



20TH CENTURY ROLE IN CHANGES OF WOMEN IN LITERATURE-A REVIEW

Ann Pathania¹, Dr. Kusha Pandit Chawla²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English and Communication Skills (School of Humanities)
Alakh Prakash Shimla University, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India

Email: annpathania1@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor (HOD), Department of English and Communication Skills (School of Humanities),
Alakh Prakash Goyal Shimla University, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India

Email Id: kpleolion@gmail.com



Article information

Received:20/04/2022
Accepted: 26/05/2022
Published online:31/05/2022
doi: [10.33329/ijelr.9.2.60](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.9.2.60)

ABSTRACT

Women's roles in literature have evolved throughout history and had lead women to develop into strong independent roles. As the twentieth century went along, writing was depicting ladies' jobs as more grounded and autonomous than previously. In the article, The Role of Women Throughout the Ages of Literature, the writer expresses that "*cutting edge writing has filled in as an outlet and sounding board for ladies' privileges and women's activist trailblazers*". Some major female authors of 20th century beside Charlotte Bronte, Virginia wolf are Fannie Hurst, Willa Cather. After the death of Willa Cather, J. Donald Adams wrote in the New York Times that "No American novelist was more purely an artist," Four years later, George Whicher declared that "No American writer can be surer than she to catch at last the esteem of any kind of family down the line." The shortfall of a nitty gritty account is presumably because of the snares, entanglements, and blockades she set in the biographer's way, and up to this point adequate material has not been accessible to figure out in excess of a medium-length life. While no memoir at any point can be authoritative, this study contains significantly more material than any past one and goes impressively past my own prior life story, as well as the endeavours of others, in introducing a daily existence size picture of this wonderful lady.

Keywords- feminism, suffrage, Great Britain, male, female, gender, sexuality, sexual oppression.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will look at the evolution of feminism in English literature during 20th century, as well as briefly explore how feminism is seen today. Feminism is a widespread phenomenon that continues to be debated; I've been interested in it for a long time, which is why I've chosen to write about it. Social change is an adjustment of society in general. Changes that happened in friendly connections are social changes. Women's have been key specialists of social change on account of colossal changes in our day-to-day existence. The association of women's in encompassing political developments, for example, communism and the moderation development,

propelled a specific sort of composing that included both inventive and political texts which analysed the issues and issues confronting women's when the new century rolled over. The nineteenth century was one of the most important times in British history; it was a century marked by substantial changes for women, and the twentieth century followed suit. Literature, as well as society and women's status in relation to males, evolved during the 19th and 20th centuries. Nonetheless, it was the suffragette movement that kicked off this revolution of gender equality. Feminism as a movement has progressed greatly over the ages, however the name feminism may still have a negative connotation for some. Since the commencement of the nineteenth century, women in the United Kingdom have been hostile for their rights and independence, with the goal of having the same occasions for education, employment, and life as men. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, women in the United Kingdom have been fighting for their rights and independence, with the goal of having the same opportunities for education, employment, and life as men. The double of an independent woman has evolved over time, from a woman who was expected to be a wife, mother, and housekeeper, as Martin Luther put it: "Women should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children. A woman is, or at least should be, a friendly, courteous, and a merry companion in life, the honour and ornament of the house, and inclined to tenderness, for thereunto are they chiefly created, to bear children, and to be the pleasure, joy and solace of their husbands," to a woman who does not require the company of a man in order to be happy, and whose occupation is whatever she desires. Due to the fact that feminism is not just related to women, one of the authors is a male writer, the thesis will introduce four writers and investigate the distinctions between male and female writing on the issue of feminism. Charlotte Bronte, Thomas Hardy and Virginia Woolf will be discussed, and the works will be *Jane Eyre* by Bronte and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. Both these female writers were feminists meanwhile, some people thought of Hardy as a misogynist, which is something the thesis will look into. Different perspectives on sexuality, as well as homosexuality, will be discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE EXPANSION OF FEMINISM

1.1 A definition of Feminism

The word feminism comes from French word 'féminisme' and according to the Cambridge online dictionary feminism is "the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state." The feminist movement encompasses social and political views that deal with concerns of gender inequality. For decades, the movement has existed. British women began to combat oppression in the mid-1850s, when the first feminists began to espouse their views on injustice and the first suffragette movement arose; since then, women have begun to work on achieving their aims of having the same rights and holding the same social standing as men.

