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Feminism

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ABSTRACT

A political, cultural, or economic movement promoting women's equality and legal protection is referred to as feminism. Feminism is a movement that promotes gender equality for women and works to advance their rights and interests. It also includes political, sociological, and philosophical ideas and philosophies that address issues of gender difference. The Ancient Greek feminism's origins are uncertain, but the four waves of feminism are how most people today identify the movement.

The evolution of feminism will be examined in this research paper.

Keywords: *Feminism, gender equality, women's rights.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Any ideologies that support women's rights to equality, often through elevating their standing, are referred to as feminist. The foundation of feminism is challenging men's historical dominance of women. So, the term "feminism" didn't come into existence until after women had already begun to question their inferior status and seek an improvement in their social standing. Many of those who advocated for women's rights did not accept the term "feminism" as a term of identity until after it had been created. Even many women's rights organisations did not identify as feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s since the term was very loosely applied to some issues and certain groups (Delmar 1986). The label "feminist" has only recently been applied indiscriminately to all women's rights organisations, and the discrepancy between these organisations' self-identification and subsequent labelling as feminist is directly related to the question of what standards should be applied when determining whether a person, group, or action is "feminist."

²The place of women in literature, society, and global culture is highlighted by feminist writing and criticism, which also emphasises how patriarchal systems frequently devalue the roles and experiences of women. By creating literature and criticism from the perspective of women, feminist authors and critics try to restore the equilibrium. *A Room of One's Own* (1929), a significant feminist text from the modern era, was written by Virginia Woolf. Black feminism is occasionally referred to as "womanist" to separate it from mainstream, middle-

¹ Author is student at IILM Law School, IILM University, Gurugram, India.

² Baumgardner, Jennifer. 2011. *F'em! Goo Goo, Gaga and Some Thoughts on Balls*. London: Seal Press

class, white feminism.³ Despite the fact that the terms "feminism" and "feminist" were not become widely used until the 1970s, they were already in use in everyday speech much earlier. For instance, Katherine Hepburn refers to the "feminist movement" in the 1942 movie *Woman of the Year*. The history of feminism, according to Maggie Humm and Rebecca Walker, may be broken down into four waves. These feminist movements gave rise to the feminist theory.

II. THE FOUR WAVES OF FEMINISM

The first wave (1830's – the early 1900's): Women's fight for equal contract and property rights

First-wave feminism was an era of feminist action that took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly in Europe and the Anglosphere; it was primarily concerned with securing the rights of women to vote, education, improved working conditions, and double standards.⁴ The phrase "first-wave" was created in hindsight when the term "second-wave feminism" started to be used to refer to a more recent feminist movement that placed equal emphasis on addressing social and cultural injustices as it did on addressing new political injustices. Women came to the realisation that the only way to ignite the fire for change was for them to have political power (including the ability to vote) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their political agenda grew to include topics related to sexuality, reproduction, and the economy. The idea that women can give just as much, if not more, than males, was planted. The term "first wave feminism" describes a protracted era of feminist activism in the United Kingdom and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Initially, it was centred on the advancement of women's equal contractual and property rights as well as the resistance to chattel marriage and husbands' ownership of married women (and their offspring). But, at the end of the nineteenth century, political power, notably the right of women's suffrage, became the primary focus of action.

⁵ Nonetheless, feminists like Margaret Sanger and Voltairine de Cleyre continued to fight for women's economic, sexual, and reproductive rights at this period. Florence Nightingale introduced female nurses to the military in 1854.

³ Brodzky, Brandon (18 November 2014). "Social Media User Statistics & Age Demographics for 2014". LinkedIn Pulse. Retrieved 16 March 2016

⁴ Chittal, Nisha (26 March 2015). "How Social Media is changing the Feminist Movement". MSNBC

⁵ Kaplan, E. Ann (2003). *Feminist Futures: Trauma, the Post-9/11 World and a Fourth Feminism?*. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4(2), 46-59

The second wave (1960's-1980's): Broadening the debate

⁶The second wave of feminism, which emerged soon after World War II, concentrated on the workplace, sexuality, family, and reproductive rights. It was believed that women had achieved their equality aspirations at a time when the United States was already attempting to reform itself, with the exception of the failure to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (which has still not been ratified). This period is frequently criticised for being insulting, outmoded, and fixated on the issues of middle-class white women. Contrarily, many women during the second wave originally participated in movements for equality such as the Gay and Lesbian Movement, the Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Movement, the Anti-Vietnam War Movement, the Chicano Rights Movement, and the Asian-American Civil Rights Movement. Many of the female supporters of the aforementioned organisations believed that their issues about gender equality needed to be addressed first in order to be respected in coed organisations. They felt that their opinions were not being heard. Women were so concerned about these civic concerns that they wanted to make sure their views would be heard by first fighting for gender equality.

The term "second-wave feminism" describes the movement's development from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. Imelda Whelehan, a researcher, contends that the second wave of feminism was a continuation of the preceding phase, which involved the suffragettes in the UK and the USA. Since then, second-wave feminism has persisted and coexists alongside what is known as third-wave feminism. According to academic Estelle Freedman, who contrasts the first and second waves of feminism, the first wave concentrated on rights like suffrage while the second wave was primarily concerned with other equality-related problems like abolishing discrimination. The phrase "The Personal is Political" was created by feminist activist and novelist Carol Hanisch, and it came to represent the second wave. Second-wave feminists pushed women to recognise that some areas of their daily life were highly politicised and reflected sexist power systems because they believed that women's cultural and political injustices were intricately intertwined.

