



A Study of Feminist Approach in the Novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

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Abstract: Feminism is a social theory and political movement that was developed and initiated to tackle misogyny, sexual harassment, and sexual discrimination. Feminism criticism in literature is concerned mainly with how gender effects the creation and analysis of literary works, including stereotyping, discrimination, tyranny and patriarchy. Jane Eyre is a fictional character who has an emotional connection to Rochester, In this paper, using feminist approach and text analysis, Jane Eyre dares to pursue love, fight against unfair laws, portraying the true image of woman, the traditional symbol of the Western awakening feminist awareness, women begin to fight for their rights and desires. Charlotte Bronte's novel Jane Eyre is a well known work based on her own personal life. The author portrays a strong and independent woman who aspires to true love and equality in this novel. At that time, Jane Eyre was different from any other woman. She struggles for her life and defends her destiny in the midst of hardship and in difficult situations. Jane Eyre's character was very different from male-dominated society of the Victorian period. She stands for a young woman who dares to fight for her love and rights. This paper argues that Jane's transformation into a feminist in seeking autonomy, equality, and love is gradually influenced by the historical, cultural, and contemporary background of the Victorian era and key points of feminism, as well as the events of Victorian period.

KEY POINTS: Feminism, Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre, Love, Victorian Period.

INTRODUCTION: Charlotte Bronte is an English novelist and the eldest of the three Bronte sisters whose works have become eternal English classics. Jane Eyre is recognized as her masterpiece. Charlotte Bronte grew up in a poor clergyman's family. Her mother died of lung cancer when she was young. Her childhood was miserable and gloomy due to the lack of sunlight in the depths of winter. Her father, a poor clergyman, taught her to read and guided her to read newspaper. This would be a sigh of relief in times of relief in times of sadness. Due to poverty, she spent her childhood in a charity school.

Jane Eyre, the protagonist, is an orphan and is mistreated at a very young age. She struggles for her life and has a clumsy nature. She learns how to survive from her childhood's environment. It also contributes to her developing career, which includes her determined personality, ideal beauty, and understanding. Jane Eyre is a unique image. She lives a life by herself and dares to express her own thinking. She maintains her self-esteem as a result of hard work, brilliance, and extreme individualism in the midst of the stresses of life. She never deviated from her path. Despite Jane Eyre has a small figure, but she is a woman of immense soul. She pursues true love and is faithful and dedicated to her man. Her kind heartedness, brilliance, and independence admired the hero. She finally finds a true love.

VICTORIAN PERIOD: Jane Eyre was created in the Victorian era. Unlike time, the era of Victorian literature coincides with the Queen Victoria, who ruled from 1836 to 1901, is the greatest period of British history. In the Victorian era, the society is controlled by men and women are subjected to the voices of men. A low-class woman can't have a peaceful life or a happy marriage. The social status of a person is determined by the social structure. In the patriarchal world, women are marginalized. In this era, female writers use their pens to raise their voice for the marginalized women, and Jane Eyre comes to be most popular novel.

1. The Impact of the Economic Conditions on Feminists.

During Queen Victorian's reign, Great Britain experienced rapid economic growth and significant social challenges. After the publication of "The Reform Act", political power became a newly developed industrialized capitalism. Sooner as the industrial revolution began to take shape, new technologies emerged in England, for example, railways, steamships, printing press, textile machines, etc. England became the factory of the world and creates great wealth by expanding the markets around the world and grabbing resources in its colonies. The Great Britain became the first strong nation in the world in terms of economic growth in the middle of the nineteenth century. But the deepest division in society is buried beneath this

glamour. The popular chartist movement burst out in 1836-1848. The lower class published “The People’s Charter”, and demanded government to guarantee human rights, and improve the life style and working conditions. This movement covers almost the entire city. Although it was cut off in 1848, the movement still has much success. As a result of the movement, the working class was awakened.

