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The Interconnection between Feminism and Education for Women Empowerment in Laura Bates' *Girl Up*

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Abstract

Feminism fosters the erasing of the social discrepancy between the expectation of the patriarchy and the real standard of women to make their own choices to uphold gender equality. As the central concept of the development of humanity, women's education has been an ultimate goal for years and decades of human history. The sharp eyes of feminism concentrate on the benefits of women's education and capture the attention of the global community to spread the implications of women education and empowerment. Education has a pivotal role to mould both the woman society and the human world to craft a perfect realm where men and women have equal rights and freedom. Women empowerment and education of women are inextricably linked to augment the standard of women in humanity. As an agent of the distinctive and flourishing society, education stretches its hands to boost the social role of women and builds up a platform where the women community can mark their unique and courageous performance in the human world. Laura Bates is a leading figure of the contemporary feminism to throw light on the role of modern education to uphold the liberated women society. This paper is an endeavour to explain the role of feminism to hold up women education in the light of Laura Bates' *Girl Up*.

Keywords: Feminism, education, gender equality, women empowerment, gender inequality.

1. Introduction

Women education is the foundation stone of gender equality and the rapid expansion of the social, political and economic dimensions of the human world. The rights and facilities of education without discrimination build up a world of ambitious women. Equal right of education without gender inequality has a supreme role to build a perfect human world with self respect and self confidence. Women education is a medium to endorse the rising status of women in the patriarchal society. Through women education feminism takes a role to wipe away the sexual harassment and domestic oppression and to inculcate the needs of equal rights and the individual freedom from the walls of their

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domestic world. Feminism has a distinct role to eradicate the social evils such as dowry system, unequal payment and lack of job opportunity for women and to mould an educated family as well as an educated society. The reverberation of feminism on the educational level is a relevant theme in modern society. Education is a leading force which annihilates the patriarchal concept which brings women to the feet of the patriarchal system. As a driving force of the reinforcement of women's society, women's education boosts the aspiration of women to secure equal prestige with men. Feminism breaks down the disparity among men-women relationship through the inception of education and upgrades the standard of women by improving women's education. In the traditional male dominated society women are undervalued in the academic level as well as in the social interaction.

2. Literature Review

Role of Education in the field of women Empowerment

Education is the key to the economic growth and the single sharp bolt of the women's world against the household and public oppression of the patriarchal world. There has been a momentous transformation in the educational pattern and a steady and undeniable advancement in women education in the modern era. Education system is the cradle of women's achievement and empowerment of the society in which boys and girls can acquire equal benefits and advantages. The handcuffs of the traditional patriarchal society resist women to pursue their higher education and to enjoy equal political and legal rights in the male dominated society. As Robin Truth Goodman (2005, p. 5) in *World, Class, Women: Global Literature, Education, and Feminism* suggests, "feminism began as a radical discourse about education, particularly because discussing education required thinking about civic access on which rests the very notion of political freedom for women". Domestic violence and the discrimination against the equal legal rights close the door against the empowerment of women through the improper education system. Education not only boosts the intellectual level of women but also makes them doers of the society (Aiston 2010).

Rouf Ahmad Bhat (2015, p.189) in "Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in India" expresses his opinion as, "Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life". He also emphasises the empowerment of humanity through education as "empowerment means a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights. It is a multilevel construct referring to individuals, organizations and community" (Bhat 2015, p.189)

3. Methods

The method applied in this research is descriptive and interpretive study. The study explores the background of the emergence of feminism through the field of education. In order to support the argument, the study analyses and interprets Laura Bates' *Girl Up* in the context of the interconnection between education in relation with feminism and women empowerment throughout the centuries. The paper upholds a close study of the interpretations and views of eminent critics on feminism and role of education in women empowerment. The study primarily is an interpretation on the role of education and feminism to wipe away the control of the patriarchal structure and to support women liberation in the society.

4. Result And Discussion

Feminist movement has a wide and salutary influence on the modern society especially on high access on women education, on the right of women to take personal and individual decisions and domestic and social freedom to come forward in the main stream of the society. Women education fosters the idea regarding the unequal payment in the work field and the social situation where women

are identified as the sexual objects in the hands of men. This section describes the role of education and feminism to support the liberation of women in the light of Laura Bates' *Girl Up*.

