



"FEMINISM AS, EXTENTION OF EXISTENTIALISM: WOMEN IN CANADIAN FICTION"

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Feminism is an expression or resentment at the unjust treatment meted out of women. The term 'Feminism' was derived from the Latin word 'Femina' meaning 'Woman' and was first used with regard to the issue of equality and women's right movement. The concept began in the west but spread all over the globe gradually like an oil slick.

The term 'Feminism' a global phenomenon which has a number of connotations. Feminism may be defined precisely. "Belief in the principle that woman should have the same rights and opportunities as man. "Feminism fosters the idea of an egalitarian society where the dialectics of male dominance and female passivity are erased.

The term 'Feminism' was first used by the French dramatist, Alexander, Dumas the younger, in 1872 in a pamphlet 'L' Homme-Femme' in the context of the emerging movement for women's right.

Feminism, seek to discover the subtle and deep rooted causes of women's oppression in every sphere of life as politics, patriarchal social system, sexual oppression, in wage inequalities and other such discriminatory and prejudices against women. Thus this world-wide phenomenon, Feminism; is a movement from women's point of view, by the women and for the woman'.

Feminism, a movement, a revolution in social consciousness surfaced in the western in the decades of 60's and 70's. **Today there are various branches of modern Feminism, the Canadian feminism, the English Feminism, the New Zealand Feminism, the Indian Feminism and so on.** And due to such varied approaches Feminism became quite bewildering to be understood however one thing is common, that all share a concerned for the wretched plight of women and try to remove the causes that are responsible for it, however all they are different in their outlook and remedies.

Verginia Woolf, Simone de Beavuvior, Betty Frewdian, German Grear, Elaine Showalter and Kate- Millet are some eminent name in the field of Feminism. There writing triggered the worldwide awareness of the oppression of women and protest against it. Thus feminism is a mode of existence in which, the women is free to the dependence syndrome.

All over the world women position is more or less the same and whatever variation are there, they exist only in degree and not in the nature of women's subjugation. Verginia Woolf views about Feminism are fully manifested in her celebrated work. "A room of one's own" and she holds the opinion that the image of women as projected by male writer, is in adequate and not fully realized.

Simon De Beauvior Writes - (In Second Sex) **"one is not born but rather becomes a women, it is civilization as a whole that produce this creature.....which is described as feminine."**

"Women is the direct result of nurture rather than nature."

German Gear discussed how restriction imposed on women's emotions and sexual instinct reduces women to female eunuch. Generally people have negative connotation about feminism. For them feminism implies losing femininity and walkout from family orbit. But women have conviction in feminism as an ideology need not be unfeminine in their attitudes relating their femininity they can still project ideas and actions which hamper their personality.

Feminism refute the deep drilled patriarchy theory where men is regarded as a master and women as a slave. As Tennyson says-

"Man for the field and women for the hearth Man for the sword and for the needle she Man for the head and women with the heart Man to command and woman to obey"

Ruskin wrote "A true wife, in her husband's house, is his servant....."Even Tulsi das says-

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Domestic virtue are regarded her ornaments, obedience, patients faithfulness are the ideals for women since birth to death. **But women must not be treated as a second sex but as an autonomous being, with her identity, desired, emotions and sentiments.** in Canada itself the modern feminist movement started in the earlier 1970's. it was an outgrowth of the 'women's liberation movement' of America in late sixties. The women's liberation movement in Canada evinced women as the severely

oppressed group. And as in the neighboring countries, U.S.A. demanded equality for women in all social, launched a systematic campaign against economic discrimination, violence, against woman and sexual, ignominy which they uncouneted in their quotidian existence.

Contemporary Canadian and most other societies are identical in one aspect-in-being severally patriarchal. Fundamentally the goal of the feminist movement is committed to understanding to improving the situation of women. Margaret Eichler is of the view that in Canada the feminist work leads eventually towards grouping for a few epistemologies which allows for the adequate understanding both female and male life.

But feminism fosters the idea of an egalitarian society where the dialects of male dominance and female passivity are erased. Generally, feminism is a concept emerging as a protest against male dominance and the marginalization of women. Actually feminism demands love, respect, compassion, understanding for the women from the men. As some novelist explains her view about feminism "we need to have a world we should recognize as a palace for all of us human beings. There is no superior and inferior. We are to halves of one species". Just like a man woman is basically is women as well as a person. As a woman see definitely needs man and vice versa. But as a person see can legitimately claim to be free and independent. However, in our social set-up her to ideas, viza a woman and a person have been rolled into one a woman and this lead to be confusion.

Feminism as an extension of existentialism gets echoes in world literature. This existentialism struggle to establish one's individuality and the desperate fight to exist as a separate entity appears in all its intensity in the novels women's writers.

In the process of selecting the novels to be studied, I was guided by Elaine Showalter's distinctions between books that happen to have written by woman and a literature which purposefully and collectively concerns itself with the articulation of women's experience besides it, for a woman writer we want a glimpse of the female psyche to which the male has no access the agony and trauma of oppressed woman. In earlier fiction male writers writing in English present with insight and understanding the dilemma which modern women are facing in patriarchal society. **The woman in Canada is seeking emancipation from social, legal, artists, sexual and psychological constraints.** In Canadian fiction, I have selected those **novelist fictions in which this** feminist concern has been fore grounded and has been interestingly handled. The **selected** tentative novelist are- **Margaret Atwood's (1939), Margaret Lawrence's (1926-87), Margaret Drabble's (1939) and some others** eminent Canadian women novelists etc. Feminism is an extension of existentialism in spite of its negative connotations.

