

Analytical Study of Significance of Feminism in Contemporary Times

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Abstract: *The term "feminism" refers to a broad spectrum of political concepts, philosophies, and social movements that are united in their quest to define, establish, and realize gender equality in the political, economic, personal, and social spheres. The fundamental goal of feminism is to provide opportunities for women to have equal access to resources that are ordinarily freely available to males, as well as to equality and justice for women in all areas of life. The emergence of feminism represents a fresh perspective on the global rights of men and women. No matter in philosophy, culture, society, politics, economy, etc., the research on feminism is of great significance. Given the variety of psychosocial and cultural conceptions of femininity, feminism is, in fact, a genuine attempt to investigate, comprehend, and elucidate. However, by examining a few seminal works in the field of feminist literary theory, this study aims to trace the theoretical origins of the movement and define some fundamental assumptions and principles of feminism*

Keywords: Feminism, Waves of Feminism, Components of Feminism

I. INTRODUCTION

The term 'feminism' originates from the Latin word 'femina,' meaning 'woman,' and was initially associated with issues of equality and the women's Rights Movement. Defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a state of being feminist or womanly, and by Webster's Dictionary as the principle advocating for women's political rights equal to those of men, feminism has evolved over time.

In the post-independence era in India, significant challenges emerged, including the depletion of natural resources due to colonial rule and the suppression of indigenous arts. Factors such as industrialization, technological advancements, and social norms hindered women's progress. Social reformers aimed to preserve Indian culture by establishing moral and legal frameworks, protecting women from discrimination, and ensuring equality for all citizens regardless of gender, religion, or ethnicity. Feminism encompasses various moral and political assertions and encourages innovative approaches to philosophical questions, along with critiquing traditional philosophical theories and methods.

Feminism, as a socio-political movement, seeks to achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality between genders, challenging societies that prioritize the male perspective and perpetuate injustices against women. Efforts to combat gender stereotypes and improve women's opportunities and outcomes span education, employment, and interpersonal spheres.

The history of feminism is complex, often categorized into waves, although this metaphor oversimplifies the multifaceted evolution of feminist thought and action.

The first wave, emerging in the late 19th century, emphasized fundamental rights for women, including suffrage.

The second wave, prominent in the mid-20th century, focused on issues such as contraception, domestic abuse, and abortion rights, while also critiquing gender norms and family structures. Mainstream, radical, and cultural feminism were prominent during this period, advocating for institutional reforms and gender equality.

The third wave, starting in the 1990s, addressed issues of racism and classism within feminism, celebrating individuality and challenging societal norms. The fourth wave continues to fight against the marginalization of women of color and emphasizes inclusivity, particularly for transgender individuals. Intersectionality, addressing the unique

struggles faced by women of different backgrounds, remains a key focus, along with campaigns against sexual harassment and violence, exemplified by movements like #MeToo.

The fourth wave of feminism is currently shaping its identity, building upon the efforts of third-wave feminism to combat the marginalization of women of color. It underscores the importance of including transgender women in feminist movements, advocating for both gender equality and the right of individuals to define their gender identity. Additionally, fourth-wave feminism has sparked movements like #MeToo, aiming to end sexual harassment and violence against women, while also promoting intersectional and inclusive approaches to social justice.

Intersectionality remains a central focus of fourth-wave feminism, highlighting the experiences of women of color that are often overlooked by mainstream "white feminism." Critics of white feminism point out the ongoing suppression of non-white feminist voices and perspectives. Discussions around transgender rights also feature prominently in fourth-wave feminist discourse.

Feminism encompasses both normative and descriptive elements in various forms. The normative aspect asserts a moral or ethical standard regarding how women ought to be treated, while the descriptive aspect examines the actual treatment and perception of women in society. Together, these components serve as the basis for challenging the status quo, making feminism both an intellectual and political movement.

From a liberal perspective, feminism can be defined by two main claims:

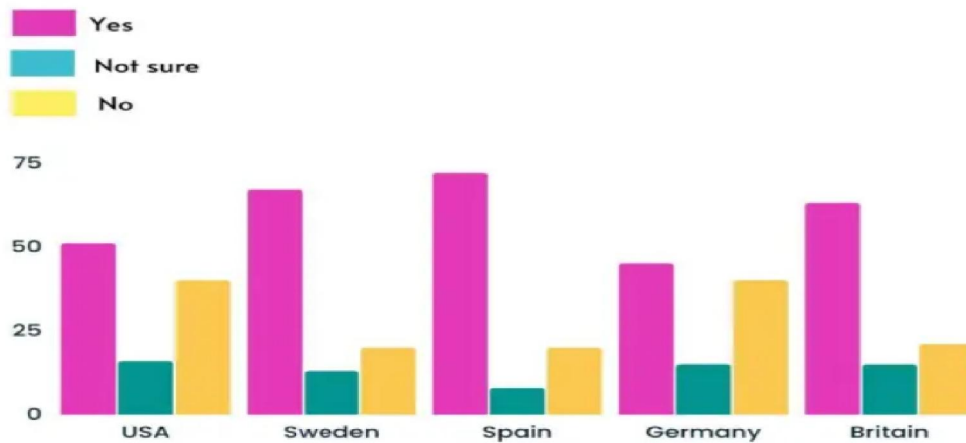
Normative: Men and women should be treated equally and with respect.

