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**FEMINISM IN THE NOVEL OF JANE EYRE**

*“Women are the real architects of society”*

*Harriet Beecher Stowe*

**Summary**

The name of the research article is "Feminism in the Novel of Jane Eyre ". It has been emphasized familiarity with feminist aspects of the novel "Jane Eyre" in this article. If we look at women's role has changed in society from generation to generation, we can see "the greatest fight for equality" throughout history. This phenomenon was the origin of the dissatisfaction of all women. Since there was no gender equality, women were seen as inferior, angels staying at home taking care of their children and husbands. The ideal place for women was considered home where she is committed to obeying and satisfying their husbands by cleaning, providing hot dinners, and creating an atmosphere of comfort and protection. Unfortunately, in the Victorian era, men often regarded women as passive objects who could not hold up themselves or survive on their own. As though, they were subjected to their men's jurisdiction in many ways. However, the change came mainly from the intellectuals. Many of them saw it as their duty to put up a fight against the injustices done to women and to release them from the misuse of men. This article shows that women in the nineteenth century were supposed to behave according to traditional gender roles.

**Keywords:** *feminism, Victorian era, gender, equality*

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**Introduction**

In the Victorian era where male-supremacy was extremely dominant and even with a female monarch, few writers were brave enough to approach the theme of gender issues and discrimination. Emily Bronte was one author of the Victorian age who chose to face these issues of gender and discrimination frankly. Her writings helped path the way for those who follow her. The novel *Jane Eyre* was significant example of nineteenth century of England. The novel is masterpiece of well-known Victorian English novelist and poet Charlotte Bronte. *Jane Eyre* is the most powerful and popular novel to represent the contemporary view of women's status in society from 1836 to 1901 and it is a good example of feminism in literature of nineteenth century. In the novel main character Jane Eyre is an important feminist character who represents women in her time. The novel centers woman as the second sex under the domination of men. Woman autonomy which emphasized through the novel is part of gender issues which becomes a concern of feminist. In

Victorian era, the society was man-controlled and man-dominated society, and women were considered as a subject to the voice of men. It is impossible for a lower class woman to have a worthy life or a good marriage. The social structure was determinant for the social status of a woman. Women are differentiated in the patriarchal society. As in many eighteenth and nineteenth century novels, dignity and self-respect are ultimately recognized by heritage and through marriage, a rise in economic property.

**Main part:**

***Feminism***

Life in nineteenth century of England was governed by social class, and people typically stayed in the class into which they were born. The novel *Jane Eyre* is a novel about a woman written with man's freedom which the freedom portrays the impoliteness of a heroine who has explosion of anger as a child and unbound passion as an adult. Jane admits her desire honestly when she thinks it is untrustworthy and gives the inactive and dependent role up in

romance. Jane Eyre is considered an important feminist character represents women in nineteenth century.

Gender has come to be applied in several ways in different spheres of life. It had described women's relationship to men in societies, the experiences of women and men in movements in social emancipations. Gender is divided into masculinity and femininity. According to Faqih Mansour, it caused woman as the second sex, and if it happened, it will be considered as a "fate" of woman and is a normal thing of her life. [2; 151] Gender differentiation has built an unfairness of gender status of women. Men and women do different kind of jobs, even though the duties of each gender change by time. According to Faqih, the injustice of women is divided into six parts:

- Firstly, the subordinate of woman in front of man, especially in case of making any decision of life and controlling power.

- Secondly, dissimilarity and gender distribution of the marginalization of women giving birth of economical findings among environment, bureaucracy, and development programs.

- Thirdly, this dissimilarity result is the suppression of woman.

- Fourth, woman practically works inside the house, do any domestic work at home and if they want to work outside the house. It means that they would reach a double job, caring for a child and as an employee.

- Fifth, gender dissimilation also makes any violence both physically and mentally for woman.