Liberation of Women in the First Wave of Feminism

In the past centuries, women were kept away from all sources of knowledge and educational systems to cease them against questioning the rules and the oppressive nature of the patriarchal world. The lack of education puts a stop to the possibilities of women to come into the front row of the society and to obtain the leadership quality in the male dominated society. The explicit barriers of women to acquire education are a prominent problem and the theme of the first wave of feminism.

The disparity in the education system of the patriarchal world makes women slaves in the male dominated society where they are underestimated and subjugated. First wave feminists fight against the unequal treatment of women through the inferior nature of educational policy. They envisage the idea that education plays a lion part role to exercise reason and the capacity of women to compete with the male centred society. This deep rooted disparity is obviously evident in the writings of the first wave writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf. First wave feminism contributed a strong and world wide support to ensure the educational rights of women in the late 18th and early 19th century. The improvement of women status results in wide-reaching effects on the total welfare of the society and a developed social system.

Virginia Woolf forms a substantial and concrete foundation which supports women to gain their role in the education dimension. She pinpoints her viewpoints about the unequal access to education and elevates the value of equal status of women through equal education throughout her work, *A Room of One's Own* (1929). She investigates the glory of women education and advocates for the equal education of the woman community. The concern of education equality is reflected in her works such as *The Voyage Out* (1915). *The Room of One's Own* explores the subject matter of self actualization and empowerment of women through equal education which men achieve in the society.

Virginia Woolf draws the picture of women with highly educated and self-esteem in her literary creations. She questions the exclusion of women from the quality education system which destroys the whole human world in her *Three Guineas* (1938). She takes her pen to dismantle the prevailing education system and inspires a proper channel to educate and to provide knowledge to women also. Virginia Woolf strongly opposes the discrepancy between the education system of men and women and upholds a dream of a novel world where both sexes enjoy equal rights of education. The writings of Mary Wollstonecraft revolve around the basic concepts that "education was the key to personal independence and empowerment" (Pedersen, 2010, p.27). In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (1949, p.725) provides an indication of the equal education for men and women where she declares to be "a complete individual, equal to man, woman has to have access to the male world".

The Role of Education in the Modern Feminism

The repercussions of gender equality in education and the limited opportunities for job and education are explicitly expressed by modern feminism. The unequal treatment directly intercepts the physical and psychological growth of the whole of humanity. Contemporary feminism fights for gender equality and prevents the social oppression of the patriarchal society. Modern feminism guarantees a world regardless of gender inequality and social status. It designs the empowerment of the modern young women through sex education and liberal principles. Diane Elam (1994, p.43) in *Feminism and Deconstruction* says that "liberation arrives when all women have come to authoritative consciousness of their own, identical, sexual identity".

Liberal feminism announces the idea that women should be able to exercise their individual freedom and also exhorts women to fight for the legal rights, property rights and equal job opportunity in the society. Feminism advocates for the overall development of women through equal education

policy and the profile of women empowerment has an indefinable and vital change in comparison with the condition of women in the past.

Modern feminism also takes its arms to fight for women's education and a total liberation of women in the technological world and pushes them to fit for the existing nature of human society. Modern education system is a challenging revolution that charges women with confidence and capacities to encounter contemporary social issues. Modern women writers and activists put emphasis on the concept that in order to flourish the ideas and contributions of women to the patriarchal world women should be free and come forward to mark their fortunate and truly enviable position in the history of humanity. Feminism is a catalyst to indoctrinate and to impel women to make use of their chances through liberal and thorough education which makes them fit for the contemporary existing world. The self actualization and the liberation of women lead to a frivolous and hopeless dream without a proper and equal education system. Sara Ahmed (2010, p.54) in *The Promise of Happiness* says that "Education provides a way of getting the would-be subject to face the right way such that they can receive the right impressions".

