



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**English**

**Rise of global feminist movements  
An emotional and intellectual analysis**

**KEY WORDS:** The Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, transition, humanism, feminism, feminist movement, waves, second sex.

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**ABSTRACT**

The article makes an attempt to decipher the how and the why of feminists' movements. The essay goes on to vindicate that the feminism is a source of new awareness, power and knowledge to the contemporary thinking. The subject matter of feminism is women's past and contemporary history which brings consciousness into undiscovered aspects of women's lives and how it was influenced by the happenings of the Middle Ages like the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Along with the French Revolution came the dawn of modern world and with it arrived a new age for women too. In the 18th century, women had no rights-they were the property of their husbands or fathers. Inspired by the French Revolution, women began to challenge this situation. For the last two hundred years, women have fiercely and assiduously combated for their rights. Their struggle is sometimes called the women's movement that came in "waves". The term includes different campaigns embracing different stages and dimensions.

**Introduction**

Transformation may require two modalities for its occurrence: internal and external. If internal change does not occur naturally and automatically, change is brought about externally; by coercion as it were. This principle implies in the case of feminists' movements too because every revolution has its intrinsic and extrinsic causalities. Every movement has a motto, a cause, a leitmotif, an objective, a beginning, a slogan. Clement McNaspy enunciates that change is inevitable, seems incontrovertible. Said so, he investigates the mode, the amount and the measure of change- how fast, how profound and how encompassing? In the case of feminists' movements too similar queries come into mind. What could be the beginning of a feminist movement? How did it trigger? Could it be female discontent? Could it be changes in socioeconomic variables? Could it be the growth in the literacy rate of the women? There is no single aspect that prompted and promoted to such a movement rather; there are various accumulated dynamics that resulted in such resistance. As the chapter unfolds itself, the inherent leitmotifs will be clear. For now this is enough to consider that in any society there are both men and women. When one talks of human development, it automatically includes both the species of the human being. No society can boast of advancement only due to the men of valor without the help of women in one way or another. In spite of this, a big slice of population continues to be excluded from the benefit of the development. Bijaya Kumar Nayak opines, "Women, who are about the half of the total population, receive a meagre share of developmental opportunities. Much is discussed in various commissions, committees and conferences on equality, development and empowerment of women. But reality is far from speculative theory/truth"<sup>2</sup>.

Today, with the spread of all round education, the impact of feminism is profound. It has transformed the academic face of literature and unsurprisingly so because women are innately creative and imaginative in this field. The importance of feminine values in the life of societies is tangibly felt more than ever. The most fundamental value related to women's actual lives is "the capacity for the other" rather than "living for themselves". Women preserve the deep intuition of those actions which elicit life, and contribute to the growth and protection of the other. Kurien Kunnumpuram observes, "It is women, in the end, who even in very desperate situations, as attested by history past and present, possess a singular capacity to persevere in adversity, to keep life going even in extreme situations, to hold tenaciously in the future, and finally to remember with tears the value of human life"<sup>3</sup>. Women have an irreplaceable role embracing all aspects of family and societal life which involves human relationships and caring for others. It is in the family that humans learn to be human. And in every family, the mother has the most important and the most fundamental role to play. Such is the background within

which the feminism is being propagated and expounded about. Tremendous influence of feminism in everyday life is being extended far and beyond. Feminist movements have changed societies, particularly in the West, by achieving women's suffrage, gender neutrality, equal pay for women and the right to enter into contracts and own property. McNaspy quotes Newman who opined, "...here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often"<sup>4</sup>. At present, women's movements have grown multifaceted. In actual fact women's predicament is almost common universally, nevertheless, the nature of the problem varies as per the situation so also the apprehension, credence and response differ from person to person and country to country as well. Feminists around the world have differed in causes, goals, and intentions depending on time, culture, and country.

**1.1 Historical background**

The three significant factors of the world history might remotely beacon as backgrounds to the movement-the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment. By renaissance is meant reawakening of learning of the ancient Greek and Latin classics. Renaissance first started in Italy in the fourteenth century, Francesco Petrarch and Boccaccio being the pioneers of this great revival. Through the writings of the two great Italian writers the Renaissance found its way into France, Germany and England. The logic behind Renaissance easily finding place in the neighbouring countries like France, Germany and England is because it propagated and catered humanism. In the words of Jayne Parsons, "From its birthplace in Italy, the renaissance spread to embrace most of western Europe, and deeply affected the way educated people looked at the world and its purpose. Inspired by the study of ancient Greek and Roman society, Renaissance scholars, thinkers and artists abandoned medieval pessimism and constructed humanism- a new, pessimistic outlook for the future, in which men and women played a central role and created a civilized environment"<sup>5</sup>. Joseph Valiamanglam discovers that "The Renaissance brought a whole new self-awareness of history, of humanism and of individuality, symbolized by the new dignity of the body in the art of Michelangelo, or by the new drama of individual consciousness in the plays of Shakespeare"<sup>6</sup>.