*Generally pre-feminist women writers are not armed with a polemical feminist ideology on the other hand post-feminist women writers are armed with a polemical feminist ideology but all they want that women must not be treated as second sex or subordinate sex but as an individual Human being.

So all these women novelists treated women as the subject not as the object, women is seen in all her colours: the power of women, the deviousness of women, the helplessness of women, the courage of women.

Generally the women of pre-feminist novelists show that a woman wants something more than material comforts but the women of past feminist novelists seldom give evidence of such thinking, women writers have often evolved different strategies of liberating women from these conventions, some of them use the format of travelogue, others use abductions or exile as a method of freeing women from the setting, yet others employ the psychological strategy of using withdrawal or alienation.

Existentialism is a 20th century philosophical movement; assumes that people are entirely free and thus responsible for that they make of themselves. Existentialism is not dark and depressing phenomenon but it is about life. Existentialists believe in living and in fighting for life. Camus, Sartre and even Nietzsche were involved in various wars because they believed passionately in fighting for the survival of their nations and peoples. The politics of existentialists varies, but each seeks the most individual freedom for people within a society.

Existentialism, broadly defined, as a set of philosophical systems concerned with free will, choice and personal responsibility. The existentialist conclude that human choice is subjective, because individuals finally must make their own choices without help from such external standards as laws, ethical rules or traditions. Because

individuals make their own choices, they are free; but because they freely choose, they are completely responsible for their choices. The existentialists emphasize that freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. And feminism goes side by side with this existentialism movement and played for women she is not an addition to man. She is an autonomous being capable, of through trial and error, finding her own way to salvation. The culture that created a Sita and a Savitri has denied the rights of existence to woman except some one daughter, sister, wife and mother etc.

A critic says that in our country Sita is worshipped along with Rama, Radha with Krishna, Parvati with Shiva, but strongly enough goddess Durga and Kali are worshipped in their individual capacity. Is it not ironical that on the one hand men are worshippers Durga and not in Sita. Is not this clear indication that, in order to gain respect from men, women must project a Durga like image? The meek, subservient, obedient women will always suffer in silence.

Feminism extends to existentialism because it wants that women's existence must not be depend at the mercy of men. Besides being a daughter, sister, wife and mother, she must be recognized as an individual being. But in the patriarchy social system woman is denied for independence syndrome. The patriarchy is so deep drilled in our mind that even in this modern era we are unable to come out from the clutches of sexism. She is regarded only sex symbol and easily can get name and fame by this means, the film industry is the fiery example of it.

Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Drabble and others. Some eminent name in Canadian feminist writing. The heroines of these novelists are more introspective in nature rather than socio- personal in scope.

Margaret Atwood's protagonists go through a phase of neurosis to reach the ultimate saint. Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1965) is a 'Protofeminist' novel, which deals with the symbolic cannibalism of women and how it takes a long time for a well-trained but meek woman to overthrow her weakness and susceptibilities.

Feminism extenest

In Atwood's fiction, beginning from Marian to Rennie in *Bodily Harm*, women undergo a slow ransformation.

Margaret Laurence one of the famous feminist Canadian novelist her writings usually focused on women struggling to overcome the limitations of small town life.

'The stone Angle', *The Diviners* and 'A Bird in the House' are three of the five books in Margaret Laurence's renowned "manawaker series", named for the small Canadian prairie town which they take place. Each of these books is narrated by a strong women growing up in the town and struggling with physical and emotional isolation.

Margaret drabble is one of the prolific feminist Canadian novelist. She has extensive series of works her novel *'The Milestone'* won the John Lewelyn Rhys Prize. Her novels *A Summer Bird Cage*, *The Witch of Exmoor*, *The peppered Moth* and *The seven Sisters* have special feminist bearing. Margaret Drabble is not consciously feminist novelist

because when she started writing there was no women's movement; and feminist criticism was born in 1968 precisely, she published first novel in 1963.

Thus the different novelist's works highlight different types of female repression and different possible resolutions in the search for female selfhood. Women in these novels are no longer treated as object for they become the objects for these novels. We see women in all her colors.

A common contemporary issue facing every country is type the question of women whether in western or Indian literary tradition. the women are seen as plunging themselves into the quest for their identity. Because women is the product of the basic assumption of male-generated -oriented and dominated social values and has remained so for centuries. She is mould. Reshaped and reoriented by men is the man. Feminism breaks this patriarchy assumption and pleads for women equal status in every sphere of life.

emotion The fact is that women are basically a woman as well as a person as a woman she definitely need man and vice versa. but as a person can legitimately claim to be free and independent. However in our social set up her two identities, Viz. a woman and a person have been rolled in to one, Viz. only a woman and **this** lead to the confusion.

Actually feminism demands love, respect. Compassion and understanding from the males. If the **love** of men to women would stem with devotion, I am quite confident

that the problems faced by women would be easily solved. The uppish and superior attitude of men is the root cause of female dissatisfaction.

Calixathe Beyala says, "for me liberation of women is not at all the western style of emancipation. After all, a woman defines herself in many ways. She is a mother, a daughter, a bread winner....Emancipations should not be negation of your gender, your feminity and your responsibility. But of course this does **not** mean that women's conversations should be limited to the price of vegetables"

Women's urges, needs and aspirations are largely conditioned by the milieu, the economic situation the educational and employment opportunities. The women in Canada is seeking emancipation from social, legal, artistic, sexual and constraints.

It will therefore be my endeavor to and prove through a lose and deep study Feminism as an Extension of Existentialism. A study of the existential struggle of all the hypersensitive and highly individualistic women amply illustrates that more or less feminism can be viewed as an extension **of** existentialism.

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