In modern feminism, women empowerment is boosted by the advent of technology. Mobile phone technology and the internet pave the way to extract and to exchange information among women. In the article "Role of Media in Women Empowerment" Azad Pratap Singh (2017, p.50) reveals that "The increase in the participation and access of women to self-expression and decision-making through the media and new technologies of communication is in a way empowering women". In the present era, women are more productive to engage in the area of social media "to express themselves creatively and communicate with others" (Kearney, 2006, p. 2). The availability of the online materials which prompt them to acquire knowledge leads the young women generation to create a path for their future uplift. The comparison between the traditional way of women education and the modern one underlines the same concept:

In contrast to previous generations of female youth, whose forms of communication and creativity were largely restricted to writing and the domestic arts, girls today are using virtually every medium currently available, including film, music, periodicals, and the Internet, to express themselves, explore their identities and connect with others. (Kearney, 2006, p. 3)

The advent of the media culture of the present century meets the needs of contemporary women's education to undergo a sea change to strengthen their knowledge and career path. Feminism creates a straight way to lead the modern women generation to broaden their vision regarding their role in humanity along with men in an effective manner. The transformation of women through technology and media makes them tighten their hold to satisfy their demands in the modern cultural society. The involvement of modern women in the technological world as a result of the contributions of contemporary feminism produces an in-depth analysis of the capabilities of women to support and build up the society. The contemporary approaches of feminism to elevate the academic productivity through social media is a blow to the contemporary patriarchal norms that prevent the "productive cultural practices" (Kearney, 2006, p. 4) of women.

Cyber feminism is a catalyst which accelerates the widespread education and the substantial and credible information among the women community. As Agrawal and Dutta (2013, p. 112) in *Feminism in Modern English Literature* says, "The Internet promises women a network of lines on which to chatter, natter, work and play; virtuality brings a fluidity to identities which once had to be fixed; and multimedia provides a tactile environment in which women artists can find their space....".

Feminism suggests social media as a form for the young generation to reinforce their activity to mould them as an independent individual and to construct a bold relationship with other women around them. Kearney's (2006, p. 5) words support the transformation of the modern female world as, "Contemporary girls who make media are therefore evidence of a notable transformation in gender

and generational politics”. Along with social media women magazines and periodicals encourage the young modern generation “to adopt an ideology of self-improvement and to practice self-surveillance” (Kearney, 2006, p. 10). The self-improvement through improving the physical appearance and positive attitude towards their physical beauty make women to construct their own stand in the male dominated society.

The modern female youth takes privilege to acquire a position in society with the association of the technological world and breaks the strong bond of the patriarchy that holds women’s world from independence and individual liberation. Through the acceptance of social media and technology, the modern female youth challenges the patriarchal conventional notions which consider women education and women liberation are taboos of humanity. Through the sincere involvement of the modern women in the world of social media, they achieve a standard place in the history of the human world and expand their realm to the horizons of the entire world. The visible resistance of the modern young women against the patriarchal viewpoints through social media builds up a strong exposure and equal status of women in the society.

Women Empowerment through Education in Laura Bates’ *Girl Up*

Laura Bates is a strong proponent of women liberation through a proper educational system in her well known work *Girl Up*(2016). The acquisition of the modern knowledge through technology and social media is highlighted in her work that acts as a milestone in the way of individual woman freedom. Through *Girl Up*, Bates navigates the young women generation to the anchor of a brighter future that supports them to mark their individual contribution in the history of human beings. She frankly addresses the young women generation of the modern era to hold the control of their lives and to emerge from the shackles of the male powered society.

As a guideline to the teenage girls, she transforms the educational system of the past centuries and provides a new face to the modern educational system. She introduces sex education, information about technology and social media and the assaults against women in the modern cultural society. *Girl Up* performs as a testimony to inform the young generation against the challenges and competence of the modern technological world where women are excluded from the mainstream of the society.

Laura Bates highlights her instructions to beware social media which traps the young generation in the present social situation. She (2016, p. 5) says, “The easiest way to protect yourself online is to think of the online space as if it were a real space – think of your social media accounts like your home”. This book can be considered as a guide for modern women youth as a collection of suggestions to ensure the safety of women in the age of social media, that is to treat “the online world like the real one” (2016, p. 6). Her book plays a vital role in ensuring the safety of women in various walks of life in the modern world such as social media, female body, mental health of women, pornography and sexuality, and also paves the way for imparting knowledge on all aspects of life.

