



## ***The Fourth Wave and the Global Scenario of Feminist Movement***

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### ***Introduction***

Feminism is a movement which advocates, propagates the equal political, social and economic status of woman enjoyed by man. Throughout the world, women are subject as the other and are deprived of their rights and freedom. In the domain of patriarchal culture, woman is a social construct, a site on which masculine desires are enacted.

The two axioms on which feminism is built are;

1. Gender difference is the foundation for structural inequality between men and women by which women suffer sympathetic social injustice and
2. The inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity, but is produced by cultural construction of gender difference. (Nagarajan 206)

The factor which changes a girl into a woman with finality is not simply her anatomy, but the process of social conditioning which influences and moulds her psyche to desire and pursue traditionally accepted and encouraged feminine roles only.

The agenda of feminine therefore is to understand the social and psychic mechanisms that constructs and perpetuates gender inequality and change it as much as possible. Feminist literary criticism aims to study the ways in which cultural representatives such as literature, undermines and reinforce the economic, social, political and psychological suppression and oppression of women in society. (Nagarajan 206)

The sole goal of feminist movement is to agitate against any type of female objectification. Even some critics assert that the family system is the root cause of the oppression and marginalisation of women.

***Key Words:*** female, feminine, feminist, equality, rights, agitations

### ***Feminism- Literary and Critical Aspects***

Feminism we can say it's a 'women's movement' which started in 1960s and developed with leaps and jumps in the course till reaching the end of the twentieth century. Its roots lie deep with books such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the rights of Women* (1792), Olive Schreiner's *Women and Labour* (1911) and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. The earliest feminist approach was limited to marriage, motherland and education. In the 1970s it went through a major change, it went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy and raised it roar to the sexual inequality.

As Peter Barry observes, in the late 1980s in feminism as in other critical approaches, the mood changed. Firstly, feminist criticism became more eclectic, meaning that it begun to draw upon the findings and approaches of other kinds of criticism – Marxism, structuralism, and linguistics and so on. Secondly, it switched its focus from attacking male versions of the world and outlook and reconstructing the lost or suppressed records of female experience. Thirdly, attention was switched to the need to construct a new canon of women's writings by rewriting the history of the novel and of poetry in such a way that neglected women writers were given new prominence. (Barry 117)

### ***First Wave of Feminism***

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century marks the advent of female consciousness and the suffragette movement. It was organised activity in USA and Britain. The major achievement of the early agitations or the first waves of feminists were the age old closed doors opened for them for higher education and reforms in the education system for females at all level. The Property Act of 1870 heralded the equal rights movement. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 1792 is one of the early noteworthy texts that evoked the literary as well as political sphere of feminist movement. But the First World War broke out and it slowed the pace of feminist movements. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) argues that,

“Female creative expression is limited by women’s material circumstances, which frequently deny them the opportunity for either the space or time to explore their creative and intellectual capacities.” (Upstone 138)

### ***Second Wave of Feminism***

The starting point of Second Wave is still debatable. De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* published in 1949 or the *Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan in the year 1963 is considered as the beginning of the second wave. The 1960s were the years of political cataclysm. The second wave started with bang. The invention of contraceptive pills and its approval for use led the womb carriers to decide whether they are willing to borne a child or not. This step proved to be one of the great factors for feminine consciousness and it developed the path for new women. Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Alice Walker's *In search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose* and other catalyst texts moved the minds of women ready to agitate. The movement converted to more political than literary. Simon De Beauvoir's famous quote “*one is not born woman; rather one becomes a woman*’ (Beauvoir 1) in *The Second Sex* clearly differentiate between gender and biology as a social expression, and this can be seen as a milestone in feminism of the modern world. We experience varieties of feminisms such as; Lesbian Feminism, Socialist Feminism, Traditional Marxist Feminism, Radical Feminism, Eco-feminism, Psychoanalytic Feminism and Post-feminism.

### ***Third Wave of Feminism***

Third wave began in 1990s and some say it is still on till present. The third wave is broadly focusing on the gender discrimination and the relationships with various social forms. ‘Feminism constitutes a broad range of diverse identifications, and debates with other theoretical interests’. (Eagleton 3) This wave is against the notion of female inequality. The women around the globe became aware about their social versions and their part in the society. A global awareness about the regional and ethnic experience was developed in this specific era. The battle between the genders was the talk of these specific movements and the seeds of the fourth wave were sowed in this wave.

### ***Fourth Wave of Feminism***

The fourth Wave of Feminism or shall we consider it the last wave of feminism is quite debatable. This 21<sup>st</sup> century brought a new life in the feminist movements which surpassed all the movement of the previous past century. Even we can say that this century is the century of woman. In the year 2003, a wide agitation was launched against eve-teasing and it gave a wide platform to share the stories of women who suffered from sexual harassment in their past.

A group of women in a pub was attacked by right wing activist and India experienced **Pink Chaddi Movement** launched by **Consortium of Pub-Going, Loose and Forward Women** in 2009. It was a nonviolent protest against the conservative groups who believe in the traditional role of women. The only offence of the group was that they were celebrating Valentine’s Day.

Man is free to use woman as object but if a woman even desires to walk the same way they are culturally abused and are called sluts. The rape victims are not accepted by the society and even in some cases the faults are counted on woman. Same is the case with victims of sexual harassment and they are at the negative plane in the whole oppressive actions by man. A transnational movement was launched against the notion of Sluts; rape victims and sufferers of sexual harassment in 2011. It gain momentum after walks at Toronto and other cities. This movement spread across the globe in no time and agitations against such cases were wide.

**#Happy to Bleed** hash tag was viral in just hours and millions of girls joined this campaign across India and globe. This created awareness about the menstrual cycle of women. This particular movement deals with the biological part of woman. They experience this as part of their physiology and undergo pain and suffering for days. In India this is a taboo. One in the cycle cannot cook food, enter temple and even in some societies women are detached from the house completely. This movement led to the awareness in the Indian society and globally it was accepted as a normal phenomena.

The latest examples of such movement are Pinjra Tod (Break the Cage) in 2015 and Bekhauf Azadi (Freedom without Fear) in 2017 which gave women a new discourse. The discourse about their physiology and it talks about their own body. Pinjra Tod (Break the Cage) break out due to the circular banning women not to leave campus after 8.00 p.m. which received agitations by women commission, Delhi and afterwards various hostels and other women associations joined it.

Bekhauf Azadi (Freedom without Fear) was launched by poet, Amy Singh in support of Varnika Kundu. She was publically harassed on the street and it stirred the minds of the beautiful city of Chandigarh. This agitation was supported by the social agencies and people of Chandigarh marched in favour of it.

### **Conclusion**

The world is experiencing a new women in the women of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was far back some 150 years ago and still they are fighting for their rights and equality. The present wave is focusing more on the physiological aspect of woman. They are becoming more aware about their bodies and they are not feeling ashamed of their biological things. Women are now conscious about their role in the society. Today they are challenging the patriarchal concepts about mind, equality, menstrual cycle, sex and other taboos of the past. History was never free from bias and women have suffered due to it. Religion plays the role of catalyst and directly supported patriarchy in suppression of women but the time is over now for all such biases and the present century is the century of women.

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