Descriptive: Women are currently not treated fairly in terms of rights and respect.

This framework suggests that feminism involves advocating for equal rights and respect for men and women, while also acknowledging the existing disparities in treatment. Debates within feminism and with non-feminist perspectives often revolve around differing views on what constitutes justice or injustice for women and the specific forms of injustice they experience.

GRAPHS

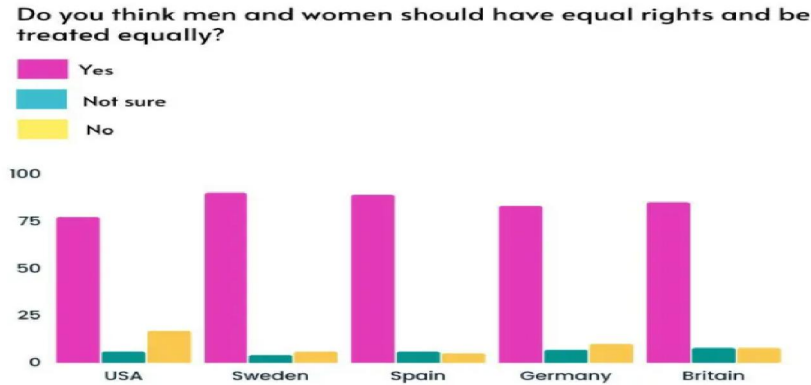
Feminism is the belief that men and women should have equal rights and be treated equally. Are you a feminist?



Source: <https://www.nadja.co/2023/03/14/in-2023->

Most respondents say they are feminists when they understand what this means

When respondents were asked whether they identify as feminists, which is the belief that men and women should have equal rights and be treated equally, the figures reversed dramatically. All countries had a majority of respondents saying they are feminists, with Spain having the highest proportion at 72%.



Source: <https://www.nadja.co/2023/03/14/in-2023>

There is widespread consensus that both men and women should be entitled to equal rights. When surveyed, a significant majority across various countries expressed agreement with this principle. For instance, Italy and Sweden recorded the highest percentages, with 91% and 90% respectively, endorsing the notion of gender equality. However, it's notable that in the United States, 17% of respondents disagreed with this statement. Denmark had an even higher dissent rate at 19%, surpassing all other countries surveyed, including Germany, where 10% of respondents disagreed with the idea of equal rights for men and women.

II. CONCLUSION

Therefore, 'feminism' emerged as a social movement in response to gender inequality, social injustice, and the exploitation of women by capitalism. Initially, feminist theory was a fragmented opposition to male-dominated ideologies, but it has evolved into a well-established field of critical analysis and scholarship.

The realm of feminist literary theory extends beyond asserting women's individuality in societal and literary realms to engaging with and challenging male-centric literary discourse. This expansion encompasses a diverse array of feminist theorists who utilize post-structuralist, psychoanalytic, socialist, and postcolonial approaches to dismantle masculine ideologies and promote women's social justice across all spheres of life.

III. RESULTS

The significance of feminism in contemporary times remains a pivotal and evolving subject of discussion and research. When examining its relevance in the current era, several key aspects come into consideration:

Gender Inequality and Discrimination:

Assess the enduring presence of gender-based disparities and discrimination across various societal sectors, including employment, education, healthcare, and politics.

Utilize recent data and statistics to underscore the persisting gender gaps and inequalities.

Intersectionality:

Explore the interconnectedness of feminism with other social identities, recognizing that women's experiences are influenced by factors such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and more.

Analyze how an intersectional approach enhances feminist discourse by addressing the complexities of oppression.

Political Landscape:

Evaluate the representation of women in positions of political leadership and decision-making.

Investigate the impact of feminist ideologies on policies and legislation concerning reproductive rights, workplace equality, and other gender-related issues.

Challenges and Criticisms:

Address critiques and obstacles encountered by the feminist movement, both internally and externally.

Discuss strategies for overcoming challenges and promoting inclusivity within the movement.

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