

Relevance of Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists*

Ms. Rucha Jadhav (Research Scholar)

PG Department of English
MSP Mandal's Shri Shivaji College, Parbhani – 431401
Ruchajadhav99@gmail.com

Prof. Rohidas Nitonde (Research Supervisor)

PG Department of English
MSP Mandal's Shri Shivaji College, Parbhani – 431401
rsnitonde@gmail.com



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Courtesy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chimamanda_Ngozi_Adichie)

Abstract

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian author and a renowned feminist. In *We Should All Be Feminists*, Adichie puts forward a thought-provoking perspective on feminism. She challenges all the negative stereotypes associated with the term. She also describes her first encounter with the phrase 'feminist', which was uttered to her in a way that sounded like a supporter of terrorism. Through this essay, she creates an awareness of the importance of gender equality and calls for action to create a fair and equal society. This paper examines and analyses Adichie's views on the societal constructs of gender inequality and its consequences on society.

Introduction to Adichie

Adichie was born on 15th September 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. In her works, Adichie often explores the themes of gender inequality, identity, race, and culture. Adichie has received

numerous awards for her contribution to literature, which include MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (2008), The Orange Prize for Fiction, International Nonino Prize (2009) and PEN. Her novels like *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of Yellow Sun* (2006), and *Americanah* (2013) gained her international recognition. In addition to these novels, she has also written essays and short stories and delivered speeches creating awareness about the importance of gender equality. Adichie is considered one of the most important and prominent voices in contemporary literature, and her works have been translated into more than 30 languages.

Concept of Feminism

Feminism is a theory that aims to create social, political, and economic equality for both sexes and eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women. Feminism has a rich history and can be traced back to the 18th Century. Feminism aimed not only at ending gender discrimination but for advocating women's suffrage, reproductive rights, equal pay for equal work, and challenging and dismantling the patriarchal power structures. Also, feminism is not a monolithic ideology but an intersectional approach that addresses the issues regarding race, class, sexuality, and disability. Feminism recognizes that equality cannot be achieved without addressing these issues owing to their interconnected nature.

Variants of Feminism

Feminism is a broad, multifaceted movement with different variations and approaches. While there are many variations of feminism, the prominent ones are discussed here in brief.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal Feminism is the most common or mainstream variant, which stresses achieving equal rights and opportunities for women through political and legal frameworks within societal constructs. Liberal feminists advocate changes in the legal and political system required to eliminate gender-based discrimination and to promote gender equality. Examples: Voting, Equal pay for equal work.

Radical Feminism

This variant of Feminism views patriarchy or male supremacy as the root cause of women's suffering and oppression. This variant strongly argues for overthrowing patriarchy in all social and economic spheres for women's liberation and for creating a just society. Prominent radical feminists include Alice Walker, Catherine MacKinnon, and Andrea Dworkin.

Marxist Feminism

Marxist Feminism is a combination of the theories of Marxism and Feminism. Marxist feminists strongly believe women's oppression is rooted in the capitalist system. They argue that women's oppression is a byproduct of the intersection of capitalism and patriarchy. They demand and strive for a more egalitarian society by changing the social system through collective action.

Intersectional Feminism

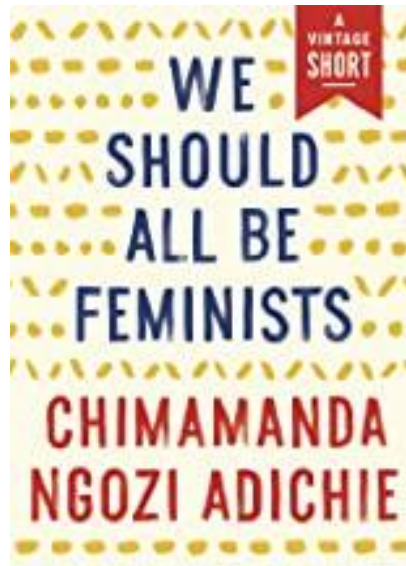
This variant of Feminism is the intersection of gender inequality and various forms of oppression. It addresses the issue of women's exploitation in various spheres based on race, class, and sex. Intersectional feminists seek to create awareness about the intersectional nature of various forms of oppression and to promote social justice for women.

Ecofeminism

This variant explores the interconnectedness of the exploitation of women and nature. Ecofeminists attempt to depict the similarities between women's and nature's exploitation. They argue that both women and nature must be respected, and their motive is to create an equitable and sustainable society.

These are some of the many variants of the mainstream theory of Feminism. Though each variant has its uniqueness and perspectives, they all share one common aim to eliminate the worm of gender inequality.

We Should All Be Feminists



Courtesy:

https://www.amazon.com/s?k=We+Should+All+Be+Feminists&i=stripbooks&crd=1K0SVAJJXF4OW&sprefix=we+should+all+be+feminists%2Cstripbooks%2C190&ref=nb_sb_noss

2

We Should All Be Feminists (2014) is a talk-turned-book by Adichie. In it, she tries to define the concept of 'feminism' in the twenty-first century. Here, she discusses the essence of being a feminist. Adichie also argues that the support of men for women's empowerment is important and therefore not only women but we all should be feminists.

