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Feminism, Historical Origins Of Feminism And Basic Concepts

*Feminizm, Feminizmin Tarihsel Kökeni ve Temel Kavramlar**Kutay Üstün**
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Özet

18. yüzyıldan itibaren kadınlar, karşı karşıya kaldıkları eşitsizlikler ve bu eşitsizliklerden dolayı toplum içindeki dezavantajlı konumlarını sorgulamaya başlamışlardır. Hukuki, siyasal, ekonomik, idari, toplumsal ve kültürel alanlarda eşitsizlikler yaşamaları, onların konumlarını sorgulamalarına ve böylece bir mücadelenin de başlamasına sebep olmuştur. Feminizm sözcüğünün kökenine baktığımızda, Latince kadın anlamına gelen “femine” sözcüğü ile karşılaşırız. Tarihsel olarak feminizm, ilk defa 18. yüzyılda İngiltere’de ortaya çıkar. Feminizm, kadın ile erkek arasında var olan eşitsizliğe karşı çıkar, kadın ve erkek arasında, toplumsal, kültürel, siyasal ve ekonomik eşitliği savunur. Esas amacı, kadının temel hak ve özgürlüklerini korumak olan feminizm, kadının erkekle eşit haklara sahip olması için uğraş verir. Feminizm, kadınların temel hak ve özgürlükleri için mücadelesinde, siyaset yapmalarını içerir. Kadınların erkeklerle, özel ve kamusal alanda eşit olmak, özgürleşmek, toplum baskısından kurtulmak için başlattıkları Feminizm Hareketi, tarihsel süreçte, farklı zaman ve durumlarda anlam değişimine uğramış, kavramsal ve eylemsel açıdan değişim ve dönüşümler geçirmiştir. Genel anlamda feminizm, kadınların erkeklerle eşit olması gerektiği iddiasındadır ve kadınlara yönelik olan eril baskıyı yok etmeyi amaçlar. Bu çalışmada feminizm tarihsel kökeni ve temel kavramları çerçevesinde ele alınmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminizm, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Kimlik, Modernleşme

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Abstract

Since the 18th century, women have begun to question their disadvantaged position in society because of the inequalities they faced. Experiencing inequalities in legal, political, economic, administrative, social and cultural areas caused them to question their positions and thus to start a struggle. When we look at the origin of the word feminism, we encounter the word “femine”, which means woman in Latin. Historically, feminism first appeared in England in the 18th century. Feminism opposes the inequality that exists between men and women, and advocates social, cultural, political and economic equality between them. Feminism, whose main purpose is to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of women, strives for women to have equal rights with men. Feminism involves women making politics in their struggle for their fundamental rights and freedoms. The movement of feminism, which was initiated by women to be equal with men in the private and public sphere, to be free and to get rid of social pressure, has undergone a change in meaning in different times and situations in the historical process, experienced with changes and transformations in terms of conceptual and political activism. Feminism in general claims that women should be equal to men and aims to destroy masculine oppression against women. In this study, feminism is discussed within the framework of its historical origin and basic concepts.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender, Identity, Modernization.

Introduction

Women starting from the 18th century, especially after the Enlightenment period, they questioned the inequalities they are exposed to in legal, political, economic, administrative, social and cultural areas and their disadvantaged positions and roles in society. They started to struggle on these issues. The struggles of women to have equal status, equal rights and freedoms with men have revealed the concept of feminism since the middle of the 19th century. The feminist movement, which women started in the 1960s to get rid of the social oppression of the patriarchal order and to become free, has undergone many conceptual and epistemological transformations in the process until today (Taş, 2016: 163-164).

Feminism includes women's making politics by fighting for their fundamental rights and freedoms. In the feminist movement, it is aimed to intervene in politics and transform the political field in the context of gender by focusing on women's emancipation and equality. At this point, women, who have been removed from politics for centuries, have struggled to obtain their political rights by demanding to take part in politics, along with feminism (Adak, 2016: 19).

The origin of the word feminism is the word "femine", which means woman in Latin. Feminism, an approach that advocates the prevention of restrictions of women, their liberation, and their equal rights and freedoms in their private and public activities (Taş, 2016: 165), considered as a field of science that investigates and examines the problems women have experienced within the framework of parameters such as race, language, religion, nation, class etc., by examining the oppression and difficulties that women are exposed to just because they are women.