Over the past twenty years, Great Britain was stable. The working class was respected, and people embraced a warm, self-esteem, modest, and patriotic enthusiasm. In the meantime, the queen Victoria is a representation of these characters. With the help of these new ideas, English literature became diversified. Jane Eyre is always regarded as a member of lower class by those powerful people with wealth and power at that time. They have no dignity for people like her; the potentates can treat them casually and should not bother to give them any respect. Jane isn’t content to give up to those idiots who hate the poor and weak parochially and mercilessly. In her entire life, she wrestles for self-worth that is deserved by any human being rather than a privilege reserved for the rich people. She exerts all of her energy to win the respect and pride of the people around her.

In Britain, like the Miss Ingram, is anticipated to live a decent life by marrying a rich husband. It is however, dependent on her family’s status and fortune. How can Jane, a simple and destitute girl, change her fate and find contentment? According to Heather (in 2003 p.146), “feminist once been raised: women’s status in society is defined by some special society and culture power that can be challenged and changed”. Jane Eyre rises from inferiority to superiority in every relationship, and then attains complete independence through constant struggle.

2. The Voice of Feminists on Literature.

Victorian literature as a part of the Victorian period has many characteristics. It is complex and multifaceted, with dramatic shifts in between fantasy and reality. As the world moved, many talents of literature grew up during this period. Writers began to confront the present situation and do advanced work, whether it was in the forms of poems, novels, or essays.

In Jane Eyre’s struggle for self identity as a feminist, a key theme in this context is the quest for equality. In Victorian period, people are taught that all people are not born alike, people in high positions dislike people in low positions and men are more superior to women. In every sector, women like Jane Eyre are treated unfairly. When Jane sees the unfair system, she fights for equal basic rights. It shows Jane’s resolve and perseverance in her quest for self-identity as a feminist woman.

The novel's most prominent theme is also about true love. The quest for true love is a significant part of Jane Eyre's journey towards self-realization in her entire life. Love is pure, spiritual in Jane Eyre's sense, and can't be measured by position, wealth or power etc. She needs more than a solace able true love after a fragile childhood and painful adolescence. In her quest for true love, she suffers a lot. In the meantime, she finds it in her long and difficult quest. The Victorian period's literature accurately portrays the reality and spirit of that period. The power, the truth in society, humor with compassion, and the limitless imagination are all beyond measure. Works are ready to welcome the new century in any way in literature.

The Pursuit of Equality in Love

The period of childhood is extremely important because it determines a person's perception of life. But Jane Eyre was not so fortunate. She was branded a "bad animal" and was despised everywhere. When Jane Eyre reaches adulthood, the feminist consciousness begins to emerge. She then begins to fight against unfair laws, to find equality in true love.

Jane Eyre saw her owner for the first time on her return to Thorn field after sending an email. Hearing the horse neighing, she stepped forward to help, but was refused. This attracted her attention. In their first long chat, they discussed about looks, inferiority, superiority, and even the past of Mr. Rochester. Both were sincere and direct in their statements. Jane Eyre began to understand that Mr. Rochester was important to her. They both fall in love. Although, even Jane is in love with Rochester, she maintains a disciplined mindset of rationalizing herself and maintaining her honor. Even when Jane meets Miss Ingram, an attractive, elegant, and wealthy woman, she doesn't feel inferior, and she thinks that she is Rochester's best girl as a life partner.

An ordinary girl, Jane Eyre transcends secularist assumptions. She said that marriage is not a trade union but a free union of two hearts. She claimed that even though she may face many difficult challenges, her personality will be preserved. Jane has always sought for peace, dignity, and equality in the pursuit of love and joy. She believes that she is spiritually equal to her master, apart from wealth and social experience. Indeed, she did not appear depressed and discriminatory in front of him. In Jane's opinion, person will never lose its human value dignity. She would rather give up everything, fight for equality, and defend dignity for this reason. On her wedding day when Jane discovers that Rochester had a wife, a mad woman in the roof space. She does not act like most girls and doesn't have fight with Rochester. She accepts the truth and decides to leave him permanently and immediately. After some time, when getting a call from Rochester she hurries to leave. She returns to Thorn field Hall and discover it in ruin. When Jane saw Rochester in front her eyes,

her face was filled with a mixture of sorrow and happiness, finding that Rochester's wife Bartha died in the fire, the once impenetrable barrier vanished. So Jane decides to marry MR. Rochester, who is banal and without money. His disappointment will not deter Jane's love, because her love is not based on looks, wealth or social class. When Rochester loses all that, they find equality and harmony in the soul. This love story proves that Jane is not just any straight shooter: she is a brilliant girl who has generous thoughts and knows what she actually wants to do.