Importance of Feminism

Feminism is a movement that seeks to achieve social, political, and economic equality for all genders. Despite the importance of gender equality, Feminism has faced criticism for years by many who consider it an unnecessary movement. Another misconception regarding Feminism is that it only benefits women and that men are somehow disadvantaged. Adichie

counters this statement by clarifying that Feminism does not aim to disadvantage men but to create a just and equal society. She strongly advocates that Feminism is not about putting one gender above another but achieving gender equality.

Adichie attempts to redefine the term feminism by saying that this term should not only be restricted to women but any man or woman who feels that something is wrong with the present gender system and that it needs to change.

Consequences of Gender Inequality

The present societal construct requires men to be more masculine or rigid and suppress their fears and weaknesses. As a result, their egos are more fragile, and women are trained to be submissive to men's fragile egos. Gender inequality pervades almost every sphere of human life, including schools, colleges, and workplaces. Adichie cites her first-hand experiences growing up in Nigeria, where she faced gender inequality. She remembers being unable to be the class monitor because only a boy could be the monitor. She also talks about not being allowed to enter bars or clubs without a male counterpart. Adichie argues that gender inequality harms women by limiting their potential and men by pressuring them to conform to narrow definitions of masculinity.

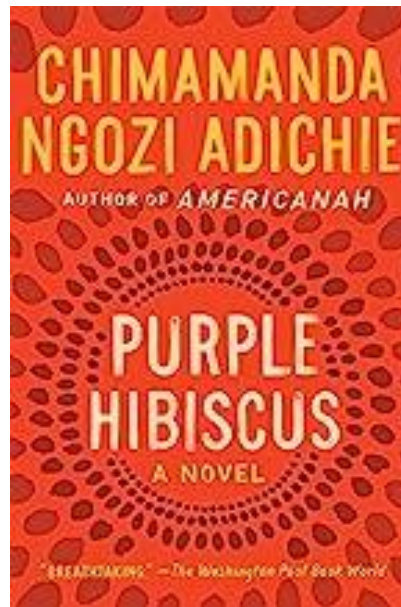
Consequences of Patriarchy

A quote from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* best suits this context, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". Right from their childhood, girls are trained to be submissive and likable and are expected to be the ones to compromise. Adichie says that when we see certain things again and again, somehow, it becomes routine. Thus, women's subordination has become quite normal, and our society finds nothing wrong with it. It also results in the underrepresentation of women and gender pay gaps in workplaces. A woman with the same abilities and qualifications as a man is still paid less for the same job. Therefore, Adichie dismisses the argument that Feminism is unnecessary as women have made significant progress in recent decades. She makes it clear that though progress has been made, there is a long way to go before we achieve gender equality in all aspects of life. Adichie also claims that "Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture."

Adichie's Contribution to Feminism

Throughout history, numerous individuals have played vital roles in shaping feminist ideologies. Adichie is among those many influential figures, whose work has profoundly impacted the contemporary discourse surrounding gender equality. Through her compelling narratives, powerful speeches & thought-provoking essays, Adichie has raised awareness, challenged stereotypes & advanced a more inclusive understanding of Feminism. Her work challenges gender stereotypes, expands the feminist discourse to embrace intersectionality, and empowers women to define their paths. Adichie's critically acclaimed works "Purple Hibiscus" and "Half of a Yellow Sun" offer profound insights into the lives of women and the systemic issues they face. With her remarkable skills, she exposes the complexities of gender inequality, enabling readers to question the societal expectations placed upon women. Adichie's work champions women's empowerment inspiring them to embrace their individuality and challenge

societal expectations tied to traditional gender rules. She encourages women to break free from patriarchal norms, defining success and happiness on their terms. Her writing catalyses for women to find their voices, pursue their aspirations, and reject the limitations imposed upon them by societal norms. Her unwavering commitment to gender equality has inspired individuals worldwide, and her legacy as a feminist icon will continue to shape future generations.



Courtesy:

https://www.amazon.com/s?k=purple+hibiscus+book&i=stripbooks&crd=QAYOCBHSW7M&prefix=Purple+Hibiscus%2Cstripbooks%2C190&ref=nb_sb_ss_ts-doa-p_2_15

Adichie's 14 Points in Support of Feminism

Further in her book *We Should All Be Feminists* Adichie explores the following 14 points which may be the ways of advocating Feminism:

- 1) Gender equality
- 2) Women empowerment
- 3) Freedom of choice
- 4) Fair pay
- 5) Education
- 6) Political representation
- 7) Solidarity
- 8) Ending violence against women
- 9) Women's rights
- 10) Challenging stereotypes
- 11) Reproductive rights
- 12) Challenging gender norms
- 13) Creating awareness
- 14) Encouraging women's participation in society.

Last, but not least, Adichie gives a solution for creating a fairer and happier world. She says, "We must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently so that they do not become vulnerable in the face of sexism".

Conclusion

It is concluded that gender equality is essential if we wish to prosper as a society, and no other channel better than feminism can help us achieve the same. While Feminism has faced criticism for decades, Adichie argues that it benefits both men and women and can eventually be helpful for the betterment of society.

Works Cited

- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "We Should All Be Feminists." Anchor Books, 2014.
Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "Half of a Yellow Sun." Fourth Estate, 2006.
Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "Purple Hibiscus." Algonquin Books, 2003.
Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "My Feminism." TEDxEuston, 2013,
https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists/transcript.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism>.
<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism>.
-