Historically, feminism first emerged in England in the 18th century. The first academic work in the field of feminism was Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" published in 1792 (Sevim, 2005: 7-8). After the Enlightenment, women's objections to social roles and inequalities, and the special emphasis on human rights with the French Revolution became a starting point for women to have their voices heard, and Wollstonecraft became a systematic advocate of women's rights in her related book. In her work, Wollstonecraft argues that domestic functions for which women are held responsible are not at all a "necessity" of female nature, as the patriarchal order suggests (Andree, 1993: 45-46). Wollstonecraft underlines that woman, who were born as equals with men, started to struggle for their demands for freedom and rights when they realized that their lives did not continue on equal terms with men (Kolay, 2015: 5).

Feminism is an approach that opposes the inequality between men and women and argues that equality between the sexes at the social, cultural, political and economic levels should prevail, manifests itself in the fields of philosophy, sociology, ethics and politics. The main purpose of feminism is to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of women. On a practical level, it tries



to ensure that women have equal rights with men in areas such as child rearing, child rights, education, and employment. While feminism, on the one hand, aims to improve women's health and the "abortion" right, which is banned in some countries, on the other hand, it highlights issues in different fields, the prevention of all forms of violence against women, the elimination of harassment and rape, and including the rights of lesbianism. (Taş, 2016: 165).

Feminism is a philosophy which is based not only on eliminating the inequality between men and women, but also on the struggle for the solution of many problems in societies. Since the 19th century, changes in economic, political, social and intellectual fields have increased the levels of freedom and development of societies. The ideas of freedom and equality have found an increasing place in social life. However, in this period when universal advances took place, women realized that the ideas of freedom and equality were not applied to their own lives. Realizing that this situation is not due to their biological sex, but as a result of "sexist" social organizations, they embarked on the struggle for freedom and equality. Experienced historical transformations and the Industrial Revolution limit women to the private sphere identifying them with "Irrationality" and "Nature", while men identifying with "Culture" and "Reason", which are active subjects in the public sphere (Kolay, 2015: 5-6).

Feminism, which argues that there is a conflict between men and women in the context of status in social relations without a biological perspective, can be considered as an approach that struggles to eliminate the problems faced by women who oppose, question and criticize the patriarchal system that is dominant in society (Taş, 2016: 166). Although feminism existed in the second half of the 19th century, it was after the 1960s that this movement found its way in daily life. Feminism claims that women are subjected to a dependent and systematic oppression and exploitation, and that the relations between men and women are not due to their natures. While feminism acts with the view that women are in a disadvantaged, unequal, exploited, oppressed and subordinate position compared to men, claims that this unequal position between men and women in terms of gender is due to a political relationship. And it argues that this power asymmetry can be changed with a political struggle (Özgün, 2014: 379). Feminism has historically been divided into three waves from the 19th century to the 21st century. Throughout these waves, it is seen that women struggle individually and universally to have equal rights and freedoms with men. In the struggle for feminism, women have shaped their intellectual and political positions by feeding off different theories and ideologies. As a result, different feminist approaches have emerged (Taş, 2016: 163).

Feminism as an umbrella concept, on the one hand, includes categories such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, on the other hand, it exhibits a



diversity which includes black women, lesbian women and some other sub-groups today. The term “women’s movements” expresses that woman are fighting for the same purpose (Özgün, 2014: 379).

1. The Historical Origin of Feminism

Human history goes back thousands of years. However, the information about the lives of past societies is very limited. 10000 years before BC, people made their living by hunting and gathering as well as agriculture with hoe. This age is the period when the least information about the situation of women is known. Due to the fact that in the era of these societies, the writing which allowed them to convey their history to the future had not yet been invented (Andree, 1993: 11-16). During this period, men and women lived equally. In these societies, no dominance or superiority between the sexes has been observed. (Kolay, 2015: 5).

Small nomadic communities in the Paleolithic period and small villages in the first Neolithic period were replaced by large towns, and over time, cities were formed. The first-class conflict occurred in the urbanization period. The urban life means that one class feeds itself to another class with the development of agricultural land, private property and accumulation. The division of labor in the cities led to the emergence of the artisans, soldiers and priests who entered the service of the rich. At that time, technical developments increased, the plow period began in the fields and private property began to develop. The foundation of social institutionalization which led to the subordination of women was laid from this period. (Andree, 1993: 17-23).

In the Paleolithic age, hunters had to secure their hunting grounds through alliances in order to survive. Therefore, the tribes had to be Exogamic. When the settled system was passed, Exogamy left its place to Endogamy. Family heads now began to hide their daughters or daughters’ fertility to use for the growth of the household by marrying off to their cousins. This is the basis of the closure of women. At the end of this change, alliances formed by the export of women to other tribes by marriage gave way to wars (Tillion, 2006).