The Renaissance also brought about transition from the Middle Ages<sup>7</sup> to the modern world reviving the art and literature in Europe in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries based on the ancient Greek learning. Around this time there erupted another phenomenon called the Reformation. These two movements started almost simultaneously running parallel to each other but later drifted apart. In fact, initially they were complementary to each other in their ideals and goals but later became opposed to each other. "The Renaissance was a movement in the field of art and literature: The Reformation was a movement in the field of religion. The Renaissance aroused the intellect and the aesthetic

faculties: The Reformation awakened the spiritual nature"<sup>8</sup>. In the words of Veliamangalam, "The spirit of renaissance gave birth to the intellectual movement known as humanism which was promoted by secular studies. Medieval intellectual life up to that period was dominated by scholar clerics who had developed scholastic philosophy and theology which promoted God centred knowledge based on revealed truths as the ultimate source of knowledge. Humanists also took human nature and human dignity seriously"<sup>9</sup>.

The Renaissance and the Reformation can be viewed as revolt and revival simultaneously. The Renaissance was a revolt against the theological trammels. So far, scholarship had predominantly been the concern of the church. Theology had a cruise control over men's thoughts and feelings. The church governed the individual as well as the social life. Ecclesiastical rules, principles and ideas had the final word over the private and public life of the people. On the other hand, the medieval habit of mind was persistently nagging the adventurous spirit of men smarting under the strictly enforced theological dogmas. As providence would have it, the impetus came from the reawakening in Italy for the revival of the study of the literature of classical antiquity. The two celebrated Italian writers, Petrarch and Boccaccio were the leaders of this great revival in Italy. This wave of refreshing breeze stirred and stimulated entire Europe France, Germany and England being immensely inspired. Hukum Singh observes:

The influx of the spirit swept away the sway of the ecclesiastical ideas and the medieval temperament. It expressed the intellectual horizon of the continent. Immense enthusiasm was awakened not only for the art, but also for the moral ideas of Greece and Rome. The entire atmosphere was surcharged with the awakening of a new spirit in the life of the people. A new culture was developing in England. It was called humanism. Under the impact of humanism developed sense of beauty, delight in life, free secular spirit and love for freedom and individual liberty<sup>10</sup>.

Just as the Renaissance was a movement in the field of art and literature, the Reformation was a movement in the field of religion. The Reformation started as a revolt against the authority of the Pope in Rome. The Reformation awakened the spiritual nature while challenged the need of having meaningless rituals that abounded and crippled the life and faith of the people. The Reformation was a revolt against the fact that some Catholic officials had become rich and corrupt whereas ordinary priests remained poor and ignorant. Scholars began to demand reforms that would restore the Church's old purity. The pope, bishops and priests were the most learned people of the period and people trusted them too. Kings and princes were subservient to them functioning in subordination to the church leaders with the belief that the spiritual power had supremacy over temporal power. Soon the clergy began to amass enormous wealth and privileges causing great resentment and revengeful attitudes among the nobles and the ordinary people. For such people, secularism would certainly have been a handy ideology to dislodge the authority and power of the church. Hence, "The Reformation in its opposition to Church authority advocated the separation of the Church and state. The French Revolution was an attack both on political and ecclesiastical authorities"<sup>12</sup>.

The period of Enlightenment closely followed the two preceding occurrences of the human history. The term Enlightenment is translated from German word *Aufklärung*. "It is a term applied to the aspects of rationalism and humanitarianism from the mid-seventeenth to early nineteenth century in European thought"<sup>13</sup>. The period of Enlightenment practically pervaded and embraced every aspect of human and societal life calling for transformation. "Among its ancestors were Rene Descartes (1595-1650) in philosophy, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) in politics, John Locke (1632-1704) in psychology and above all Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) in science. The American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Revolution (1789) were its political manifestations"<sup>14</sup>.

### 1.1.1 Point of departure

The school of thoughts like the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment directly or obliquely amounted to the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution which definitively became the yardsticks and can rightly be said the Pauline conversion that changed the course of human history for better. These factors of the history tantamount the paradigm shifts in power politics. For example, the balance of power passed on from the land-owning aristocracy to the owners of industrial units which employed large numbers of people. The mill-owners and their employees had developed different perspectives. In the political arena there were revolutions of far reaching consequences. For instance, "The American Revolution led to the Declaration of Independence (1776) by the thirteen colonies. The French Revolution was a shattering and sundering event which affected the whole of Western Europe in several ways"<sup>15</sup>. Nageswar Rao further reflects and then quotes William Hazlitt, "The French Revolution seemed to be the great divide and the beginning of a new era in the history of mankind...There was a mighty ferment in the heads of statesmen and poets, kings and people...It was a time of promise, a renewal of the world"<sup>16</sup>. The French Revolution was the first of its kind that led to many more reformations within the countries in Europe and in Americas. Its three catchy slogans, liberty, equality and fraternity promised a free and egalitarian society which made home in the mind and hearts of most of the sensible human persons across the globe. Nageswar Rao affirms:

Monarchy was abolished and the feudal structure was demolished. The principle of the dissolution of hierarchies carried into literature meant that the epic and tragedy which were at the top of the literary pyramid had to yield place to such forms as the lyric, the ode and the ballad. In language, the cultivated speech of the elite was sought to be replaced by the speech of the common people. In the choice of themes, great events had to make way for more commonplace incidents. The characters depicted in poetry need not be kings or queens; humbler folk like a leech-gatherer, or a highland lass, or even an idiot boy, is good enough for poetic composition. Thus the French revolution caused a democratization of literature in genre, in language, in themes and in characters. The spirit of the age demanded these changes and the creative writer responded enthusiastically<sup>17</sup>.

The French Revolution gave impetus to the people that they could freely raise their voices against poverty and injustice. Jayne claims, "The French Revolution swept away the power of the monarchy and ended the traditional social order. When the revolution began, poverty was widespread, the king was unpopular, and people resented the clergy and nobility"<sup>18</sup>. Hukum Singh is of the opinion that "The French Revolution was, in more than one sense, a world event rather than a domestic event of France"<sup>19</sup>.

### 1.1.2 Trend setter

The three great key-words of the French Revolution, Equality, Liberty and Fraternity indubitably shaped the fate of many a nations' affecting their thought and politics. Hukum Singh expresses his conviction, "In its deepest impulses the French Revolution should be regarded as a continuation of the Renaissance and the Reformation movements. It was the heritage of all mankind reaped in France. Its spirit was that of American Revolution and in the manifestation and extent of success it compares with the Russian Revolution of 1917"<sup>20</sup>. The French Revolution may have had major impact on the world scene but it had itself its base on the Renaissance. Against this background the Renaissance is referred to as trend setter because it gave birth to humanism and the reformation that would have bearing on the overall life of the people influencing their thinking pattern. Humanism basically denotes man's concern for himself. Humanism refers to the classical writing because its authors were humanistic in outlook. During the period of renaissance, human values came to be recognized as permanent values. They were sought to be enriched by the heritage of antiquity. Like the renaissance, humanism too affected the literature of the period. As has been aforementioned that reformation is yet another notable result of renaissance but it touched the field of religion.

The church was the most prominent influencer of the lives of the people. During the time of the renaissance, the church too seemed to be corrupt. Instinctively, writers like John Wycliffe and Martin Luther attacked the corruption. As a result, King Henry VIII went against the pope destroying monasteries. The King became more powerful than the pope. Translation of the Bible became more important than the preacher. Soon afterwards, Elizabeth became the absolute ruler. Smita Mishra concludes, "Like humanism, Reformation too, along with Renaissance, affected the life and literature of the people. Thus the Renaissance can be called an important intellectual revolution strengthened by humanism and Reformation"<sup>21</sup>. The Renaissance as a movement was shaped by various factors. Smita Mishra notes:

First the Tudor monarchs themselves shaped the Renaissance. Political and social order was restored and thus the climate was prepared for the flourishing of literature. Secondly, Renaissance got royal patronage. King Henry VIII was a great friend of the new learning. He was fond of music, art and literature. Later on in the reign of Queen Elizabeth Renaissance achieved its flowering stage. Thirdly, England came in contact with several other European countries because of trade and political factors. England was thus brought into touch with literary and social influences of the whole continent. The fourth factor that shaped renaissance was the invention of the printing press by Caxton. It made possible to produce many copies of the new books. Similarly, classical scholars came back with scholarship and started schools where Latin and Greek were taught. Finally, scientific theories like those of Galileo and Copernicus also contributed much to the preparation of the Renaissance. The Renaissance along with humanism and Reformation left considerable impact on literature of the period<sup>22</sup>.

One will further wonder why the Renaissance has been categorized as the trend setter. The Renaissance has been so perceived for the simple reason because its impacts were multifaceted which embraced and shaped practically every aspect of European life. So far, it was the church that had monopoly over the lives of people. The Renaissance provided multidimensional faceted life which would enhance the overall lifestyle of the whole of Europe. The first of its impact was on universities for they were the icons of the repositories of all learning. The scholars apart, it influenced the educationists of the era who wrote their works modeled on Italian works. It further had its impact on the classical mythology and ancient literature. The ancient Greek mythologies furnished mines of information on every science. Soon those invaluable mythologies were translated into different languages, English profiting the most for the latter found a window on the enchanted world of classical antiquity. As has been aforesaid that Italy is the birthplace of Renaissance, Italian influence on the literature and high voltage moral ways of living were hugely advantageous. People found sheer delight in the beauty of language. The ancient treasures of Latin and Greek literature transformed the whole melody and beauty of language. People became intoxicated with words, as it were. The spirit of discovery and adventures also find their share of influence on literature. The voyagers bequeathed themselves with the splendor and beauty of natural panorama. The books on adventure and natural scenic beauty opened new horizons on many a counts. Poetry, prose and drama found a new horizon to tread on. Literature found itself on a new height as never before. Recalling the boons it has brought to the human society at large, Smita Mishra enchants:

...spread its influence over all aspects of culture, scholarship, literature, science, art architecture, and music. The principal channel of this influence was Italian culture but behind the Italian arts and letters, lay Greek and Roman classics, and directly or indirectly, Greece and Rome contributed most to the belletristic aspects of English Renaissance. But the 'rebirth' was more than a revival of interest in classical antiquity; it was a tangible but universal spirit of freedom, of novelty, of living, a thirst for seeking out what was new and stimulating either in geographical realms or those of art and thought. It was the dawn of the modern world<sup>23</sup>.

## 2.2 Eruption of women's movement

Along with the dawn of modern world, came a new age for women too. Jayne Parson writes, "In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, women had no rights-they were the property of their husbands or fathers. Inspired by the French Revolution, women began to challenge this situation"<sup>24</sup>. For the last two hundred years, women have fiercely and assiduously combated for their rights. Their struggle is sometimes called the women's movement, although the term includes different campaigns embracing different stages and dimensions. According to Ramesh Bhandari, "Most feminist historians assert that all movements that work to overturn gender inequality and obtain women's rights should be considered feminist movements, even when they did not (or do not) apply the term to themselves. Other historians assert that the term should be limited to the modern feminist movement and its descendants"<sup>25</sup>. The history of the modern feminist movement is divided into three waves. Jayne Parsons continues, "The first wave of organized feminism – the fight for women's rights- appeared during the 1800s, and was concerned with legal rights, and the right to vote. During the 1960s, a new wave of protest- the women's liberation movement- appeared that made women's rights a global issue. By the 1990s, the women's movement had gained many victories and changed society"<sup>26</sup>. Parson mentions the purpose and the year while Bhandari includes time and place however omits the purpose as he says, "The word "feminism" appeared first in France in the 1880s, Great Britain in 1880s and the United States in 1910. The Oxford English Dictionary lists 1894 for "feminism", and 1895 for "feminist". Prior to that time "Women's Rights" was probably the term used most commonly"<sup>27</sup>.

Human beings have certain rights, for example, to say what one wants, to be treated fairly and not to be discriminated against because of one's gender, colour, age, religion, sexual orientation or ethnic group etc. these rights pertain to every individual no matter where one goes. At a certain juncture, women felt that they were continuously and conscientiously being deprived of something fundamental to them. In this context, Hukum Singh voices that "The feminists demanded social and political rights on equality basis with men. Mary Wollstonecraft's 'A Vindication for the right of Women' laid the foundation of the Feminist movement. Virginia Woolf's 'A Room of One's Own' and Simon de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex' followed next"<sup>28</sup>. In some way it could be argued that the feminist movement was ignited by male writers who analyzed women characters in their writings from male point of view. Later feminist movement began to be founded on philosophical, sociological and linguistic grounds of Karl Marx, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction. Four models have been described on this movement: biological, psychoanalytic, linguistic and cultural. Biological model concerns the physiognomy of women that claims woman as inferior to man. Psychoanalytic model locates the difference between the psyches of men from that of women<sup>29</sup>.

### 2.2.1 First wave

Modern Western feminist history is split into three periods, commonly called "waves", each with slightly different aims based on prior progress. Consequently, history of feminism is the chronological narrative of the movements and ideologies aimed at equal rights for women. It cannot definitively be determined who could actually be accredited- Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), or Madame Bodichon (1827-1890) as the "founder" or "originator" of the women's movement. Aims, circumstances and timeframe might differ but chronologically, as Hukum Singh too mentions Mary's name, her contribution could be examined first. Jayne Parson records, "In 1792 an Englishwoman, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), wrote *Vindication of the rights of Women*. She deplored the fact that married women were kept at home "confined in cages, like the feathered race", and called for an end to their oppression"<sup>30</sup>. Mary Wollstonecraft was an English writer, philosopher and most importantly, an advocate of women's rights. She married a philosopher as well but unfortunately she died days after she gave birth to a baby girl. But During her brief career, she wrote on several issues and to various audiences. Her writings include, novels, treatises, a travel narrative, a history of the French Revolution as she lived its cause and effect directly, a conduct book

and a children's book. Theodore Pappas sums up, "Her early *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) foreshadowed her mature work on the place of women in society, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), whose core is a plea for equality in the education of men and women. The vindication is widely regarded as the founding document of modern Feminism"<sup>31</sup>.

