The Concept of Feminism

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Feminism, Gender Inequality, and Modern Society

Modern society is evaluated through the level of feminism incorporated into its main folds of communicating with both genders. Though the current societal trends are considered to be modern, there is still a lot of evidence of inequality among men and women on different platforms, such as pay scale, rights, and adequate job opportunities. The feminist concept is not new. Rather, it is rooted in the 1960s when, for the first time, women were considered as an identity and were given the status of individuals who had the needs and rights over their personal likes and dislikes. Jane Eyre was the initial and the most authentic source of representation of modern women. The novel revolves around the character Victorian, who is the true representation of the feminist beacon for women of the current age.

The development and modernism of any nation are analyzed through its growth in society as a whole. Gender discrimination topics have been debatable in democratic societies. However, the feminist concept inculcated in society took one step ahead and ensured that the female gender was given equal rights to men. The contemporary world is still facing issues like economic, political, and social inequality among males and females. However, positive steps have been taken, such as women's rights, and rules against women's discrimination have been thoroughly followed in every developed nation these days. Unfortunately, these circumstances have not reduced the number of cases reported. The statistics of developed countries are alarming in terms of complaints lodged by female victims, and the scale would be higher for underdeveloped countries.

Rights such as sexual orientation, the right to abortion, medical facilities, and equal pay and status are still under discussion. Even newer concerns like harassment at the workplace have been reported to be increasing with the growing modernism in society. Females working outside the convenience of their homes have been facing issues like sexual harassment and judgmental opinions from society. It may be questioned: why feminism? Why are new laws developed to define feminism? Feminism is just the division of gender into two roles, which is mandatory for performing social performances or acting within their given roles (hooks, 2000).

Feminist Themes in Jane Eyre

Society, no matter how much it grows or becomes modern, is still defined in transitional roles. So, does the novel 'Jane Eyre' justify the feminist approach from traditional society? Charlotte Bronte has written this critical novel presenting the unique situation of the depicted characters, which is near reality. Jane Eyre has the ability to present this opinion not through the high values displayed in the novel, but she was able to speak it through her actions and speech. The novel presents the time when the success of a woman was judged through her marriage status. Most importantly, females were categorized according to their beauty and financial status.

The author has picked this character unconventionally. Jane is an orphan at a time when a female of her age with no fortune is vulnerable in society. However, she was able to break this stereotype through her age. It has been clearly stated and repeated by the writer that she is an unattractive woman, thus making it more interesting for the readers how such a female has been able to survive in society depending upon the strong categorization of gender on different standards.

Jane's actions represent the strong will and the focus of her life. Unlike other women her age, Jane did not seem interested in getting married and was tied up with her responsibilities. It is clear through an interaction between Rochester and Jane. When Rochester is disguised as an old woman and asks Jane about her future choices, she simply states that she does not want to opt for the vows that end up in catastrophic marriages. A woman's opinion is certainly against the norms of society, and it shows how she is capable of expressing her individual opinion over societal limitations.
It showed how she was able to confidently carry her individual self in a male-governed society. Thus, it is considered the main reason why Jane has been able to speak against the unjust behavior and the inequality towards herself and other females like her. For Jane, every individual, whether belonging to her family, her teacher, or the person she loved, anyone bullying her or making her feel any lesser, was subjected to the same reaction to prove that she is not a weak being and is able to defend herself.

Jane, being a young girl, had the courage to speak for her aunt when she was treated unfairly in the red room. At such a young age, with the motivation of judging that the following behavior with the female is unjust and standing to protect her from it, she is courageous enough to speak for the motivation and character of Jane.

Resistance, Independence, and Female Self-Assertion

Jane has never responded politely to any unfair request, and her tone speaks a lot about her opinion. For this reason, an orphan like her with no fortune was expected to accept every demand without any hesitation, but Jane refused. Thus, this represents that feminism is not something which was recently

introduced but consisted of qualities inculcated in females that were never reported in history. However, Jane Eyre's novel is the true depiction of such females.

This spirit of Jane was the beginning of her future relationships with the coming males in her life, especially beginning with Mr. Brocklehurst. Another proof of her feminism could be evaluated through her relationship with Rochester (United Nations, 1979). When she was a governess, her role was not given much importance and respect in society, but even then, she didn't consider herself inferior to Rochester in any way, not in terms of status and spirituality.
Jane's dialogue with Rochester explains her stance when she says, "Do you think that I am poor, orphan and little make me any lesser in the society? And does this make me soulless and heartless? Indeed not! My heart has complete soul and determination."

The above-stated opinion clearly indicates that Jane wanted equality among both genders in terms of spirituality and respect in society. Jane was clear about her opinion and categorized herself as a spiritual individual who cannot be defined in the categories by society for some marriages, which may not even be the source of happiness in her life.

Marriage, Autonomy, and the Preservation of Identity

Even when Rochester tried to buy her jewels and clothes to compel her into marriage, she simply refused, saying that it would not only make her lose her individuality but her true free spirit. St. John showed anger and bitterness towards Jane's opinion that it is a complete right and choice for every woman and that if she does not want to get married, she will not.

The male-dominated society of Victorian times used to consider it a sin and infidelity for a woman to reject the proposal of getting married. Marriage was considered a safe haven for females of that time, and a woman rejecting it meant that she was following any nefarious design. Thus, taking into account all these encounters, Jane Eyre is considered to be the representation of a true feminist figure. However, the women in the current society are not judged for their marriage status but are judged on other things that are believed to be more important in the current society. Issues like equal pay, status, facilities, and the right to be respected are still challenged and show that there have been many controlling characters in the feminist society who are still following the masculine opinion.

The novel Jane Eyre clearly reflects the opinion that even in a male-dominated society, a woman can raise her head high and maintain her individuality through her actions and speech. In the moments of hard life, the woman shall have the courage to face it with deep desolation and motivation that she will not bend herself to the storm. Rather, she will move the storm in a newer direction.

References

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