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A Study on History and Importance of Feminism in Modern World

Farhana Begum

Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Tapasya Degree College,
Lakdi-ka-pul, Hyderabad.

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Abstract:

This paper studies the history of feminism which portrays the movements initiated by women and talks about the waves in the era of history of feminism. It provides the overview of feminism rights, revolts, requirement of women's equality in all world sectors. This paper acknowledges the struggles of women in history and various other activities undertaken by them in order to stand equal in par of men. It examines the works and importance of women in various fields of development such as science, literature, architecture and much more. The paper talks about how women in history were enthusiastic enough to disclose the difficulties they have faced for just being a woman and stood firmly to accomplish the objectives ascertained by them. Lastly, paper goes on discussing the women rights as human rights, women rights considered as a vital point in the progress of women. It demanded to be noticed in almost all countries of the world. It came out with many important rights which were essential for women to have for the overall growth and development of women. Development of women is truly the development of the entire world.

Keywords: Feminism, history of feminism, women rights, equality.

Introduction

The history of feminism has developed into vital field in the recent years as scholars from many disciplines and many countries explored the ways in which oppression, rights, contributions has been represented, discussed and resisted in the past centuries. This new research has revealed importance, necessity, the extent and the complexity of the concern to understand the sexual oppression, which is the core of feminism.

Feminism is not a simple way of reflection of the prevailing situation of the women, nor it is a history of feminism is a general history of women, the study of feminism requires a recognition of the new possibilities, potential changes and developments required to recognise the feminism goals.

The demand for the rights of women in the late eighteenth century gave the framework and basis for modern feminism. It describes political, cultural, economic movement aimed at achieving equal rights and legal protection for women. It involves sociological, political theories and philosophies related with the problems of gender difference and movement that demands gender equality for women, women rights, choices, life and interest.

The works of Mary Hays, Fanny Buency and Jane Austen raised questions about the importance of girl education, the possibility of equality in marriage, domestic relationships, recognising women's sexuality. The representatives of women assumed a great importance especially because of the expansion of literature as a profession for women, and through which women demanded the right to represent themselves as independent beings.

Objectives of the Study

- To extract the overview of history of feminism
- To understand the importance of feminism
- To evaluate feminism and women rights

Research Methodology

The research is based on the secondary source of information or secondary data collection method, which is collected from Government Agencies, online web portals, Web based statistical records and paper articles and journals.

Limitations of Study

This study is an attempt to understand about history of feminism, rights of women and importance of feminism i.e. not in depth analysis was attempted. Such that it is difficult to conclude that the strategies discussed in this study covered all the areas or strategies that lack the thorough study of feminism and its roots.

History of Feminism

The history of feminism comprises of the movements and ideologies which have aimed at equal rights for women. While feminists around the world have differed in causes, goals, aims, objectives and intentions depending on time, culture, and country. Some other historians who talk about feminism limit the term "feminist" to the modern feminist movement and its progeny, and use the label "proto-feminist" to describe earlier movements

of feminism. Modern Western feminist history is conventionally divided into three time periods, or "waves", each with different aims based on prior progress.

First-wave feminism of the 19th and early 20th centuries discusses overturning legal inequalities, specifically addressing issues of women's suffrage. First-wave feminism speaks of a period of feminist activity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the United Kingdom and the United States. Especially, it focused on the promotion of property rights for women and the opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women (and their children) by their husbands. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, activism engaged primarily on attaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage. Some feminists such as Voltairine de Cleyre and Margaret Sanger were still active in campaigning for women's sexual, reproductive, and social and economic rights at this time. In 1854, Florence Nightingale established female nurses as addition to the military.

In Britain, the Suffragists campaigned for the women's vote. In 1918 the Representation of the People Act 1918 was passed which granted the vote to women over the age of 30 who owned houses. In 1928 vote to women was extended to all women over twenty-one. In the United States, leaders of this movement like Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony, who campaigned for the abolition of slavery prior to championing women's right to vote; all were firmly influenced by Quaker thought. American first-wave feminism involved a wide range of women rights and aspirations. Some people such as Frances Willard belonged to conservative Christian groups such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Others are Matilda Joslyn Gage, were more radical, and expressed themselves within the National Woman Suffrage Association or individually. American first-wave feminism is considered to have ended with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1919), which granted women the right to vote in all states.

