



## Examining the Evolution of Feminist Thought: A Journey from 19th century to 21st century

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### Abstract

The feminist ideology has evolved greatly with its foundation pillars set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, advocating for women's rights and the current examination of interconnected oppression and the promotion of intersectionality. All these thoughts were found in Virginia Woolf's principles of feminism, emphasising its true soul. To understand such complex dynamics, the presented study has examined the evolution of feminist ideology in influential literary works across the initial ideology and the first, second and third wave of feminism using Virginia Woolf's idea of feminism as a benchmark. The study employed a qualitative content analysis approach, using a discourse analysis framework to dissect the incorporated themes representing the key movements. Themes, including autonomy, intellectual freedom and gender inequalities, were identified and assessed using Woolf's ideology. The study findings indicated that the early feminist discourse in the 19<sup>th</sup> century established the foundational principles such as women empowerment and gender equality and criticized the societal barriers. Expanding it the first wave probed the patriarchal domination in the society and advocated self-determination and equal opportunities for women from the prescribed societal roles. The second wave further assessed the construction of gender identities and the interconnected oppression of marginalized groups. To overcome discrimination by embracing a variety of perspectives and understandings, the third wave placed a high priority on coalition building and representation. This wave promoted a wide range of viewpoints and advanced the conversation in line with Woolf's goal of empowerment and freedom. Moreover, Literature discourse has significantly influenced feminist movements, advocating for social justice and autonomy, despite enduring patriarchal domination. However, intersectionality remains a challenge, necessitating representation and alliance. In essence, the presented study has provided a broad ground for future study to investigate further with a specific focus on each theme.

**Keywords:** Feminism, gender equality, intersectionality, autonomy, women's freedom, patriarchal domination