There is a striking similarity between Mary Wollstonecraft and Barbara Leigh Smith (later famously known as Madame Bodichon). Nationality apart, their mindset, their profession and vocation bear tremendous similarities. Just as Mary, Barbara too was an Englishwoman who turned out to be an educationist, artist and a leading feminist and women's rights activist. She was one of the foremost founders of the women's rights movement. She reinstated what Mary had earlier iterated and certainly added another important dimension to it. Jayne Parson writes, "During the 1800s, middle-class women, such as Madame Bodichon (formerly Barbara Leigh Smith) campaigned for a married woman's right to keep her own property, and for the right to education and meaningful work"<sup>32</sup>.

If the women in Britain were conscious of their identity, place and role in family, society, nation and in history, can one imagine what would follow in America? Women in America too had their own fare share of 'insurrection' manifested in one way or another. One such phenomenon was fight for the vote. Jayne Parson remarks, "From the 1840s, American and British women focused on fighting for the vote, because they believed that only by voting could they improve their situation. The Cause, as it became known, was a long struggle involving hundreds of thousands of women"<sup>33</sup>. Priya D. Wanjari finds it appropriate to compare Sarah Margaret Fuller Ossoli (1810-1850) of the United States to Mary Wollstonecraft of Britain (accidentally, both of them have had significantly a short span of life). Comparison sounds justified because just as Mary Wollstonecraft, Margaret Fuller too was a women's rights advocate who through her book, *Woman in the nineteenth century* published in 1845, initiated women's fight for rights. Her book profoundly affected the women's rights movement which had its formal beginning at Seneca Falls, New York, three years later. She could rightly be called the 'godmother' who contributed significantly to the American Renaissance in literature and mid-nineteenth century reform movements. Priya Wanjari gathers few other American prominent women personalities who joined Margaret Fuller to tread a path that is both difficult and troublesome. They include Lucretia Coffin Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone and Susan B. Anthony etc<sup>34</sup>.

Jayne Parson then goes on to record the timeline that highlights all such occurrences worldwide. There is a long gap between the first and the second wave but that does not necessarily signify nothing happened during this period of time. Ever since the first seed of women's movement sown by Mary Wollstonecraft, something significant did occur sporadically and periodically in some part of the globe or the other in achieving the desired result demanded for. For example, in 1830s Anti-slavery campaign stimulates growth of women's movement in USA. In 1848 first- ever formal women's rights convention took place in Seneca Falls, USA. In 1869 Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed National Woman Suffrage Association in USA. The rights the British and American women initiated and fought for in 1840s, eventually bore fruit after fifty years as women in New Zealand were the first to gain the vote in 1893. In 1908, socialists in the USA set aside one day for women's suffrage demonstrations. In 1968, women workers at Ford, UK, called for strike for equal pay. In 1970 Germaine Greer, an Australian, wrote *The Female Eunuch* calling for women's liberation. In the 1970s, feminists revived what the socialists had done in 1908 adjudging it something appropriate whereby today women worldwide celebrate 8 March as international women's day taking silver wattle as the women's day emblem. In 1975, equal rights laws passed in United Kingdom<sup>35</sup>. Thus, a small candle ignited by Mary Wollstonecraft in the form of *A Vindication of the Right of Women* took the form of a bonfire to enflame and enlighten every woman to walk into the path of equality and justice.

## 2.2.2 Second wave

As has been observed above that there may have been too long an intermittent gap between the first wave and the second but the fire was not totally extinguished but was all dormant like a volcano. An opportune moment awaited for its eruption as though women on intercontinental basis were looking for sunshine to make hey. Aforementioned issues, associations and movements were building up towards women's liberation movement and such is the period in which Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) came into the scene. If Mary Wollstonecraft and Barbara Smith could be endorsed as the pioneering figures in early stirrings and inception of the first wave, Simone de Beauvoir could be recognized as the champion of modern feminism who furnished the impetus to initiate the second wave. Jayne Parson informs, "French philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir (1908-86), was a major figure in modern feminism. In 1949, she wrote *Le Deuxieme Sexe (The Second Sex)*, in which she drew on history, art, literature, and psychology to show how men had consistently denied women's identity. Her book was very influential, and de Beauvoir herself campaigned for women's rights"<sup>36</sup>. The second sex addresses to men and women who, directly through ethnicity or indirectly through their education, inherit Western European tradition of thought that is primarily anti-feminist. Against this constituency of mind, Simone de Beauvoir had the courage and creativity to introduce and define a woman's identity. Provokingly, she aroused the dormant mentality of women who were persuaded to think that humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; not someone autonomous but one always in relation to him. Kopila quotes Simone who writes, "Woman is simply what man decrees: thus she is called 'the sex' by which is meant that she appeals essentially to the male as sexual being. For him she is sex-absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Absolute-she is the Other"<sup>37</sup>. Beauvoir points out that the women have always plays a second fiddle to men. For a woman the point to reflect is her predicament in which she is caged. A woman cannot and, as such, should not be defined in relation to man. The point must be well driven into any species of man that man and woman are complementary, interdependent and supportive each to other. For either a man or a woman life without the other is simply inconceivable, not feasible. Man and woman are co-creators, cohabiters, living in collaboration and in harmony as against opposite and adversary.