While some changes occur with the settled life, the superior position of women in religions disappears (Andree, 1993: 19). Philosophical currents of thought and monotheistic religions lay the groundwork for the representation of humanity from the male lineage, emphasizing the distinction between men and women. Political, social, religious and cultural institutions are conveniently established in patriarchy. While women were directed to household chores such as taking care of children and the elderly, cooking and cleaning, men were influential in the fields of art, education, health, politics, culture, religion and law in social institutions (Kolay, 2015: 5).

While the “mother goddess” was the only object of worship for thousands of years, statues representing men gradually began to appear after that. Models of the phallus, the symbol of



masculinity, made of clay or carved into stone, are multiplying. These kinds of symbols reveal that, although male gods have not emerged yet, the role of men in reproduction and the fact that the hoe used by the woman is replaced by the plow under the guidance of the man, at a time when the economic bases of the matriarchy were destroyed, the ideological base of the matriarchy gradually weakened and lost value (Childe, 1958: 110). The deterioration of nature and international relations in this period causes women to be in a worse situation and to be imprisoned at home (Andree, 1993: 19). With the beginning of the settled life of human beings, women have suffered their first and still continuing defeat, and “what-who” they are in terms of society is now characterized by male power (Beauvoiere, 1996: 35). While the subordination of women in almost all societies emerged in this period, the struggle against women’s oppression began only after a petition was filed in England in 1647 (Özgün, 2014: 380).

The conscious revolt in the 17th and 18th centuries emerged in an environment where bourgeois revolutions took place, capitalism blossomed and production was taken from the family and given to the public sphere. A strong attempt to defend women’s rights during the Enlightenment came with the birth of the intelligent, elegant, knowledgeable, determined and beautiful woman. Enlightenment writers envisioned a more civilized and broader education for noble class girls (Rowbothom, 1994: 20). Such a thought affected very few of the women of the period. However, highlighting the issues of freedom and education, which are among the demands that will increase women’s rights defensiveness, strengthened women’s rights advocates in the following period (Özgün, 2014: 380).

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the separation of home and work division, which allowed the bourgeois class men to participate in production, has caused a large part of women to be identified with the home and to be excluded from some professions they previously fulfilled and to be thrown out of production. The theory of human rights, which was put forward as a result of the struggle for freedom and equality led by the bourgeoisie at that time, had a general and abstractly defined framework. Although the history of feminist ideas goes back to the Chinese and ancient Greek civilizations, it was realized in the 19th century that they were expressed in a more organized way (Atan, 2015: 3). It was in this century that women realized that they were excluded from some ideals of the new society such as justice, freedom and equality, and that they were deprived of some rights which developed with these concepts, and it became a social movement by gaining a mass characteristic (Çakır, 2008: 416).



2. Fundamental Concepts of Feminism

2.1. Gender

As the individual begins to socialize in the society, the society transfers certain identities to the individual. By adopting this identity, the individual internalizes the norms transmitted by the society and learns to be subject to the norms. The individual inevitably acquires these norms transmitted by the society, because the society is in a very strong position against the individual with its thousands of years of tradition. There are various norms imposed on women and men by society. For instance, while features such as understanding, sensitivity, dependency and emotionality are described as femininity by the society, traits such as dominance, independence and leadership are attributed to men. These norms, which are attributed to women and men, cause pressure on the individual (Cenikli, n.d.: 3-4).

Biological sex differences are differences that occur between men and women in terms of innate and unlearned/untaught characteristics. Gender is the differences that occur between the sexes, reinforced by the qualities learned and acquired through socialization. Gender differences lead to some transformations both from individual to individual and from culture to culture (Dökmen, 2015: 25).

There are many behavioral and attitude differences between men and women. For example, in many societies, men are relatively more aggressive than women. Differences in behavior and attitudes between men and women stem from culture, not biology. Sex differences are biological, but gender encompasses all the traits that a culture teaches and attributes to men and women. Gender depicts the cultural construction of a human being. By collecting systematic ethnographic data on gender, anthropologists have identified frequently displayed patterns of behavior related to gender differences and observed changes associated with gender roles, the environment, the economy, adaptation strategies, and the political system (Kottak, 2013:405; Gezon and Kottak, 2016:146).