- Sixth, all gender differentiation above, according to Faqih, it caused woman as the second sex, and if it happened, it will be considered as a "fate" of woman and is a normal thing of her life. [2; pp:151]

Also, in the Victorian age, the female writers took their pens to speak for the oppressed women and the novel *Jane Eyre* came to be the most influential novel in this period. At that time, as a member of the lower class, Jane is always looked down upon by those rulers with money and power. For women as Jane, they have no glory. The rich could treat them unusual and did not need to give them any respect. But

Jane Eyre never capitulates to those high and mighty people who treats the poor and the weak ruthlessly. In her life, Jane jumps herself into struggling for honor. Jane puts all her strength to achieve the respect and admiration from people around seeking for equality. It is another important issue through Jane Eyre's struggle for self-realization as a feminist. People in Victorian age had the idea that people were not born equally, people in upper class hate people in lower class and men are considered superior to women. Consequently, women like Jane are treated unequal in every field of Victorian society. When Jane realizes the cruel situation, she fights for an elementary right of equality. It reflects positively in Jane's intention and persistence in rebellion for self-realization as a feminist woman. Also the true love is the biggest theme in the novel. In Jane Eyre's whole life, the looking for of true love is an significant representation of her struggle for self-realization. In Jane Eyre's mind and soul love is pure, divine and it cannot be measured by class, power or property and so on. She suffers a lot in her pursuit of true love. At the same time, she gets it through her long and hard pursuit.

According the novel *Jane Eyre*, the image of women always stands behind the men with the social class variations among them. It clearly shows that women mostly doing a domestic job rather than being a financial resources in a family. Albeit Jane Eyre in an exception in this matter, she is trying her best to make her own financial by working as a governess which in that time, the profession of governess itself could raising Jane's status in society.

It is clearly mentioned throughout the novel *Jane Eyre* that all these disrupted deeply raised social codes of femininity and respect capacity. The significant point of novel is that Jane Eyre believes on the importance of women's independence and strives maintain a status in life and to devoid of any debts to the other characters. Jane Eyre also tries to find equal emotion with other characters. Jane Eyre is dissimilar from any other women at Victorian era. She struggles for her life and defends her belief in hardships and difficult conditions. In Victorian age, the image of Jane Eyre was a sharp contradiction to the man-dominated

society. She stands for a new lady who has the brave to fight for her own rights and love in her period. By analyzing the contemporary social, historical and cultural background of Victorian period and key points of feminism, and Jane's experiences, it is realized that Jane gradually becomes a feminist in following independence, equality and true love. Born into poverty and lacking nobility, Jane should have shown a reception of her social status and not desired for more and fellow education and career. She dares to love a man of a higher class status than herself.

In the nineteenth century when Charlotte Bronte wrote this novel, she expressed her feelings about woman's position. It is fact that family is the smallest unit of community. The woman's status has to try some filtering in family. Even in the home, woman can meet the "supremacy of man". The supremacy which practically makes a man has a power for the whole things in the home. Then, as an independent woman who feels really irritating with "the power of man", she tries to create some conflicts of this unequal situation. This is the sample of strong voice of Jane. What she desires is about a woman position. It is interesting that Jane certainly does not understand anything about gender manifestation, feminism, woman status or anything related to do it, she has never got a specific education about that. It means that she does not purposely do all rebellions about woman autonomy. She just imagines how nice it would be, if woman has an equal movement which is same with man does.

Jane Eyre is one of the greatest representatives of novels which show how women can move from a life of poverty and oppression to independence and victory. Charlotte Bronte herself suffered a lot in her life like Jane before becoming an accomplished writer. Also it is possible to see clearly the relations between the heroine and its author while reading a novel. Charlotte Bronte lived in the same environment under the same conditions as Jane live. That means, Charlotte Bronte reflects a part of her life, inner self, also, the society in which she lived in the work of Jane Eyre which mirrored the writer's life. That

was an inspiration achieving the novel. Jane led a life of toleration for vary difficulties as a women. She suffered in all her life periods from her childhood in Gateshead Hall, through adolescence in Lowood School to maturity as a governess of Mr. Rochester's daughter, Adele, at Thornfield Hall. In the novel Jane Eyre, the gender inequality is quoted: "*Nobody knows how many rebellions, besides political rebellions, ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel. They need exercise for their faculties, and field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do. They suffer from too rigid restrain, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or lean more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex*" [1; ch:12]

This quote is an excellent sample of Jane's longing for equality and independence. The oppression that happened in Jane's life is that she makes some uprisings. Started from the strong voices she created in her mind then moving to real actions of revolts.

