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**'FEMINISM IN PURSUIT OF IDENTITY WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SHAKESPEARE'S  
PLAYS'**

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# 'Feminism In Pursuit Of Identity with Special Reference to Shakespeare's Plays'

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**Abstract – In the world of work and politics some feminists tried to discuss for dismantling all barriers against women while at the same time approving women's "dual role". After the 1970s the feminist approach to Shakespeare developed with immense rapidity. A question arose whether Shakespeare was a feminist but the question was debated with great enthusiasm from both sides and has been accused of a patriarchal bias and as a sexist. The feminist criticism of Shakespeare recently divided into two incompatible ideological camps i.e., proto-feminists and patriarchal feminists. However the recent feminists have sought to escape from these ideological camps. As a consequence it would appear that the woman's and man's part are hardly essential and stable categories of identity but contestable and changeable social constructs.**

**Keywords: Feminists, Women, Pursuit, Shakespeare's, Identity, Developed, Discuss, Approach, Sexist, etc.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Before the rise of feminist criticism gender, sexuality and desire were emergent rather than a dominant concept within Shakespearean criticism. Since beginning Feminism has been in the eye of a storm. It has never been a movement a concept or a belief which can be described in the singular [1]. There have always been claims and counter claims which constantly intersected with social, cultural and political histories. Feminism has sought support from revolutionary agendas, attempting to separate it from them in order to gain more visibility. Amazingly enough feminist movements have both gained and lost from their association with other kinds of revolutions [2]. For in every revolution, after the initial impetus male concerns take over and absorb dissent in pursuit of their 'larger' agendas. Women have often enough been left waiting on the margin. It constantly needs to be stressed that feminism is not entirely on the west. It has its indigenous roots. It is deeply rooted in one's awareness of one's body and is molded by socio-cultural patterns [3]. Each individual and generation work anew for the definition of the self.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

All human communication is taboo and an immense loneliness is thrust upon her. All such myths and misconceptions need to be questioned [4]. Feminism asks for a change of perspectives, for an opening out of concepts and values to a variety of viewpoints and attacks all hegemonic and monolithic values,

viewpoints and structures. Shakespearean Age was an age of passion, of passionately hates and passionate loves; of eager devotions, of fervid abhorrence; of infinite tenderness, implacable fierceness; of the keenest readiness to do or die. These violent, excitable, ardent, faithful, wild, impetuous spirits, are they not, then the children of their ages? Writing with a fierce impatience beneath the intolerant tyranny which would fair, have torn from them the old religious creed of their race [5-7]. A creed deeply rooted in nature and with tendrils intertwined with their heart string sting to a burning resentment by wrongs daily inflicted on them. They're mad for revenge; rebels, mutineers against the order oppressed them from defiance of law and defiant of fate It is impossible to observe these men without seeing that, they are of the same flesh and blood with those heroes that won for the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Its honor and glory however deluded them. They were not endowed with the splendid energy, valor and devotion, which on the other fields achieved triumphs. What especially characterized the Shakespearean age, both for good and evil, was comparatively free play of life – the unfettered moment of nature [8]. It was these characteristics that made it so favorable to art. In the same manner in our Elizabethan age our dramatists studied mind and character and were able to represent the humors and the passions of their time with the insight and force that place their works amongst the most precious records of humanity. Shakespeare saw 'the very pulse of machine'.

### 1. Frightening Feminism:

Anytime the word 'feminism' is uttered, almost everybody within earshot is astonished and angry, or at least unlikely to join in a debate about it. The principle of feminism has acquired a negative connotation over the years, especially among men. For many of them a lot of women, as well 'feminism' evokes a picture of unsatisfied, angry women, who pretend to be superior to men and refuse to fulfill the responsibilities society expects of them, like doing the housework or having children [9]. For them, feminism connotes competition, proving whether women or men are the best, the question of status, superiority and inferiority. However, the matter of feminism is a more complex one and long ago moved beyond its initial stages of fighting for women's basic rights and equality; for example, equal job opportunities and equal legal status in society. A lot of people are usually frightened of or even angry with feminists, they deny the rightness of the dissatisfaction of women. Juliet Duesenberry emphasizes that the way a society thinks about and treats women is often considered a means of measuring how civilized it is. According to the latest studies by Slovak sociologists, which gave birth to a movement called "Piata žena" [The Fifth Woman], every fifth woman in Slovakia is either physically or emotionally abused. If Duesenberry is right, we have much to do and many things to change.