According to Vargün, the framework of the necessity of being a man and a woman within the scope of the expectations of the society and cultural teachings, “has a certain continuity with the transfer of culture from generation to generation. The transfer of the norms of femininity and masculinity to the individual by the culture in which he/she was born also shows that gender is always relearned and reproduced, since it is a repetitive process” (Vargün, 2021: 8).

A newborn child has a biological sex but does not yet have a gender. As the child begins to learn, society puts before the child a set of rules or behavior patterns appropriate to his or her gender. Certain socialization factors or agents -especially family, media, friend groups, and school-



concretize these expectations and models and prepare the environments in which the child will adopt them. Whatever the social models or rules, they are more or less internalized. As a result, gender identity emerges, which normally coincides with the social expectations of a particular gender (Connell, 2019, s. 278). “Generally speaking, the definition of being a woman or a man is determined by the culture, it is transmitted, maintained and reproduced” (Vargün, 2021: 9). Keny and Smille draw attention to the fact that the roles attributed to men and women are cultural constructs. Masculinity and femininity are social constructs that should be considered together with other social categories. Thoughts on gender discrimination may differ in terms of attitudes and practices (2015:196).

During socialization, boys and girls are brought up by taking into account the “gender differences” among the emotions, behaviors, approaches and roles that their cultures attribute to their sexes. The differences that arise as a result of the society’s imposition of the situation on the individual is that women are expected to fulfill the duties of housewives, nurses, teachers etc. in the context of being perceived as more caring, emotional and sensitive, while men are expected to fulfill duties such as engineers, merchants and soldiers etc. in the context of being perceived as independent, strong and assertive. There may be some differences between these gender roles and the sexes, and there may also be variations among individuals belonging to the same sex in terms of these characteristics. For instance, among men, there can be very strong as well as weak ones. In the same way, there can be very emotional as well as emotionless among women. There can be very strong women or very emotional men in society (Dökmen, 2015: 24-25).

It is a known fact that women are more affected by inequality arising from gender. Discrimination against women is seen in almost every country in the world. However, it happens in different ways. In different countries of the world, a newborn girl is strangled to death because of her gender, or a girl is circumcised (genital mutilation). In some countries, girls are prevented from receiving education about sexuality, while in another, a young girl is forced to continue her pregnancy due to her family’s religious beliefs. Women who are faced with gender discrimination experience inequalities while exercising their social, political, legal and economic rights (Sarp, 2008. 7).

The issue of gender did not gain political attention or prominence until the 1960s. During this period, many men and women believed that the division of labor between men and women in society was due to biological reasons. Women were considered fit for a domestic lifestyle because of childbearing and breastfeeding. Because men had more physical strength than women, it was considered more convenient to work outside and in public life. Traditional political theories continued to perpetuate such beliefs and ideas and often ignored gender differences. Unwilling to

examine the power and privilege of their fellow men, male thinkers have succeeded in keeping women out of politics (Heywood, 2013: 235).

While the equality of women and men often cannot find a place for itself in daily life, the ultimate goal of the emphasis on the use and defense of rights in feminism is equality. Feminism, advancing in this direction, gained an intellectual concreteness with the English Mary Wollstonecraft's "Advocacy of Women's Rights" in the 18th century, and then gradually spread to Europe (Rowbotham, 1994: 51).

Gender and biological sex are completely different from each other. Biological sex is an inborn sex, and gender is an artificial sex created by society according to biological factors. The difference between gender and biological sex is that gender changes with society and time, and this reality shows that the situation is changeable. The society that builds a hierarchy between the sexes leaves women in the lower strata in this hierarchy. Due to this position of women, women have embraced the concept of gender more. However, we cannot describe gender victimization for only one gender because men can also take part in this victimization. Nevertheless, since more women are involved in the victimization side of the issue, the gender problem goes in parallel with the women's problem (Cenikli, n.d.: 4).

According to Chanter, the relationship between sex and gender is an indispensable part of the patriarchal perspective. Traditionally, sex has been regarded as the determinant of gender. Traditional thought associates feminine traits with female sexuality and masculine traits with men (2019:31).

2.2. Patriarchal Society

Patriarchy is an order that makes male authority dominant and subordinates women, based on the idea that the continuity of the lineage is ensured by the father. This order, which is applied in all areas of life, includes more than one domination according to feminist theorists (Emeklier, 2011: 174).

