

Feminism: A Fight for Equality

Michelle Jose M

Student, Christ (Deemed to be University)

ABSTRACT

Feminism has been given importance and has evolved since the 1900's. This paper aims to explore the themes, debates, and traits of feminism throughout the years. Feminism is a movement that fights for gender equality and has changed a lot over time. This article looks at the history of feminism, starting with the fight for women's voting rights in the 19th century and going through different stages up to today's diverse approaches. The research highlights important moments and changes in feminist thinking. The article also looks at current challenges for the feminist movement, internal disagreements, and the combination of gender with other identities such as race and class. Through a review of academic literature, historical records, and modern sources, this study gives a complete overview of feminism's past achievements and current struggles and offers ideas for its future direction and potential growth.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a world where women have the same rights and opportunities as men. That's the dream feminism fights for. It's a powerful movement with a long history, and its ideas have changed a lot over time. In the beginning, feminism focused on basic rights for women like voting and having control over their bodies. It challenged unfair laws and customs that treated women as less than men. This early fight for equality was a major victory.

But as feminism grew, people realized it wasn't just a simple men vs. women issue. Women of color, LGBTQ+ women, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds faced unique challenges. Feminism needed to consider these differences too. This gave rise to the concept of "intersectionality," acknowledging that different types of oppression may intersect and impact women in distinct ways. Today, feminism's fight for equality is more complex. Some worry about the progress being reversed, like access to healthcare or equal pay. Others see divisions within feminism itself, with different groups focusing on specific issues. Feminism fights for fairness, challenging ideas that treat men and women differently. Feminism aims to break free from stereotypes. By looking at the past and present, ways can be found to make feminism even more powerful and effective in its fight for equality. We'll understand how different feminist approaches address the issue of equality. By understanding these complexities, we can work towards a future where everyone, regardless of gender, race, or background, has the same opportunities.

PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

There is an ongoing paradox within feminism and the patriarchal society has been criticized. Male supremacy has been glorified and gender qualities have been categorized. Qualities such as reason, intellect, and bravery have been considered masculine traits whereas kindness, emotion, and submissiveness are considered feminine traits. These "feminine" traits are not appreciated and are considered inferior in society. 'Care' is considered a feminine quality but it is indeed important and plays a crucial role in human relations and it should be a human quality possessed by everyone irrespective of

gender. Society believes that qualities like showing emotion and politeness are particularly for women and not for men. “The patriarchal culture which promoted exploitation, slavery, and discriminatory attitudes against women at large, contributed to treating women merely as a ‘second sex’ .“ (Chakraborty,2017) Carol Gillian believes women’s voices get suppressed due to the roar of patriarchy. The patriarchal society constructs the behavior, attitudes, and expressions of women. They are obligated to suppress their way of thought. “Feminine characteristics have been totally demoralized by their social, economic conditions, where she is always considered as ‘non-sense, immoral, even whose brain capacities and the sense of accuracy is always lesser than a man’s brain.” (Chakraborty, 2017)

These old ideas about gender roles limit both women and men. Men are expected to be strong and aggressive, which can lead them to hide their emotions and struggle with mental health. It also stops men from taking on caring roles, which can help create a kinder society. The strict separation of "male" and "female" traits often ignores the importance of a full human experience where everyone can express different emotions and qualities. By challenging these stereotypes and supporting gender equality, society can become more fair and give everyone a chance to succeed, no matter their gender.

REVOLUTIONARY FEMINISM

Revolutionary Feminism focused on male violence against women due to women’s oppression. It was different from radical feminism as it focused on cultural or lifestyle feminism. AI Garthwaite, who was one of the founders of Revolutionary Feminism, organized the first Reclaim the Night marches in the UK in November 1977. They were street protests against male violence towards women. Revolutionary feminism’s approach was considered more practical than Radical Feminism according to Garthwaite. She found Radical Feminism to be “amorphous and unrefined”. Feminism resurged in the 21st century with a wider age range and diversity among participants compared to the 1970s and 1980s. Revolutionary Feminism was mainly focused on the fair treatment of women. During this period, Garthwaite also observed the intersection of homophobia with anti-feminism. Revolutionary Feminism has given rise to developments in the field of feminism and ignited a ray of hope for women.

Revolutionary Feminism's hands-on approach to fighting male violence and pushing for fair treatment of women has had a strong impact on feminist movements around the world. By organizing marches and protests, Revolutionary Feminism empowered women to take action and speak up against wrongs. This movement set the stage for future feminists to address issues like homophobia and anti-feminism. The influence of Revolutionary Feminism can still be seen today in the ongoing fight for women's rights and safety, as well as in efforts to make feminism more inclusive. By challenging old ways and promoting big changes, Revolutionary Feminism brought new energy to the fight for women's equality and empowerment.