Theodore Pappas opines, "She is known primarily for the treatise *The Second Sex* (1949), a scholarly and passionate plea for the abolition of what she called the myth of "eternal feminine"; the book became a classic of feminist literature. She also wrote four admired volumes of autobiography (1958-72), philosophical works that explore themes of existentialism, and fiction, notably *The Mandarins*. *The Coming of Age* is a bitter reflection on society's indifference to the elderly"<sup>38</sup>. Simone's book provided adequate momentum towards women's liberation movement. Therefore, in the late 1960s, the women's liberation movement exploded on to the political scene. Increasing numbers of women around the world joined in challenging the oppression on women and traditional female roles offered them in familial and societal level. They demanded an immediate end to all forms of sexual discrimination and campaigned around issues such as equal pay, job opportunities, healthcare, childcare, abortion, sexuality, violence towards women and racism. The determination and vehemence was perceptible as "In 1970, feminists demonstrated at the Miss World beauty contest, protesting that it degraded women. The contest continued on a stage covered in flour and other debris thrown by the protesters. After this event, which was televised worldwide, more women began to meet in groups to discuss how sexism affected their lives, and to plan changes"<sup>39</sup>.

It does not end there; the fight for equal rights persists. Women may not have suddenly begun to enjoy the harvest of Copernicus change in mentality, family and society but gained enough impetus to tenaciously, in some form or the other, grapple for equality and justice. During the 1970s then, the women's liberation movement was a major political influence in many



countries. It forced the introduction of legislation that ensured equal rights for women by bringing sex discrimination at work and in the field of education. However, though this legislation established women's rights to equal opportunities in theory but in praxis inequality still continued. Legally women might have stood ground but psychologically men tended to go offensive and still propagated inequality in many a spheres<sup>40</sup>.

Priya Wanjari holds that first wave feminism focused mainly on woman's suffrage and overturning legal obstacles to gender equality while the second wave broadened its concerns and commitments to wider range of issues such as sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights etc. During this period, women showed their determination to battle against social and domestic violence in the form of constituting marital rape laws, establishment of rape crisis and battered women's shelters and change in custody and divorce laws. Priya Wanjari gives minute details of the timeline and issue dealt with commencing, continuing and encompassing second wave feminism in her book *Understanding feminism* pp. 109-121. Wanjari has painstakingly researched and included each occurrence in her book zealously. It is wished that those could be mentioned here but due to the lack of space, it is sadly omitted. Around this time, there emerges a paradigm shift that would give rise to the birth of third wave feminism.

### 2.2.3 Third wave

There wasn't a dozing gap, unlike the first and the second, between the second and the third wave of feminism. Neither was there a sharp distinction between the second wave of feminism and the third. On the contrary, there are overlapping features that are too thin to delineate between the second and the third. Recalling the gap between the first and the second, the first wave began with the clear distinction and headed right away towards its achievement. The first wave also provided enough thrust for the initiation of the second. Jayne Parson who recorded the proceedings of the first and the second wave of feminism with a remarkable clarity, does not opine anything about the third wave except for speaking about its possible commencement. The third wave of feminism began in the mid-1990s. Scholars accredit Rebecca Walker to have coined the term "*third-wave feminism*" in a 1992 essay. This wave of feminism is also known as Neo-Feminism that refers to several diverse strains of feminist activity and study. The fact that feminism is no longer limited to arenas where one expects to see it, young women today have really reaped what feminism has sown. New elements of modernism had a greater effect in the development of women as a whole. The advent of female literature promises woman's view of life and it highlights woman's experience as a person. Its exact boundaries, in the history of feminism, are a subject of debate. Regrettably, the reflection of third wave sensibility in recent literature by American women writers has so far gone largely unnoticed, even though numerous young writers openly embrace their membership in the contemporary women's movement. While the very existence of the third wave of feminism, not to mention its agenda and ideology, has been highly contested, there is no such controversy regarding third wave literature. The reason is that there is practically no scholarly debate on the topic. Virginia Woolf, an English writer and one of the foremost modernists of the twentieth century, who led the way to modernism and the reinvention of the novel in the early 20th century. '*A Room of One's Own*' (1929) by Virginia Woolf, is noted in its argument for both a literal and figural space for women writers within a literary tradition dominated by patriarchy<sup>41</sup>. Ramesh Bhandari, however, holds:

The history of modern feminist movement is divided into three waves. Each is described as dealing with different aspects of the same feminist issues. The first wave refers to the feminist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> through early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which dealt mainly with suffrage movement. The second wave (1960s-1980s) dealt with inequality of laws, as well as cultural inequalities. Third wave of feminism (1990s-current), is seen as both a continuation and a response to the perceived failures of the second wave<sup>42</sup>.