When we look at the historical process, it is seen that all kinds of production took place under the control of women in the "matriarchal" period when women dominated. In this period, occupations such as rope making, weaving, basket making, making fire and cooking, clay pot production, fishing, spoon, comb, bead making are in the hands of women. In addition, the first medical practices and the use of medicinal herbs for therapeutic purposes are encountered in the matriarchal period. During this period, healing is under the control of women. However, since the Neolithic period, while the transition from hunter-gatherer to the settled order, the status of women in the society began to change. The fact that both agricultural production and the vehicles



used in war are under the control of men has pushed women to a secondary position (Arıkoğlu ve Ündücü, 2016: 4). Demren draws attention to how femininity and masculinity are viewed in the ideological and cultural context within the patriarchal social structure. In a patriarchal society, masculinity is reproduced by creating the conditions of internal and external competition and ensuring the continuity of these conditions. In gender studies, it has been revealed that women and their lives are generally limited and they are exposed to certain cultural controls (Demren, 2008: 323-324).

Feminists use the concept of “patriarchy” to explain the power relationship between men and women. Since patriarchy coincides with the “rule of the father” and the supremacy of the husband and father in the family, it has been argued by radical feminists that this situation should be destroyed. According to feminists, for the reason that the role of patriarchy in the family was not only limited to the family, but also spread to the public space and caused male dominance in fields such as education, politics and business. Thus, it was thought that patriarchy caused women who create half of the society to be dominated by men who make up the other half (Çiçek, Aydın and Yağci, 2015: 278). In the words of Çakır (2007: 453), “Patriarchy is an autonomous system of exploitation and domination. The material basis of patriarchy is the exploitation of women’s invisible and unrequited domestic labor. Women’s labor is something done mainly for men, not for the benefit of capitalism.”

In the historical process, when the period of gathering and hunting is left behind and the period of shepherding and farming begins, when copper, iron, bronze are found and tools and weapons are made from metal, the division of labor between men and women becomes a thing of the past, and the importance of women’s duties is left behind (Ozankaya, 1996:361).

With the development of the means of production and the surplus product, it was women who had to withdraw from production first. (Tayanç, 1997:27). The increase in wealth, on the one hand, gave the man a more important place in the family than the woman, on the other hand, this situation revealed the tendency to use the traditional inheritance order to change for the benefit of the children. However, this was impossible as long as the lineage was regulated according to the maternity law. For this reason, the law of lineage and maternity inheritance from the woman was abolished, and the law of lineage and paternity inheritance from the man was established (Engels, 1978: 76).

At the beginning of the matriarchal society system, metal was not yet known. The invention of metal centuries later by human beings was considered the forerunner of the patriarchal order. Women were respected in farming communities. The woman, who had to work both in the field and at home, thus gained an advantage in family life. The women who exchanged what they

produced with others through the shopping method, thus kept the trade business in their hands. However, over time, this situation resulted in the victory of the men. With the transition from the stone age to the bronze age, men discovered their own power. By producing male tools, he was getting rid of the influence of nature and starting the age of reason (Kaçar, 2007: 31).

Bachofen argues that the patriarchal order emerged from the matriarchal order and according to him, after the emergence of the patriarchal order, women were given a limited life and a temporary freedom (cited by Reich, 1995:108).

Although feminists think that men dominate women in all societies, they argue that only the form and level of oppression has changed in different cultures and times. At least in Western societies, women's social status, gaining the right to vote, changes in marriage and divorce laws and easier access to education, legalization of abortion took place in the 20th century (Heywood, 2013: 240).

Social pressure continues throughout the life of the individual in the construction of gender. The individual is never/can never be "me" in its pure sense. It always has to be "we". Being male or female is not just an inborn trait. It is an identity produced by society. The society, which produces and codes the body with male and female gender, shapes, controls and reproduces the body. The body is an object in the thought of society (Bayhan, 2012-13:163).

Gender roles acquired under the influence of social conditioning are influential in working life as well as being the determinant of the attitudes and behaviors of sexes in social and cultural life. Emphasizing the role of the man as the head of the family responsible for providing for his family and the role of the woman as the mother and wife negatively affects women's approach to working life and prevents women from entering the labor market. At the same time, it causes women who enter the labor market to stay in the background, tend to professions that are suitable for their gender, acquire skills for gender-specific professions and concentrate on these professions (Arabacı, 2015: 53-54).

Liberal feminists often use the concept of patriarchy to draw attention to the unequal distribution of rights in society. According to them, patriarchy is the insufficient number of women in high-ranking positions in business, politics and public life. Socialist feminists examine and problematize the economic dimensions of patriarchy. To them, capitalism creates gender discrimination on the basis of patriarchy as well as class inequality. Radical feminists, on the other hand, emphasize patriarchy in a different way. According to them, patriarchy is a systematic, widespread and institutionalized male power rooted in the family. Thus, patriarchy reflects the belief that the dominance of men characterizing the general society and the second rank position of women is a reflection of the power order in the home life (Heywood, 2013: 240).