Jane is always disturbed to accomplish the desires and wishes of others alternately her own, even her moral standards and her faith make Jane leave from their wills. She tries very hard for her liberty, starting from Gateshead Hall, then Lowood Institution, further moved to Thornfield Hall. Her transformation can be said quite sad. She was changed in one night, when she was a little orphan girl at Gateshead Hall where she lived with her uncle's rude family. Her environment at Gateshead Hall coerces her to act wiser than the kid on her ages. The treatment she got from her aunt and cousins is the greatest trauma in Jane's inner life. Their treatment also makes emptiness in Jane. She faces the world alone and she feels had no family at all. Jane spent miserable childhood under the care of her cruel aunt Mrs. Reed where she was treated harshly against little Jane. Jane was mistreated physically and mentally as doing very hard works out of her talent and convicting to live in the red room which is cold and quiet,

where her uncle died. All of them were awful psychological trauma to little child. She struggled with her aunt family and especially with her cousin John who bullied her, Jane expresses about the situation like:

*"...Then Mrs. Reed subjoined...Take her away to the red-room, and lock her in there. Four hands were immediately laid upon me, and I was born upstairs"*[1; ch:1]

However, through time Jane brings her emptiness with her, she tries to restore her life with her close friends, friendly teacher and others. All the disagreements mixed with one achievement, woman autonomy. She tries really hard to gain it. She wants to make her own decisions. Jane's rebellion against Mrs. Reed and John represents her feminist consciousness in getting honor from other people as a noble and respectable person. Jane stands up to her cruel aunt, Mrs. Reed, as a little child, and she is Mr. Rochester's equal in conversation and struggled to retain self-respect as a teacher and governess. Jane says:

*"..I can live alone, if self-respect and circumstances require me so to do. I need not sell my soul to buy bliss. I have an inward treasure born with me, which can keep me alive if all extraneous delights should be withheld, or offered only at a price I cannot afford to give..."*[1; ch:19]"

Then little Jane was sent to Lowood Institution boarding school where she learnt a lot and became much stronger and independence. During Jane Eyre's staying in the orphanage of Lowood Institution, which is a charitable institution in name. But in fact, her understanding of worthiness becomes deeper. She is aware of a fact that, even in the face of powerful and authoritative people like the superior inspector of Lowood School, Mr. Brocklehurst, as long as her honor and self-respect hurt severely, she will never be governed by.

The second stage of Jane's hard life was at Lowood School which was a boarding school for orphaned girls. Thus, Elaine Showalter said: *"The Lowood School where Jane is sent by her aunt is the penitentiary for which the red room was the tribunal. Lowood School represents sexual diminishment and sensual discipline the*

*the girls are systematically starved and deprived of all sensory gratification in 1824 both Charlotte and Emily attended the daughter of clergy school at Cowan Bridge for 10 months"*. [p:44]

Lowood School where Jane had lived for eight years, it was like a prison for her, where she suffered and treated with cruelty by the superior, Mr. Brocklehurst, and Miss Scatcherd. Mr. Brocklehurst exercises male supremacy over Jane and the girls in school. Mr. Brocklehurst appears to Jane as "a black pillar a sable clad shape standing erect on the rug: the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital". Mr. Brocklehurst represents a new male authority where he demonstrates his superiority. He rules over Lowood Institution; a school for girls funded by donations. He is aggressive towards Jane Eyre telling teachers of the Lowood School:

*"you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, examine her actions, punish her body to save her soul"*. [1; ch:7]

Mr. Brocklehurst is a kind of man who cares about only himself, his needs and desires. He likes people who have a lot of wealth. Also Jane saw what happened with her first and best friend Helen Burns when Miss Scatcherd punished her. Jane was particularly shocked to see Miss Scatcherd's cruelty.

The whole time that Jane spent in Thornfield Hall is the most excellent part of the whole novel. She was a girl in eighteen when she was attracted to her master and falls in love with him. Mr. Rochester was almost twice her age. Jane was a simple girl didn't enjoy her social status. Also, she faces a rival for Rochester from his guest Blanche Ingram, a beautiful and rich woman from an upper class. Blanche Ingram thought to marry Rochester to secure her status in society.