As far as the beginning, its nature, aims and objectives are

concerned, there are some who consider 1990s as the actual beginning of the third wave feminism. But there are some who suggest and argue that it might have its inception already in 1980s. Priya Wanjari, for example, opines that "It is apt to mention that third-wave feminism is a term identified with several strains of feminist activity and study, whose exact boundaries in the historiography of feminism are a subject of debate, but are often marked as beginning in the 1980s and continuing to the present"<sup>43</sup>. Ramesh Bhandari is of the opinion that "The Third-wave of feminism began in the early 1990s. The movement arose as responses to perceived failures of the second wave. It was also a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second-wave"<sup>44</sup>. The reasons for the rise of the third wave feminism might be manifold. The usual leitmotifs apart, the growth in scholarship, literature and technology might be prominent reasons. Print media and electronic media explosions have turned the whole world into a global village. In such circumstances, any piece of news can be at once local yet at once global. Against this backdrop the infusion, its effect and spread of the third wave feminism will be examined. Priya Wanjari says, "The third wave embraces diversity and change. In this wave, as in previous ones, there is no all-encompassing single feminist idea. Third wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's "essentialist" definition of femininity, which often assumed a universal female identity and over-emphasized the experiences of upper-middle-class white women"<sup>45</sup>.

Concerning the paradigm shift and the persuasion of the achievement of the ideological issues Wanjari opines that institutional gains apart, the feminists believed that there needed to be further changes in stereotype representations of women and their portrayal in print and electronic media. The language, the simile and the tone need deconstruction and post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality. The exponents of post-structuralism feel that words and texts have no fixed or intrinsic meanings and that there is no transparent, coherent and self-evident relationship between them and either ideas or things. It may, however, sound a bit too liberal an interpretation for every word has literal meaning, an intrinsic meaning and implied meaning. It does correspond to what one wants to convey. However, the argument here is paradigm shift and persuasion of ideological objectives. Priya Wanjari writes:

Third-wave theory usually incorporates elements of queer theory; anti-racism and women-of-color consciousness; womanism; girl power; post-colonial theory; postmodernism; transnationalism; ecofeminism; individualist feminism; new feminist theory, transgender politics, and the rejection of the gender binary. Also considered part of the wave is sex-positivity, a celebration of sexuality as a positive aspect of life, with broader definitions of what sex means and what oppression and empowerment may imply in the context of sex<sup>46</sup>.

1. Clement McNaspy, *Change not changes*, London: Paulist Press Deuss Books, 1968, p. 9.
2. Bijaya Kumar Nayak, *Development of education and Indian heritage*, Cuttack: Kitab Mahal, 2003, p. 318.
3. Kurien Kunnumpuram, "Collaboration of Men and Women", in *Vidyajyoti journal of theological reflection*, Vol. 69, No. 2, February 2005, p. 126.
4. Clement McNaspy, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
5. Jayne Parsons, *Illustrated family encyclopedia*, London: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2005, p. 707.
6. Joseph Valiamangalam, "Challenges of Modernity and Postmodernity to Mission", in Dasan Jeyaraj (ed.) *Mission in civil society, challenges and responses*, Ananad: Gujrat Sahitya Prakash, 2015, p. 57.
7. Middle Ages refers to Europe between 600 and 1500. The term was coined by scholars in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to refer to the interval between the downfall of the classical world of Greece and Rome and its rediscovery at the beginning of their own century, a revival in which the felt were participating. It began with the papacy of Gregory the Great and ends with the Muslim seizure of Constantinople (1453) and the Portuguese

and Spanish voyages of discovery. (*Ibid.*)

8. Hukum Singh, *Samvet hand book on history of English literature*, Kanpur: Ram Bagh, 2006, p. 4.

9. Joseph Valiamanglam, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

11. Jayne Parsons, *op. cit.*, p. 704.

12. Joseph Valiamangalam, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

13. Karunakar Jha, *Meg 01 British poetry (5)*, Delhi: Young Printing Press, 2003, p. 5.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Nageswara Rao, *Meg 01 British poetry (6)*, Delhi: Young Printing Press, 2003, p. 6.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Jayne Parson, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

19. Hukum Singh, *History of English literature, op. cit.*, p. 5.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Smita Mishra, *University English literature, history of English literature from Chaucer to the present day*, Kanpur: Pandu Nagar, 2005, p. 80.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