### 2. The Suffrage Movement:

The roots of feminism lie in the late 18th and early 19th century and are linked with the revolutionary ideas, struggles and activities of the 'women's movement' [10]. Although the term, 'women's movement,' suggests integrity and understanding within the movement and seemingly presupposes the stability and uniformity of the term 'women,' even the very early appearance of signs of feminism reveals that this superficial unity encompasses a colorful diversity. Of course, there is no doubt that the strongest unity and understanding was shown during the earliest periods; the further one proceeds in time in the history of feminism, the more diversity one discerns. However, the multiplicity of ideas, philosophies, claims and standpoints is one of the basic, characteristic features of the initial stages of both the 'women's movement' and feminism.

### 3. Feminism Today:

One failure of Waves of feminism was that in achieving equal job opportunities and careers, women ended up working full-time and doing the housework and childcare as well. This indicates that on a social level, further activities need to be carried out in order to ensure true equality for women; for instance, it is important to pass legislation on providing more efficient and available childcare facilities. However, changing laws is not enough; it is also important to change the mindsets and the ways people both men and women think about responsibility for household

chores, family roles and social position. Feminism has undeniably won much for women. Throughout the history of feminism, the diversity of viewpoints and goals has proven that it is pointless to imagine women as a uniform group with the same interests and needs. Today the emphasis should instead be placed on the celebration of diversity and individuality [11].

### 4. Feminist Reading:

Feminist criticism claims that the process of reading is the process of communication between the writer and the reader, wherein both the author and the reader are autonomous figures. Reading involves the author, the text and the receiver of the text, the reader [15]. Reading is not only communication and receiving; it is also a form of interpretation. It is important to distinguish between what reading and feminist reading is. Furthermore, it is crucial to highlight that feminist reading does not equal female reading. Feminists agree that reading does involve the reader; it refers directly to the interior experience of readers, who are active participants in a communicative, receptive process. The process of reading includes not only the personal experience, personality and cultural background of the reader, but also his/her previous reading experience [11]. The process of reading from the point of view of reader-response criticism and provide another definition of feminist reading based on the assumptions of this critical approach. In the introduction of her monograph, *The Resisting Reader*, Judith Fotherly claims that literature is political [14]. She talks about the presence that literature speaks universal truths through forms. She explains that in American literature, and literature in general, only one reality is encouraged, legitimized and transmitted; male experience is treated as universal, therefore reading the American canon requires one to "identify as male," to sympathize with masculine heroes. This has led, Fotherly says, to a confusion of consciousness, an "emasculatation" of the woman reader, who must "identify against herself as she reads, thus becoming a divided self." She argues that both women's experience of reading and the content of what is read are characterized by powerlessness [12].

"Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading", that there are two basic factors that a feminist perspective includes: gender and politics. There is a focus on 'political struggle,' investigating the difference between men and women, "the way the experience and perspective of women have been systematically and fallaciously assimilated into the generic masculine, and of the need to correct this error." She claims that literature is "an important arena of political struggle," it is a crucial tool of the project of interpreting the world.[13]

### CONCLUSION:

Though there are lot of argument about the female perspectives, still the seven plays, *All's Well That Ends*

Well, Macbeth, King Lear, Othello, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra and As You Like it, have been looked differently in search of female identity. Their dimension cannot be altogether ruled out. Especially from a women's perspective, they are useful and important in their own way as they do contribute in whatever little way and throws new light on how to look at these plays from different influence.

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