MEDIEVAL ART HISTORY AND FEMINISM

Medieval art history has been deeply impacted by feminism. It has opened up new areas of investigation and has got scholars to look into marginalized viewpoints and explore how art reflects and constructs social norms. “Even some art historians, not particularly sympathetic to the feminist project per se might not have come to their fields without the influence of feminism.” (Easton, 2019) We can look into the depictions of women in medieval art and how these representations illuminate attitudes toward women. The subjects of this were figures like the Virgin Mary, female saints, queens, etc. Biblical women other than Eve and Mary, like marginalized forms of female representation, have also been included. Through

visual representations of women, female perspectives and current female roles can be understood. Although there are concepts like the male gaze that complicate our understanding of the gendered power structures and contradict fixed meanings. Feminism is also important for understanding and recognizing personal and political motivations. Feminist concerns should not be overshadowed in this modern age. Feminism's influence on the study of medieval art history goes beyond just analyzing art. It helps scholars question traditional views and challenge the male-dominated structures that have shaped how art has been interpreted in the past. By focusing on the experiences and voices of women, feminism promotes a more open and diverse understanding of medieval art. Scholars now look not only at how women were shown in art, but also at the social, economic, and political backgrounds of these artworks. This wider view allows for a more detailed understanding of medieval art and its creators. Feminism also encourages mixing ideas from different fields like gender studies, history, and cultural studies to create a more complete picture of medieval art. By keeping feminist concerns at the forefront, we can better understand the complexities of medieval art and its importance to today's issues of gender and power.

MULTIRACIAL FEMINISM

Multiracial Feminism has its focus on the worldviews of women of color and “hegemonic feminism”. In the U.S., black people and importantly black women were highly discriminated against and were highly mistreated. There was a focus on fair treatment for all women irrespective of race during this movement. Slogans like “Sisterhood is powerful” and “The personal is political” failed to account for the experiences of women of color. There was a rise in “Multiracial Feminism” in the 1970s, it was for women of color and it had an international perspective that gave attention to oppression. This is considered an extremely important movement as it gives representation to women of all races and fights for equality. Racism is still an issue that the current world deals with and hence such movements are necessary as they promote anti-racism and equality for all. “Radical Feminism” was a time when many women working with the black power movement had to put their feminism on hold to prioritize anti-racist struggles.

Multiracial Feminism highlighted the importance of understanding how gender and race overlap in the fight for equality. The movement showed how traditional feminist stories often ignored the different experiences and challenges faced by women of color. This movement played a key role in creating a more inclusive and complete view of feminism, one that understands the connections between different types of oppression. Through its activism, Multiracial Feminism pushed for big changes and worked to break down systems that keep inequality in place. By raising the voices and experiences of women of color, the movement opened doors for future feminists to continue fighting for justice and fairness across all races and genders.

THIRD WAVE FEMINISM

Third Wave Feminism began in the early 1990s as a reaction to the narrow focus of earlier feminist movements, which often centered on the experiences of mainly white, middle-class women. This new phase of feminism highlights how gender overlaps with other aspects of identity like race, class, sexuality, and ability. Third Wave Feminism values personal stories and different viewpoints, encouraging women to share their experiences to show the variety of challenges women face. The movement also critiques how women are portrayed in the media, fighting against stereotypes and pushing for more empowering depictions. It supports women's right to define their own identities and sexualities and focuses on direct

action to achieve change. Third Wave Feminism is key in expanding the feminist movement to be more inclusive and representative of all women.

The movement clearly had its focus on multi-perspectival experiences. There was importance given to multivocality and direct action over theoretical justification. Third Wave Feminism was inclusive and took into account everyone's opinions and experiences. It was a non-judgemental movement and was inclusive and diverse. Although it struggled to balance the celebration of individual choice and sexual representation with a critical analysis of how those choices might reinforce or challenge patriarchal structures. (Synder, 2008) Third Wave feminism was an important movement as it gave representation to all women including the voices of marginalized women.

A key part of Third Wave Feminism was its focus on intersectionality, which means understanding how gender mixes with other parts of identity like race, class, and sexuality. This approach helped the movement better understand the different viewpoints of various groups of women and address their unique challenges. Third Wave Feminism also valued empowerment and self-expression, encouraging women to find their own voices and fight for their rights in ways that felt true to them. By including many perspectives and experiences, Third Wave Feminism created a more flexible and responsive movement that could adapt to the changing needs and concerns of women everywhere.

CONCLUSION

The journey towards a world where everyone has the same opportunities, regardless of gender, race, or background, is a complex one. Feminism, with its rich history and evolving approaches, serves as a guide on this path.

In summary, feminism is a strong movement fighting for fairness, aiming to change unfair treatment based on gender. Over time, it has grown and learned to include the struggles faced by women of different backgrounds like race and class. The fight for fairness has many sides, with different feminists focusing on various issues. Some fight for basic rights like voting, while others work against violence aimed at women. However, there are still challenges, especially for women who face discrimination because of more than one thing, like being a woman and being a minority.

Even though a lot of progress has been made, there is still more work to do for gender equality. Today's feminists are using new tools, like social media, to spread awareness and create change worldwide. These efforts focus on how different kinds of discrimination, like sexism, racism, and classism, can combine and affect people. As feminism keeps evolving, it needs to stay flexible and open to the changing needs and challenges of women and other marginalized groups. By raising different voices and pushing for big changes, feminism can help create a future where everyone can succeed, regardless of their gender, race, or background.

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