A real obstacle to Jane's love explored that her beloved is already married and cannot married legally with Jane. Jane felt that she is cheated. Next day, Jane makes her decision about her future and she leaves Mr. Edward Rochester without as much as a word or a letter. She slept outside in the wood and lived dark nights till she found a shelter with a family who



is her cousins. Moreover, she inherited a wealth from her dead uncle and she divided it with the river's siblings John and his sister. John offers Jane to marry with him and accompany him as his wife, a marriage without love. But Jane rejected him because she loved Rochester. All her suffering does not lead her to quit, it was a motivation for Jane to success and independence and Jane's power over her own experience. Jane achieves a lot of in her life. Jane was very progressive minded, in this she is an original feminist figure whose pliable class status allows her to assess other characters on their actions and personalities rather than on their economic status and physical appearance. She disobeyed many social agreements especially those affecting women.

Jane is fearless, educated aware and knowing to moderate her emotions with self-control. Meeting with Mr. Rochester and fell in love with him expressed the feminism in Jane and her thoughts. Jane loves Mr. Rochester with all her pure heart and Mr. Rochester's status and wealth make him inaccessible for Jane to approach, yet she never feels herself lower in status to Mr. Rochester though she is a poor family teacher. Jane believes that they are equal and should respect each other. In fact, it is her simplicity, majesty and sincerity that touch Mr. Rochester. Mr. Rochester feels from the deep of his heart that Jane is the spiritual partner he always looks for. When Jane is moved by his wholeheartedness, they fall in love deeply. But at the time of their wedding, Jane finds the secret that she is not Mr. Rochester's legal wife. Jane feels heartbreaking on this news. She lives dilemma whether to stay or to leave. She says to Rochester:

*"...I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God, sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by men when I was sane, and not mad as I am now, laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation, they are for such moments as this when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigor, stringent are they, inviolate they shall be." [1; ch:27]*

In the novel *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte portrayed a strong, free and independent woman. Jane fought alone in a world full of with problems and known by social inequality from place to place looking for freedom and sovereignty. Jane took decision and was able to express herself as well as to build herself up with enough mental maturity and confidence to face life. Jane stays true to herself during her quest for personality and sovereignty. The frightening night in the Red Room causes her come to life and having experienced true fear. Now Jane is afraid to rise for herself against the male-dominated society. Miss Temple is another important figure in Jane's life quest. Owing to the fact that Miss Temple teaches her to suppress her anger. Through the death of Jane's best friend, Helen, and Bertha, Jane is released from the man ideal of woman sovereignty, the angel in the house. Jane's quest for identity and sovereignty went on at Marsh End. Jane found her good relatives at Marsh and defeated the oppressions by the bad relatives at Gateshead Hall. Jane found safety and defeated the anger suppressed in her absent-minded.

Jane controlled her feeling with discernment based on her self-respect and had a strong personality. Although all the conditions she lived, Jane achieved to overcome her troubles and success happiness by marriage with the wealthy man who she loves and any girl dreams about and Jane became independent financially.

Jane Eyre's uncompromising pursuit for honor leaves a deep impression on every reader of the novel. She struggles for equality on society, both on economy and marriage. Her pure and prideful love is based on equality and independence that has nothing to do with class, power or wealth. Jane does not interest in Mr. Rochester's wealth and position. She only wants to have a family life which she never lived. Her love is loyal and pure. Jane Eyre desires true love and she overcomes the barriers in the process of pursuing true love. After long period of her self-realization process she succeeds to live a happy life with her lover. Jane Eyre proves to the world of the nineteenth century that a woman striking the difficulties to become independent and successful on her own was not as dubious as it may have seemed. She is not

only victorious in period of wealth and position, but more importantly, in terms of family and love. These two needs that have escaped Jane for so long are finally hers. Adding to her victory is her capacity to enjoy family and love without losing her independence. Eventually, at the end of the novel, Jane finds her families, inherits some money, finds her true "Jane" and finds her lovely equal relationship that is love and to be loved.