The third wave (1990's – early 2000's): The “micro-politics” of gender equality

The early 1990s saw the start of the Third Wave of Feminism. The movement began as a reaction to what young women viewed as the second wave's shortcomings. It was also a response to opposition to the second wave's projects and actions. The "essentialist"

⁶ Solomon, Deborah (13 November 2009). "The Blogger and Author on the Life of Women Online". *The New York Times*. Retrieved 16 March 2016

conceptions of femininity that the second wave, in their opinion, overemphasised in relation to the experiences of upper-middle-class white women, are something that third-wave feminism aims to confront or steer clear of. The ideology of the third wave is heavily influenced by a post-structuralist understanding of gender and sexuality.

⁷Third wave feminists frequently concentrated on "micropolitics" and questioned the second wave's assumptions about what was or was not beneficial for women. Due of the diversity of feminist viewpoints, unlike earlier movements, women today are less dismissive of the label "feminist."

The list of feminist groups and ideologies includes ego-cultural feminists, radicals, liberals⁸ and reformers, electorate, intellectual, ecofeminists, and more. The work done by the earlier waves of women served as a prologue to the principal concerns. The battle to end the pay gap between men and women and to protect women's reproductive rights went on. Efforts to reduce violence against women both domestically and overseas is ongoing. This movement was about feminism's acceptance and proper comprehension. Although there has been great improvement since the initial wave, there is still more to be done. The variety of feminist concerns nowadays make it more difficult to define what a feminist looks like, inspiring a new generation to stand up for gender equality and women's rights. Beginning in the early 1990s, third-wave feminism developed in response to perceived shortcomings of the second wave as well as the pushback against the projects and movements brought about by the second wave. The second wave's essentialist notions of femininity, which, in their opinion, overemphasise the experiences of upper-middle-class white women, are what third-wave feminism tries to critique or steer clear of.

Fourth-wave feminism: a developing and lively wave, revitalization of interest in feminism with the use of social media

⁹The increase of interest in feminism that started about 2012 and is connected to social media use is known as the fourth wave of feminism. The emphasis of the fourth wave, according to feminist researcher Prudence Chamberlain, is on justice for women as well as opposition to sexual harassment and violence against women. She claims that "incredulity that these mindsets may still persist" best describes its core. According to Baumgardner (2011), "I think that the fourth wave exists because it states that it exists" in response to those who doubt its

⁷ <http://www.sfu.ca/~decaste/OISE/page2/files/DelmarFeminism.pdf>

⁸ Zacharek, Stephanie; Dockterman Eliana; and Sweetland Edwards, Haley (6 December 2017). "The Silence Breakers", Time magazine

⁹ Kaplan, E. Ann (2003). Feminist Futures: Trauma, the Post-9/11 World and a Fourth Feminism?. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4(2), 46-59

existence (P. 250). Kaplan (2003) was one of the first to consider the potential of fourth wave feminist action and scholarship by evaluating the "terror" age brought about by the 9/11 attacks. According to Kaplan, fourth wave feminist initiatives must be able to describe the violence and extremism that women encounter both domestically and abroad as a result of imperialism in the shape of global capitalism. Hence, according to Kaplan, the fourth wave will be differentiated by uniting feminists from the second and third waves in order to face a brand-new, terrifying reality that affects us all—if not equally, then at least all at once.

Idealistically, this new world transcends boundaries of race, ethnicity, and country. (P. 55) According to Kira Cochrane, fourth-wave feminism is "defined by technology," and is distinguished in particular by the use of social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Tumblr, and blogs like Feministing to combat sexism and advance gender equality.

¹⁰Fourth-wave feminists concentrate on issues including rape culture, university sexual assault, and harassment in the workplace and on the streets. The campaign has gained momentum as a result of scandals involving the harassment, assault, and murder of women and girls. The Everyday Sexism Project, Ni Una menos, No More Page 3, Stop Bild Sexism, Mattress Performance, 10 Hours of Walking as a Woman in NYC, Yes All Women, Free theNipple,¹¹ One Billion Rising, the 2017 Women's March, the 2018 Women's March, and the Me Too movement are a few examples of fourth-wave feminist campaigns. The "silent breakers," a group of well-known female activists who were active in the Me Too campaign, were named Person of the Year by Time magazine in December 2017. Laura Bates, Jennifer Baumgardner, Kira Cochrane, Lucy-Anne Holmes (No More Page 3), Anita Sarkeesian (Tropes vs. Women in Video Games), and Emma Watson are examples of fourth-wave feminist proponents.

III. CONCLUSION

When women are respected for who they are, just as men are, the feminist movement and its four waves will succeed, and feminists' efforts won't be in vain. When job interviews for women are judged using the same standards as those for males, when women are no longer subject to harassment while walking down the street. When decent fathers and husbands follow the same norms, couples equitably divide the chores and remain at home, and dads may support their families by doing the same as the mothers do. It occurs when transmen and

¹⁰ Parry, Diana C., *Routledge Critical Leisure Studies*, 'Feminisms in Leisure Studies: Advancing a Fourth Wave', *Advancing a fourth wave*, Routledge, 2Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

¹¹ Zerbisias, Antonia (16 September 2015). "Feminism's Fourth Wave is the Shitlist". NOW Toronto. Retrieved 21 April 2016

transwomen receive the medical care they require that is suitable for their bodies and when what is written on their driver's licence is not seen as important. When no more girls are ever sold into marriage or any children are ever used in the sex trade, then feminism has achieved its goal. Feminism's conclusion is not global peace or love and harmony, but rather the elimination of society's systemic, pervasive undervaluation of women and women's work. This will result in more competitiveness as well as increased allocation and cooperation.