The feminist framework also indicates how problems are defined and the kinds of questions to be asked. For example, according to definition in Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development written by Jane L. Parpart et al inequality results from "the need to establish unequal incentives to motivate the most talented people to do the most important jobs efficiently in society," other definition from the same book also says that the inequality results from "the practice of providing differential rewards to keep a less powerful working class fragmented by gender and race."

Brief historical background

Women in the United Kingdom and France were among the first to struggle for their rights, education, and, above all, respect.

According to **Simone de Beauvoir**, "the first time we see a woman take up her pen in defence of her sex was when Christine de Pizan wrote *Epitre au Dieud'Amour* (Epistle to the God of Love) in the 15th century."

Mary Wollstonecraft was a woman who, as Arianne Chernock says in her book *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism*, "spoke up, quite loudly, for what had been until then a largely silent section of the human race".

Florence Nightingale, who was convinced that women had a right to education, was also a major social reformer in the early nineteenth century “*all the potential of men but none of the opportunities,*”. She fought for improved education for women and pioneered the relevance of nursing schools.

Nonetheless, not only did feminist women work to ensure equal possibilities for both sexes, but feminist males also contributed to women's freedom, albeit in small numbers. Not only did feminist women work to ensure equal opportunities for both sexes, but feminist males also assisted in the advancement of women's freedom, though there were few of them. One of them was a philosopher from England.

John Stuart Mill, a political economist and feminist, was influenced by his wife.

Harriet Taylor Mill, a proponent of women's rights, once said: “*The principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.*”

The women's liberation movement, which arose after WWII and focused on achieving legal and social equality for women, as well as abolishing discrimination, was the second wave of feminism. This time period was also seen as a continuation of the first wave of feminism; in fact, the name “first wave” was coined after the second wave appeared. A new phrase was required because the second wave's purpose was slightly different. Women's cultural and political inequities were viewed by second-wave feminists as a source of oppression as “*inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures.*”

Not only were the issues raised above discussed, but rape also played a key role in second-wave feminism, and continues to do so today.

Insight of Feminism recently

The third wave of feminism, often known as post-feminism, began in the 1990s and continues to this day. Post-feminism refers to the second wave feminism's perceived failings, and it continues to fight for the same principles as earlier waves. However, the movement's orientation has altered slightly, with a greater emphasis on the individual self rather than governmental processes and rules. Feminists are also more diverse now; the first and second waves were largely Westerners, middle-class, white women, whereas the third wave feminists are women of many nationalities, colours, religions, and socioeconomic origins.

Women have gained more recognition in society during the 1990s, not only in the United Kingdom but also in other countries throughout the world. In September 2014, the United Nations announced a new campaign called HeForShe, with British actress Emma Watson serving as the Women Global Goodwill Ambassador. Watson is not only a well-known figure, but she also takes part in it. During the campaign, and in her talks at conferences, she drew a lot of attention. “*is not only women issue but rather human rights issue.*”

Virginia wolf: Virginia Woolf's full name was Adeline Virginia Woolf. Virginia Stephen (born January 25, 1882, London, England—died March 28, 1941, near Rodmell, Sussex) was an English novelist whose nonlinear narrative idea influenced the genre greatly. Woolf authored ground-breaking writings on creative theory, literary history, women's literature, and power politics. She is best known for her novels, particularly *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). She experimented with many styles of biographical writing, authored painterly short fictions, and wrote a lifetime of brilliant letters to her friends and family. However, as Plan and Seller point out in their book *A History of Feminism*, she was a leading feminist and an important person at the turn of the twentieth century.

Some thought she was a critic of literature, “*overly genteel, far too ladylike to be taken seriously, part of effete Bloomsbury, and even those who praised her, like David Daiches, agreed her art was “limited.”*” Woolf is considered to be a feminist and feminist themes are dominant in her books, her focus on the topic even arose after the World War II. The feminist movement reached a turning point at the turn of the century, when the word feminism became more common in society and women began to fight for suffrage and the freedom to

work in general. Plain and Sellers go on to say that during this time, “female writers were attacking patriarchal attitudes, cultural misogyny and the ingrained belittlement of women.”