Second-wave feminism (1960s–1980s) it involves cultural inequalities, gender norms, and the role of women in society. It talks about the period of activity in the early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s. The scholar Imelda Whelehan says that the second wave was a continuation of the earlier phase of feminism involving the suffragettes women faced in the UK and USA. Second-wave feminism has continued to exist since that time and coexists with third-wave feminism also. The scholar Estelle Freedman compares first and second-wave feminism mentioning that the first wave focused on rights such as suffrage, whereas the

second wave was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as ending discrimination, rights of women.

Second-wave feminists saw women's cultural, economic and political inequalities and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures.

Third-wave feminism (1990s–2000s) Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s, arising as a response to identify failures of the second wave and also as a response to the counterblast against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. Third-wave feminism tends to challenge the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which (according to them) over-emphasize the experiences and activities of upper middle-class white women. Including women's studies programs at universities

Some of the most important values of the third wave include gender equality, rights, identity, language, sex positivity, breaking the Glass Ceiling, body positivity, ending violence against women, fixing the media's image of women, and environmentalism.

The Fourth Wave It refers to phrase of feminism that began around 2012. Its focus was on sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture, social mobility, among other issues. A key component was the use of social media in order to highlight and address these concerns. The new wave arose a number of high-profile incidents.

Internet, in the fourth wave is the platform where feminist ideas are exchanged, and where the actual struggle is waged. The gap between the “movement leaders”, that is intellectuals, and the followers have collapsed. In fact, these roles today have become interchangeable. This is not only just a feature of the movement but an essential requirement today.

Although the "waves" construct has been commonly used to describe the history of feminism, the concept has also been criticized by non-Anglo-Saxon feminists for ignoring the history between the "waves", by choosing to focus solely on a few famous figures, on the perspective of a white woman and on popular events, and for being racist and colonialist.

Feminism refers to advocacy of women's rights to achieve equality, which is why anyone can be a feminist. It seeks to equality in rights for women, usually through improving their life and status. Feminism is rooted in ending men's historical power and domination over women. Recrudescence's in feminist theory especially focus on issues that disproportionately hurt

females, such as abolishing gender pay gaps, enacting female voting and political rights for women, and reassessing and readdressing what is considered "female" and "male".

While modern feminist thought and movement is largely rooted in the Western intellectual tradition, the ideology is gaining need throughout the whole world. In many cases, the feminist goal of equality and liberty for women has helped push movements around the world to change the entire way private society is viewed, and in some cases even helped tumble authoritarian governments.

Feminism can be studied from the perspectives of the actual movements for inequalities faced by women or from the writings of observer, commentator and participant addressing the underlying issues of why women have not been treated well and are not seen as equal.

Importance of Feminism in Various Arenas

Science Feminists have a number of distinct interests in science and developments. The tools of science have been a vital resource for understanding the nature, rules, impact, and prospects for changing gender-based forms of oppression. Scientific authority has frequently served to rationalize the kinds of social roles and institutions that feminists call into questions. Feminist perspectives on science therefore reflect a broad spectrum of epistemic attitudes towards learning science and appraisals of science.

- i. Architecture:** Feminism has a powerful, longstanding, influential effect on the development of architecture and urban design, although this is rarely acknowledged. Feminist ideas have contributed to changing architecture and its themes such as the designs and development of new building types; the engraving of collective memory of various interested topics; our changed attitudes towards nature and beauty; and finally, women's culture, rights and identity as a legitimate design paradigm.
- ii. Businesses:** Feminist activists have contributed to start a range of feminist businesses, which includes feminist credit unions, feminist presses, women's bookstores, feminist mail-order catalogues, and feminist firms and restaurants. These businesses flourished in second and third-waves of feminism in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.
- iii. Visual arts:** The movement began in the 1960s, where female artists are dealt with gender, social media and the notion of embodiment". The visual arts proved to be highly sensitive and interesting field for feminists. Feminists used posters, slogans, film, painting and photography to propagate their ideas and objectives. The relation between

women and representation in visual culture makes women's especially powerful in relation to the visual arts.

