its civilization. If women had attained an appropriate status, it shows that maturity and responsibility has reached its appropriate level in that society.

In modern India, the status of women has seen its change remarkably. Their position is equal to that of men in all spheres like political, economical, social and legal.

They have excelled in all fields. Education, Employment, Industrialisation and Urbanisation are also contributors to the upliftment of women.

In 1960's, in the west was responsible for feminist movement to gain greater momentum. Writers like Margaret Atwood, Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing and Iris Murdoch have contributed to this area. In India writers like Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande , Shobha De, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Arundhati Roy occupy prestigious status in Indo - English fiction. The strong element of protest is their hallmark. Like western counterparts, these Indian women writers have used the novel as their medium of expression, visions, colour and shades are reflected through their writing. They long for identity in patriarchal dominated world for better treatment and better understanding. They try to revolt against mechanical and mismatched marriages as a result they proved to be bold, courageous and fight for their existence.

#### Work Cited

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