

Incongruity of Modern Feminism: Prerogative or Proscription?

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Abstract

The global feminist movement is going through a new chapter in the twenty-first century. The 19th and 20th centuries avowed a prodigious concordat deal of success for feminist movements that addressed both elementary and erudite challenges in patriarchal nations. Feminist groups, which first appeared in Western industrialised countries in the 19th century, spread to developing Asiatic and African nations in the 20th century, enticing on new subjects and ventures. On the other hand, since social structures shift abruptly in the period of postmodernism, fresh challenges arise. In order to comprehend the evolving contours of the feminist movement, academics, researchers, and feminists are working to understand these new concerns. In addition, feminists have undertaken fresh initiatives for addressing the most recent problems facing women.

This paper aims to look at the history of feminism, from its early beginnings in the West to the challenges it faces in the postmodern era, and to place modern feminism within larger social and political debates. By examining the incongruities between its founding ideals and its present orientations, the study will attempt to clarify whether modern feminism continues as a prerogative of empowerment or has shifted towards a prescriptive proscription. As a result, this study is an intellectual endeavour to comprehend the novel tendency that emerged in the twenty-first century.

Keywords : Modern Feminism, Patriarchy, Current Interpretations, Occidental Cultures.

Submitted: 02.08.2025

Accepted: 25.09.2025

Published 30.09.2025

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Introduction

Has modern feminism in its current interpretations retained its liberatory prerogative (empowerment), or has it shifted towards a proscription (exclusion/overreach) that alienates the very communities it sought to uplift? This central question lies at the heart of contemporary debates around the feminist movement, particularly as it enters the complexities of the 21st century. (Spivak 90).

The quintessence of first trace of feminism as professed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton which she published on July 19, 1848, in the widely acknowledged Seneca Falls Declaration, detailing the new movement's philosophy and political manoeuvres that "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal" has now been flouted in this modern third world feministic wave (1). The new concept has usurped the prerogative brashness attitude towards subjugated subaltern oppressed section of society.

Modern feminism, presumably among the most significant and lucrative cerebral movement of the twenty-first century, was initiated by Betty Friedan. Instead of focusing on familial domestic affairs, Friedan's feminism reiterated career-oriented freedom for both sexes, as explicated in *The Feminine Mystique* (32). The global feminist movement entered a new phase in the twenty-first century. The feminist movement of the 19th and 20th centuries touched upon several basic and semi-advanced concerns in patriarchal nations and communities, and it was somewhat successful in achieving its objectives. (Tong 45). Beginning in the 19th century in Western advanced nations, feminist movements moved to emerging and underdeveloped Asian and African nations in the 20th century, concentrating on new themes and activities. (Mohanty 18). However, in this post-modern era, society is dynamically shifting towards a new dimension; consequently, some new difficulties have emerged in the twenty-first century.

However, in this post-modern era, society is dynamically shifting towards a new dimension; consequently, some new difficulties have emerged in the twenty-first century. Thus, scholars, researchers, and feminists have attempted to grasp these challenges and developments in fresh perspectives and orientations to comprehend the dynamics of the feminist movement. (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 10). They bring up such important points that they should be objectively and scientifically investigated. In addition, feminists have undertaken some fresh initiatives to deal with the most recent problems facing women. (Hooks 27) Therefore, this study is an attempt by academics to comprehend the new tendency that emerged in the twenty-first century.

In occidental cultures, the feminist movement has led to substantive changes about and major transformations, such as the achievement of right to vote for women, improved opportunities for education, equal pay for women, the ability for women to seek divorce, and the liberty for women to choose their own reproductive health, including access to the use of birth control and the option for right to have an abortion. (Evans 63). Feminists often view the decline of traditional marriage as a

positive development, considering it a patriarchal institution. (Coontz 112). The fact that most divorce cases are initiated by women suggests that women find marriage less compatible than men do. (Cherlin 54). The most significant factor is the shift in attitudes toward marriage. It is increasingly seen as a matter of personal choice rather than a sacred duty or obligatory tradition. (Giddens 58). Despite the fall of marriage, many individuals are still choosing to cohabitate. Relationships have grown more unstable and fragile because cohabiting couples are more likely to dissolve their relationships up. (Bumpass and Lu 7). Serial monogamy, rather than outright debauchery throughout one's life, seems to be the new accepted standard in this case, which is a related orientation. (Laumann 114). More single parent detached homes, single person households, and reconfigured families are produced by high rates of marital breakdown. Finally, it's critical to avoid overstating the loss of marriage as most homes are still led by an engaged pair. (Cherlin 102).