Charlotte Bronte

21 April 1816 – 31 March 1855) was an English novelist and poet. She was the eldest of the three Bronte sisters who lived to maturity and whose works became English literary classics. She enlisted at Roe Head School in January 1831, when she was 14 years old. She returned in 1835 as a governess after leaving the next year to teach her sisters, Emily and Anne, at home. She began working as a governess for the Sidgwick family in 1839, but left after just a few months to return to Haworth, where she and her sisters founded a school that failed to attract students. Instead, they resorted to writing, and Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell were their first published pseudonyms in 1846. It is even argued in the infamous Elizabeth Rigby's critique of *Jane Eyre* that if the book had been written by a woman, it would have been better- “she would forfeited the society of her own sex.” In general, Charlotte Bronte focused on basic female characters that sought fulfilment in their lives and who focused on living a life according to their own principles, focusing on honouring themselves rather than what society dictated. Charlotte Bronte built a woman that was simple, humble, morally strong, and intelligent in every way. Jane, like the author, does not rely on a guy to make her feel worthy; instead, she finds her self-worth in her willpower and brains. Jane Bronte, according to Ellen Moers in her book *Literary Women*, exhibits “resentment toward a society that has scorned her while maintaining a detachment toward humanity as a whole.”

OBJECTIVES

1. Difference between man and woman
2. Self-awareness

Women in the Western world had entirely reinterpreted their roles in practically every social, political, and cultural sector by the mid-twentieth century. While the fight for equal rights and recognition for women would continue well into the 1950s and beyond, the first major steps toward such changes were made at the turn of the twentieth century, with women writers, photographers, artists, activists, and workers blazing a new path for future generations of women.

The purpose of this thesis was to look at the evolution of feminism in the United Kingdom. I emphasised on the phenomenon's history and also highlighted how feminism is perceived today; nevertheless, the main focus was on the disparities in writing styles. A group of writers, each from a distinct era the books I selected to look into were *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte, and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf (1925). As the feminist movement progressed through the centuries, so did the literary style, and the necessity to address new issues such as sexuality, homosexuality, and the value of freedom became increasingly obvious. During the nineteenth century, writers began to stress the importance of women's independence, as well as their demand for recognition and freedom. Whereas, in the twentieth century, when women finally acquired the right to vote, gained respect in society, and were more equal to men, writers wrote more openly about new issues, which is also one of the major differences in the evolution of literature. Some of the topics addressed in twentieth-century writing would have been considered taboo in the nineteenth century, but they included: Take, for example, religious rejection, homosexuality, and sexuality in general.

References

- [1]. Bentley, Nick. *Contemporary British Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2008). Accessed March 16, 2016. https://books.google.cz/books?id=Ekwcyw_v0HgC&lpg=PA96&dq=oranges%20are%20not%20the%20only%20fruit&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false.
- [2]. Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992. Shukla, Bhaskar A. *Feminism: From Mary Wollstonecraft to Betty Friedan*. Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2007.
- [3]. Cambridge Dictionaries Online. “feminism.” Accessed January 29, 2016. <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feminism>.

-
- [4]. "Emma Watson at the HeForShe Campaign 2014 – Official UN Video." YouTube Video, 1:52. Posted by UN Nations, September 22, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkjW9PZBRfk>.
- [5]. Fulton, Elaine. "Mrs. Dalloway: Sexuality in post-war London." *Examiner* (Nov. 17, 2011). Accessed March 27, 2016. <http://www.examiner.com/article/mrs-dallowaysexuality-post-war-London>.
- [6]. Network "GWANET - Gender and Water in Central Asia." "History and Theory of Feminism." Accessed January 29, 2016. http://www.gender.cawaterinfo.net/knowledge_base/rubricator/feminism_e.htm
- [7]. Woolf, Virginia. "Orlando: A Biography". In *Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*, 393-560. London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2005.
- [8]. Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996.
- [9]. Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015