- iv. Literature:** The feminist movement produced feminist fiction, non-fiction, and feminist poetry, which created new interest in women's writing. There has also a close link between feminist literature and activism, with feminist writing voicing key concerns or ideas of feminism in a particular era.
- v. Politics:** Feminism meant to have complex interactions with the major political movements in the twentieth century. They claimed to recognize women's equality for participating in the political affairs of the country and demanded right to vote for women in order to elect their representatives.

Women Rights

As the famous saying goes, "women's rights are human rights." That is to say, women are entitled and deserve to have all of these rights. Yet almost everywhere around the world, women and girls are still denied to have these rights, often simply because of their gender.

Women's rights are the rights and freedom professed for women and girls worldwide, and formed strong basis for the women's rights movement in the nineteenth and 20th century as feminist movement. In some countries, these rights are institutionalized or supported by law, local custom, and human rights, whereas in other countries they are ignored and suppressed.

Winning rights for women is majorly concerned with giving opportunities to any individual woman or girl; it is also about changing the ways how countries and communities work. It refers to changing laws and policies, winning hearts and minds, to enter into legal contracts, freedom to vote, to have reproductive rights and to get educated, to work, to have equal pay, freedom from sexual violence and investing in strong women's organizations and movements.

Attaining equality between men and women and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women are fundamental human rights and United Nations values. Women around the world however regularly suffer non-observance of their human rights throughout their lives, and realizing and attaining women's human rights has not always been a priority. Achieving equality between women and men needs a comprehensive understanding of the manner in which women experience discrimination and are denied equality so as to develop strategies and methods to eliminate such discrimination.

The United Nations has a long history of addressing women's human rights and discriminations against women and much progress has been made in gaining women's rights across the world in recent decades. However, important gaps remain with new manifestations of discrimination against them regularly emerging. Some groups of women face additional forms of discrimination based on their age, colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, health status, marital status, education, disability and socioeconomic status, among other grounds. These forms of discrimination must be taken into account when developing measures, solutions and responses to combat discrimination against women

Findings

- Feminism refers to advocacy of women's rights to achieve equality, which is why anyone can be a feminist.
- The history of feminism comprises of the movements and ideologies which have aimed at equal rights for women.
- First-wave feminism of the 19th and early 20th centuries discuss overturning legal inequalities, specifically addressing issues of women's suffrage.
- Second-wave feminism (1960s–1980s) It involves cultural inequalities, gender norms, and the role of women in society.
- Third-wave feminism tends to challenge the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which (according to them) over-emphasize the experiences and activities of upper middle-class white women. Including women's studies programs at universities.
- Fourth wave Feminism focus was on sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture, social mobility, among other issues.
- The tools of science have been a vital resource for understanding the nature, rules, impact, and prospects for changing gender-based forms of oppression.
- Feminism has a powerful, longstanding, influential effect on the development of architecture and urban design, although this is rarely acknowledged.
- The relation between women and representation in visual culture makes women's especially powerful in relation to the visual arts.
- The feminist movement produced feminist fiction, non-fiction, and feminist poetry, which created new interest in women's writing.
- Feminism meant to have complex interactions with the major political movements in the twentieth century.
- Women are entitled and deserve to have all of these rights.

- Achieving equality between women and men needs a comprehensive understanding of the manner in which women experience discrimination and are denied equality so as to develop strategies and methods to eliminate such discrimination.

Conclusion

Feminism history and study provides with the knowledge about the struggles and aspirations of women. It studies the importance of women and developments made by them in various world sectors. Women rights should be given utmost importance as it is considered as human rights. The study is confined within the boundaries such that it is not practical to give the conclusion upon the overall learning of feminism.

Suggestion

The study is an attempt to understand feminism and related issues women faced in the world. The study is concise within the boundaries but there is a broad scope in carrying this study to the wider extent in order to analyse it in deep to understand feminism to its greater extent..

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