Bates (2016, p. 307) instructs the women world to construct a feminist society to promote proper education system as her words suggest that “Encourage school or university authorities to engage with you by approaching them with concerns and areas you could work on together”. She (2016, p. 306) encourages building up a feminist society to support and uplift the youth generation by challenging that “If there isn’t one in your school or university, why not start your own?” and which ensure mutual support and exposure. Laura Bates is an emerging proponent of the novel educational system where women achieve equal rights with men to obtain knowledge.

The flourishing influence of social media and technology amplifies the satisfactions and needs of the young girls to handle individual knowledge acquisition equally with the boys and to engage in the liberation of the female world in the twenty first century. Laura Bates concentrates on the overall development of the modern women generation both in academic level and social environment. She also encourages girls to fight for an equal external environment along with boys in the educational

institutions. She (2016, p. 59) argues, “If you’re planning to challenge authority, whether with your parents or at school or university, make sure you arm yourself with information”.

Bates’ instructional mode of writing holds together the young girls to protest against the traditional way of thinking that subjugates them under the feet of men’s society. She instructs them to come out from the confinement of the society and to fight for the empowerment through proper educational system:

But if girls throughout history had always accepted the rules and restrictions that were placed on them because it was ‘just the way things are’ or ‘because I said so’ or ‘because you’re a girl’. We might still be sitting at home knitting socks for the men, with no money or property of our own, no right to work and really, *really* unfulfilling sex lives. (2016, p. 60)

Bates’ brilliant explanation to take proper arms that can effectively protest the gender discrimination that still exists in the modern cultural society. She invites the young generation to embrace social media to proclaim their rights in the society. As a writer of fourth wave feminism, Bates welcomes online platforms to protest against the injustice of contemporary society. She (2016, p. 72) says, “Sometimes it might work to campaign different kinds of protest-like an online campaign supported by a rally, or a petition which uses a hashtag and social media account to raise awareness of what is going on”. As an ardent proponent of fourth wave feminism, her work leads the young generation to a novel platform where they can build up a liberated society and a fast transmission of information and knowledge.

Bates introduces the healthy relationship between social media and the contemporary young women to empower themselves to acquire equal treatment and gender equality in the modern world. She clearly illuminates the young girls about the inevitable role of technology to escalate the social role of women to mould the humanity in the present century. She suggests utilising social media for acquiring novel information and to introduce modern strategies to fight for the rights in a successful manner.

The twenty first century feminism upholds the percept that the modern education system should transfer the knowledge without the discrimination of class and gender and women should be independent in all walks of their lives. The creation of a society where women are brave and courageous is the ceaseless and strong desire of modern feminism. The explicit barriers of women education in the past has been thrown away by the feminist movement. The digital skills of the modern women, in fact, divert their war-path to a state of freedom and independence. The struggle for gender equality in the education field has been succeeded partly with the support of the feminist movement. The disproportional division of education disrupts the liberation of women in the male dominated structure. Feminist writings are the milestones which exhibit the achievement of women in the public realm and to encourage women study as a discipline. In the present age women education is the framework through which women acquire self respect and self esteem and a medium which instructs the women’s world to pop out from the oppressive nature of the patriarchal world as well as from the traditional concept that women should be confined in the domestic world. Feminism can play a considerable role in ensuring poverty alleviation, child health and economic security in the modern world.

5. Conclusion

Women studies create a new world in the field of research and higher studies which extends its area to the horizons of humanity. The predominant themes of the modern feminism such as dalit studies, queer theories and transgender issues introduce the crucial problems of the contemporary world. Women education and the feminist movement is the answer to the outcry of the society for gender equality and socio political justice of the women society. In the contemporary age, the realm of

education opens its windows to satisfy the needs of education of women and to achieve equal rights of education. In modern society the marginalization of women has been wiped away by the educational system of the society which ensures equal education chances for both men and women. Feminism calls the attention of humanity to break the traditional male dominated subjects of the education system and suggests a curriculum which promotes equal status of men and women in the contemporary world. Feminism disseminates the essential views of women education which generates highly qualified women in modern humanity. The inevitable role of education gives birth to a woman's world with highly aspiration and glorious victories throughout the past decades.

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