The Pursuit for Economic Independence in Love.

Jane Eyre had a terrible childhood and was sent to Lowood School in her early days. During her eight years at Lowood, despite the horrible food, bad clothes, strict rules, and a dysfunctional environment, she worked very hard to master everything they taught her. After completing her graduation she started finding a job as a private home teacher and eventually got a Job. This is a turning moment in Jane's life. Since she was bullied as a child because she relies on Mrs. Reid, getting a job was of great importance to her. However, the home tutor is of low status, Jane Eyre is able to support herself and become a economically independent girl. The job not only gives her a fair amount, but it also allows her to meet her love of life, Mr. Rochester. Despite their differences in social class and wealth, they fall in love with each other due to spiritual equality and mutual understanding. Jane Eyre loves Rochester, not because of his money and social-class, but because of his loyalty and spiritual companionship with him.

Jane Eyre proudly said "I am an independent woman now"; I am my own master", when she receive a large inheritance. She ultimately becomes completely independent due to her financial independence. She said that if God had bestowed her with some beauty and fortune, she should have made it as difficult for Rochester to leave her as it was for her to leave him. What she has predicted turns into reality, they reunited, and Jane understands her greatest aspiration. She strongly clutched her economical independence, which enabled her to achieve spiritual independence. She has never relinquished in her quest for absolute liberation, whether material or spiritual. In general, the economic situation is a basic prerequisite for spiritual growth.

In short, Jane aims for financial independence by doing her best and she achieves her goals. Women were confined only in their homes in the Victorian period. They don't have right to do much, such as doing a job, or writing about anything. They must depend on man to have a comfortable life in the world. They must follow the identity that has been fashioned by the entire community, which is dominated by man. It is rare to see an independent heroin in literature that depicts the feminist consciousness in a vivid way.

Conclusion:

Charlotte Bronte is the eldest of three Bronte sisters whose books have become timeless English literature classics. Jane Eyre is well known as her master piece. She grew up in a poor clergy man's family. Her mother died of lung cancer when she was very young. Her father taught and guided her to read newspaper at home. Her childhood was very gloomy and unhappy. She was sent to a charitable school where the environment was not good. In the novel, the life of her sorrowful childhood is also depicted. Charlotte Bronte earns a living as a teacher at a private school.

Charlotte Bronte describes the Jane's Eyre's character in three stages. The first stage is her feminism thought emerges as she fights her poor childhood. The second stage is her feminism idea takes its inspiration from her bleak experiences in Lowood school, where she learns that the fittest must survive. The most rewarding part of her quest for love, freedom and equality is when the feminism thought comes to maturity. The progress of Jane Eyre coincides with the Charlotte Bronte.

Jane Eyre's relentless quest for self respect makes a strong impression on readers of the novel Jane Eyre she fights for economic equality and marriage independence. Her love story is based on egalitarianism and self determination which has nothing to do with class, wealth or money. She doesn't care about money and doesn't want to be a Rochester's wife for his status and property. Her love is steadfast and faithful. She finally succeeds and enjoys a cheerful life with her partner.

Through the comprehensive analysis of the Jane Eyre's struggle for identity, it is well known that, despite the challenges that one encounter in his/her life, one must never giving up, is the only solution that one can do. Jane proved this to the world of 1800s that being able to be economically independent and successful on her own was no so difficult as it may have seemed.

According to a novel Jane Eyre, in a society dominated by men, a woman should struggle for self-respect and decency. In times of hardships, brave woman should be able to face the challenges of life. Self respect is the most important thing to safeguard. Feminism teaches us how to protect ourselves. In the midst of hardships, we should try to live the life. A certain amount of wealth is required in order to have a successful marriage. For a good match, a woman with a small amount of dowry is sufficient. And when it comes to a lover, the first thing is to have complete autonomy and equality as a human being. Without a love, marriage is defunct, so a good match is made possible by true love, same class, and Happiness.

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