Jane's status as the heroine of the novel, sometimes has a brilliantly imagination of her status. The women status as a second sex makes men to be a significant role. It is a normal thing if men are successful both in public sphere and domestic sphere. For example, working outside a house and also taking care of children. According to the novel of Charlotte Bronte, the image of women stands behind the men with the social class variations among them. It clearly shows that women mostly doing a household job rather than being a financial resources in a family. Even though Jane Eyre in an anomaly in this matter, she tries her best to make her own economic status by working as a governess which in the nineteenth century, the profession of governess itself could raising Jane's status in society. It cannot be disclaimed that Jane still trusts men's character.

### Conclusion:

"Feminism in the novel of *Jane Eyre*" article presents the difficulties which women lived, their place and role in society of nineteenth century. It has been analyzed different female characters in the novel from the different aspects of womanhood which was a concept of the nineteenth-century Victorian society regarding women's behavior, appearance, and manners. According to these features, development of gender equality has always been in the focus of attention. The main goal of article is to show the perception of gender inequality in Victorian era, how conventions and mores of society affected women and made them obeyed people of society and to analyze the novel of Charlotte Bronte taking into account the aspects mentioned above.

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## ФЕМИНИЗМ В РОМАНЕ «ДЖАН ЭЙР»

### Резюме

Название исследовательской статьи «Феминизм в романе Джейн Эйр». В статье подчеркнута знакомство с феминистскими аспектами романа «Джейн Эйр». Если мы посмотрим в прошлое, как менялась роль женщины в обществе от поколения к поколению, мы увидим «величайшую борьбу за равенство» на протяжении всей истории. Это явление было источником недовольства всех женщин. Поскольку гендерного равенства не существовало, женщины считались низшими, ангелами, сидящими дома и заботящимися о своих детях и мужьях. Идеальным местом для женщины считался дом, где она обязуется подчиняться и удовлетворять своих мужей, убирая, угощая горячим обедом и создавая атмосферу уюта и защиты. К сожалению, мужчины викторианской эпохи часто считали женщин пассивными объектами, которые не могли выстоять или выжить самостоятельно. Как будто они во многом подчинялись своей мужской юрисдикции. Однако изменения исходили в основном от интеллигенции. Многие из них считали своим долгом бороться с несправедливостью по отношению к женщинам и освобождать их от жестокого обращения мужчин. В этой статье

показано, что женщины в девятнадцатом веке должны были вести себя в соответствии с традиционными гендерными ролями.

**Ключевые слова:** феминизм, викторианская эпоха, гендер, равенство.

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### **“CEYN EYR” ROMANINDA FEMİNİZM**

#### **Xülasə**

Tədqiqat məqaləsinin adı “Jane Eyre romanında feminizm”dir. Bu məqalədə “Jane Eyre” romanının feminist aspektləri vurğulanmışdır. Əgər keçmişə nəzər salsaq, qadınların cəmiyyətdəki rolunun nəsil-dən-nəslə necə dəyişdiyini, tarix boyu “bərabərlik uğrunda ən böyük mübarizəni” görə bilərik. Bu fenomen – gender bərabərsizliyi bütün qadınların narazılığının mənşəyi idi. Gender bərabərliyi olmadığı üçün qadınlar aşağı, evdə oturaraq uşaqlarına və ərlərinə baxmaqla hökmlü varlıq kimi görülürdü. Qadınlar üçün ideal yer təmizlik etmək, isti yeməklər vermək, rahatlıq və qorunma mühiti yaratmaqla ərlərinə itaət etmək və onları razı salmaq öhdəliyi götürdüyü ev sayılırdı. Təəssüf ki, Viktoriya dövrü kişiləri tez-tez qadınları özlərini saxlaya bilməyən və ya təkbaşına yaşaya bilməyən passiv obyektlər kimi qəbul edirdilər. Sanki onlar bir çox cəhətdən öz həyat yoldaşlarının yurisdiksiyasına tabe idilər. XIX əsrdə bu tendensiyanı qırmaq üçün ilkin addım ziyalılardan gəldi. Onların bir çoxu qadınlara qarşı edilən haqsızlıqlara qarşı mübarizə aparmağı və onları kişilərin sui-istifadəsindən azad etməyi öz vəzifəsi hesab edirdi. Bunlardan biri də yaratdığı feminist qadın obrazı ilə çevriliş edən Şarlotta Brönte idi.

**Açar sözlər:** feminizm, Viktoriya dövrü, gender, bərabərlik

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