Feminism Redefined: Intersectional Perspectives in the 21st Century

A prominent strand of contemporary feminist interpretation in the twenty-first century emphasizes inclusivity and intersectionality as the foundation of the movement. Her statement shows a growing recognition that women's struggles are not caused by just one factor, but by the overlapping influences of identity and real-life experiences. Hatcher's perspective draws upon the earlier insights of Audre Lorde, reminding us that contemporary feminism must grapple with the complexities of race, sexuality, class, and ability as simultaneous, overlapping forces. Such recognition widens the scope of feminist engagement, shifting it from narrow categories of gender equality to a broader coalition of social justice struggles.

Similarly, Nunes, speaking to ABC News, highlighted the often-overlooked contributions of women of color in historical and modern feminist campaigns. She emphasized that these women were the 'unsung heroes', instrumental in shaping rights movements but frequently excluded from mainstream narratives. By drawing attention to these omissions, Nunes situates the fourth wave of feminism as a corrective force, one that prioritizes inclusivity and the acknowledgment of diverse contributions. Gen Z feminists are making an important and ongoing effect on social media. They are bringing about more justice and equitable circumstances in the globe through their grassroots efforts and advocacy. Several prominent figures in the Gen Z feminist movement, such as Dylan Mulvaney, Ziwe, and Malala Yousafzai, serve as drawing inspiration to others. These feminists are paving the way for an upward trajectory for the feminist movement in its new contemporary period by persistently using social media as an accelerator for transformation and change.

Together, these views show that twenty-first-century feminism is broader and more detailed than earlier forms. It goes beyond just legal or economic rights and works to address the gaps and exclusions left by past feminist movements. This new approach marks an important shift in feminist thinking, moving away from a one-size-fits-all idea of equality and focusing instead on the real and diverse experiences of different groups of women. Furthermore, the objectives and principles of past

feminist movements have been carried over into the feminist movement of the twenty-first century, along with new problems, viewpoints, and strategies that consider the shifting social, cultural, and technical environments.

Recent Trends and Shifts in Modern Feminism

In recent years, the feminist movement has undergone several significant developments, reflecting the rapidly changing social, cultural, and political landscape of the twenty-first century. One of the most notable of these has been the rise of intersectionality as a guiding concept. Coined and elaborated by civil rights activist and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality emphasizes that women's struggles cannot be explained through gender alone, but rather through the overlapping influences of race, class, disability, sexuality, and other social categories. (Crenshaw, *Demarginalizing* 140). Crenshaw explains that individuals often face discrimination not on the basis of a single identity but through the interconnected nature of multiple identities, which combine to create complex patterns of disadvantage and privilege. (Crenshaw, *Mapping* 1244). Intersectional feminism, therefore, seeks to develop inclusive solutions that recognize these interlocking realities and work toward more equitable outcomes.

Another defining development of contemporary feminism is the rise of social media and internet activism. Digital platforms have transformed how women's issues are discussed, amplified, and mobilized. Campaigns such as #MeToo and #TimesUp have not only heightened global awareness of sexual harassment and gender inequality but have also provided marginalized voices with a platform to be heard. Online activism has allowed feminists to organize across borders, connect with larger audiences, and foster solidarity in ways that were previously impossible. (Mendes; Et.Al 22). This digital turn has democratized feminist engagement, ensuring that awareness of women's experiences resonates worldwide.

The twenty-first century has also witnessed the strengthening of international solidarity in feminist struggles. Movements like the Women's March, which brought together participants from multiple countries, illustrate how global campaigns for equality have fostered transnational alliances. (Reestorff 49). These demonstrations highlight the shared concerns of women across diverse societies and underscore the recognition that gender justice is a global, rather than a regional or national, challenge. (Roth; Et. Al. 379).

Equally significant has been the renewed focus on bodily autonomy and reproductive rights. Feminist activism has emphasized access to safe and legal abortion, contraception, and comprehensive sex education, while also expanding the discourse to include the reproductive rights of transgender and non-binary individuals. (Ross and Solinger 9; Luna and Luker 338). In doing so, feminism has broadened the idea of reproductive justice beyond traditional boundaries, framing it as a universal human rights issue. (Petchesky 152).

Another important focus of today's feminism is challenging traditional gender roles. Feminists now work to question toxic masculinity, involve men in the fight for

gender equality, and create safe spaces for non-binary and LGBTQ+ people. (Connell and Messerschmidt 832; Hooks 116). This shift moves away from old, fixed ideas of gender and instead promotes a more open and inclusive view of gender and sexuality. Workplace equality remains a critical concern, as feminists continue to campaign against the gender pay gap, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, and the prevalence of workplace harassment. (Blau and Kahn 790). Advocates push for family-friendly policies, legislative reforms, and more equitable participation of women across industries. By addressing systemic inequalities in the professional sphere, feminism seeks not only to empower women economically but also to redefine structural hierarchies in labor markets. (Fraser 110).