24. Jayne Parson, *op. cit.*, p. 901.

25. Ramesh Bhandari, *Role and status of women in religion and society*, New Delhi: Alfa Publication, 2010, p. 30.

26. Jayne Parson, *op. cit.*, p. 901.

27. Ramesh Bhandari, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

28. Hukum Singh, *Samvet handbook on English literary comprehension and literary criticism with classical background*, Kanpur: Ram Bagh, 2006, p. 101.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

30. Jayne Parson, *op. cit.*, p. 901.

31. Theodore Pappas, "Wollstonecraft Mary", in *Britannica ready reference encyclopedia*, Vol. X, New Delhi: Encyclopedia Britannica (India) Pvt. Ltd. 2004, p. 196.

32. Jayne Parson, *op. cit.*, p. 901.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Priya D Wanjari, *Understanding feminism, philosophy, waves and achievements*, New Delhi: (Dattsons) Jawaharlal Nehru Marg, 2014, p. 102.

35. Jayne Parson, *op. cit.*, p. 901.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Kopila Gogia Chugh, *Literary criticism and theory*, New Delhi: Gully Baba Publishing House (P) Ltd., 2011, p. 234.

38. Theodore Pappas, "Beauvoir, Simone (Lucie-Ernestine-Marie-Bertrand)", in *Britannica ready reference encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, New Delhi: Encyclopedia Britannica (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2004, p. 236.

39. Jayne Parson, *op. cit.*, p. 901.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Theodore, Pappas, *Britannica ready reference encyclopedia*, Vol. X, p. 200.

42. Ramesh Bhandari, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

43. Priya Wanjari, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

44. Ramesh Bhandari, *op. cit.*, p. 32. But in p. 33 he says it began in mid 1980s.

45. Priya Wanjari, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

**Conclusion**

The article makes a sincere attempt to deal with the origin and development of feminists' movement. Anything of too much is too bad. That is true of the treatment of women within the family and society too. Love for power and wealth has been so delicious to man that he failed to recognize the dignity of one's own wife, mother, sister and daughter. The mother and the wife, inevitable for one's existence and a constant support and companion have to face negligence on account of greed for property and supremacy. Crave for power and dominion has, invariably and in all places of the globe, blinded man to such an extent so as to enslave and reduce the honour and dignity of one's own, mother, wife, sister and daughter and so on. History needed something like the French Revolution which paved the way towards equality, fraternity and justice within the society as much as among the rich and the poor and man and woman. The French Revolution was an attack both

on the political and ecclesiastical authorities. The repulse and ripples, created by French Revolution took its time but spread far and wide, indeed into every part of the globe like the salt that permeates into food to make it tasty and like the light that spreads into the mountains and valleys, river and seas, plains and ditches. The Reformation in its opposition to church authorities advocated the separation of the church and the State. Enlightenment, another intellectual movement, grew out of the renaissance and humanism which promoted the use and the celebration of reason, the power by which humans gain knowledge of the universe and improves his own condition. Enlightenment promoted the goals of rational humans such as knowledge, freedom and happiness. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment resulted into many a revolutions worldwide signaling the dawn of modern world. The inception of modern era brought about a new age for women too. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, women had no rights-they were the property of their husbands or fathers. Inspired by the French Revolution, women began to challenge this situation. The first among the challengers is indeed Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), an Englishwoman, wrote *Vindication of the rights of Women*. She deplored the fact that married women were kept at home "confined in cages, like the feathered race", and called for an end to their oppression. Her early *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) foreshadowed her mature work on the place of women in society, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), whose core is a plea for equality in the education of men and women. The vindication is widely regarded as the founding document of modern Feminism.

For the last two hundred years, women have fiercely and assiduously combated for their rights. Their struggle is sometimes called the women's movement, although the term includes different campaigns embracing different stages and dimensions. The first wave of organized feminism – the fight for women's rights- appeared during the 1800s, and was concerned with legal rights, and the right to vote. During the 1960s, a new wave of protest- the women's liberation movement- appeared that made women's rights a global issue. By the 1990s, the women's movement had gained many victories and changed society. The three waves of feminists' movement apart, the concept of feminism has been discussed in great details as well. Feminism covers a whole range of feminist beliefs and activities from the most moderate to the most radical and includes all forms of collective action against all kinds of discrimination. Feminism implies any form of opposition to any form of social, personal or economic discrimination which women suffer because of their sex. Feminism is a politics directed at changing existing power relations of women and men in society. Feminism, therefore, is a source of new awareness, power and knowledge to the contemporary thinking. The subject matter of feminism is women's past and contemporary history which brings consciousness into undiscovered aspects of women's lives. It then has surveyed the types of feminism and also feminists' approaches to various sciences classical, modern and contemporary.

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