Feminism today has also become more open to transgender and non-binary people, recognizing their rights and experiences. Many feminist groups now talk about gender identity and challenge the exclusion seen in earlier feminist movements. This inclusive approach aims to make feminism a space that supports the dignity, visibility, and rights of people of all gender identities. Despite progress, the fight against gender-based violence continues to dominate feminist agendas. Globally, staggering figures reveal the persistence of femicide, sexual assault, domestic abuse, and even cyberbullying. According to a World Bank report, 35% of women worldwide have experienced intimate partner violence, while 7% have reported sexual assault by non-partners. Alarmingly, intimate partner violence accounts for nearly 38% of female homicides worldwide, while an estimated 200 million women have undergone genital mutilation. Feminist campaigns aim not only to strengthen legal protections but also to combat victim-blaming attitudes and improve survivor support mechanisms.

Another area of growing significance is political representation. Increasingly, societies have recognized the importance of women's presence in leadership and decision-making roles. In the twenty-first century, more women have risen to positions of power, including presidencies, prime ministerial posts, and other senior offices. Feminist movements advocate for gender-balanced political systems, ensuring that diverse perspectives are included in governance and policy-making.

Recent feminist debates have also drawn attention to high-profile cases of violence against women, which have spurred both social outrage and policy change. For instance, the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, known as the Nirbhaya case, triggered mass protests in India and led to significant reforms in legal and governmental approaches to gender-based crimes. Such events have underscored the urgency of tackling systemic violence while also demonstrating the power of feminist activism in influencing public discourse and government action.

Finally, twenty-first-century feminism has expanded to include the rights of the queer community, particularly in relation to decriminalization of homosexuality and protection from discrimination. In India, the Supreme Court's 2023 decision—delivered by a five-judge constitutional bench led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud

—affirmed the natural and legitimate rights of queer individuals, insisting that sexual orientation cannot be the basis of prejudice. While the ruling stopped short of granting legal recognition to same-sex marriage, it nevertheless emphasized that these couples are free to choose their partners and celebrate their unions within the social realm. This development represents a broader acceptance of queer rights within feminist discourse, opening the door to greater inclusivity and recognition of diverse gender and sexual identities.

Taken together, these diverse developments illustrate that feminism in the twenty-first century is dynamic, multifaceted, and deeply interconnected with broader social justice struggles. From intersectionality and reproductive justice to queer rights and political participation, the feminist movement has expanded its boundaries, becoming more inclusive and globally resonant while continuing to confront enduring structures of inequality and violence.

Conclusion: Towards an Inclusive and Dynamic Feminism

Hence, it is seen that the intersexuality has been a broad societal taboo which has been somewhat wiped out by new twigs of modern feminism. The new surfs of modern feminism are a dynamic movement vowing for gender equality across diverse identities and experiences. Modern feminism embraces intersectionality, showing how gender influences people's lives through intersecting racial, class, sexual, and disability domains. It criticises and works to eliminate structural oppressions such as racism, capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. By addressing these interconnected systems of power, feminists aim to create a more just and equitable society for all. Additionally, modern feminism promotes body positivity, challenges restrictive beauty standards, and advocates for individuals' autonomy over their bodies. Overall, modern feminism is an aerated and covetous movement dedicated to addressing the complexities of gender inequality in today's world and creating meaningful change. It has also featured several wide ranges of concepts which has opened eyes and ears of various antagonistic avant-garde activists who are in this array of stirring feminism to modern feminism.

In retrospect, it is evident that intersectionality once treated as a societal taboo has become central to the evolving landscape of modern feminism. The contemporary feminist movement is dynamic, advocating for gender equality across diverse identities and lived experiences. By embracing intersectionality, it highlights how gender is interwoven with race, class, sexuality, and disability, and it critiques broader structures of oppression such as racism, capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. Through this lens, modern feminism seeks to dismantle systemic inequalities and move towards a more just and equitable society.

Alongside this, it advances body positivity, challenges restrictive beauty standards, and affirms the right of individuals to autonomy over their bodies. Far from being a singular or static ideology, modern feminism is a vibrant and evolving movement committed to addressing the complexities of inequality in today's world. It has not only redefined the scope of feminist discourse but has also inspired a new

generation of activists, opening fresh pathways for dialogue, resistance, and social transformation. In conclusion, modern feminism remains true to its empowering roots, but it has expanded to meet the complex realities of today's world. While earlier feminism focused on basic rights, the contemporary movement pushes further by addressing intersectionality, reproductive justice, and workplace equality. Rather than being a restrictive or prescriptive force, it has evolved into a broader, more inclusive movement that works not only for women but for all marginalized groups. Thus, modern feminism continues to be a prerogative of empowerment, reshaping itself to respond to new challenges while staying committed to justice and equality.

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