In medieval Europe, the task of controlling and punishing women was given to men because they saw women's bodies as destructive and dangerous as a result of religious interpretations. During the transition from the Middle Ages to the New Age period, many innocent women are killed on charges of collaborating with the devil. For instance, in England, a special assembly is established to punish women. The main function of the assembly is to enforce laws and different forms of torture. It is reported that almost 90,000 women in Europe were burned alive during this period (Arıkoğlu and Ündücü, 2016: 5).

There are sharp differences in the representation of women in the field of art in Europe, which is living in the early stages of modernity. In these representations, it is seen that women are cast into either very bad or very good roles. Considering the works of this period, it is common to see Eve as more sinful than Adam or to portray Jesus more holy than Mary. Again, in the works of art of this period, women are placed in a position that deserves to be represented only in terms of inspiring men. Women are portrayed in literature as an art fairy, a lover. That is, they act as objects for the hopes of the author. It is clear that philosophers in the Early Modern European period also viewed women as unworthy. For example, the portrayal of women in the works of names such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Diderot, who are taught as the most important figures of enlightenment thought, is also extremely discriminatory. It is a common theme in their works that the female figure represents evil. According to Rousseau, women exist to make men happy. According to Montesquieu, women use their charms to dominate men. According to Diderot, woman was created for fun and lust. In ancient Greece, it is seen that Socrates, Aristotle and Plato defined women as the source of all evil and the supporter of the devil (Arıkoğlu and Ündücü, 2016: 5-6).

The roles attributed to women culturally or through institutions are a function of biological, psychological and economic factors. The roles attributed to women culturally or through institutions are a function of biological, psychological and economic factors. While men realize themselves, women fall into the role of object or victim and are expected not to claim dominance. However, there is no barrier from existence for men to realize themselves (Eliuz, 2011: 224). Women are generally defined within the framework of certain areas in the patriarchal order. Indoor areas are the most common of these areas. The roles in which women are generally defined are wife and motherhood in domestic life. These roles continue for almost the entire life of a woman (Demren, 2001: 4). As a result of the idea that "a woman's world is her man, her children, her family and her home" with the assimilation of this role, women try to live in a world whose boundaries are drawn for them by men (Eliuz, 2011: 225).

Mojab and Abdo emphasize that patriarchy is a social and historical institution rather than a psychological or personal problem. According to them, patriarchy is the dominance exercise system or regime of the masculine gender. Male dominance is produced and reproduced by other social forces and institutions such as language, law, religion, education, family, popular culture and media. Accordingly, patriarchal violence includes much more than simply a problem arising from an individual, his/her mentality or ignorance, and it is systemic (Mojab and Abdo, 2006:3-5).

The devaluation of women throughout history is not just a phenomenon of a particular region or time. If some examples from history are given, we can encounter similar phenomena in the east as in the west. For instance, in ancient Iran, blood ties through the mother did not matter, and men were encouraged to marry their sisters. In Babylon, which was seen as the beginning of civilization due to the invention of writing and legal codes, the value of women was equated with domestic animals. Similarly, in ancient India, women, who are part of the family, seem to be equated with slaves. Until the 17th century, it was a common ritual for a woman whose husband died to be killed and buried with her dead husband. In China and the Far East, there were instances where women were not named and instead numbered. This is a significant example of not seeing women as subjects. Moreover, in Arab societies, girls were buried alive for a while. The woman was not considered as a human being. (Arıkoğlu and Ündücü, 2016: 6).

2.3. The equality of woman and man

The idea that people are equal forms the basis of today's modern idea of humanity based on the concepts of equality, fraternity and freedom. The idea that women are equal to men was first expressed at the time of the French Revolution. Reason, individualization, progress, the importance of education and similar values formed the philosophical infrastructure that would ground women's rights in this period. The first theoretical studies on women's rights emerged in this period. Olympe de Gouges's "Declaration of the Rights of Women" and Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of the Women" are among the first works of feminist theory. Wollstonecraft's main impact was to provide a women's definition of the core principles of the French revolution -solidarity, equality, freedom (Ayata and Gölgeliöglü, 2011: 66). The idea of equality is one of the most important tools of modern states of law. It should not be thought that people are equal in all periods, with the existence of equality from the birth of humanity to the present day. Because of that humanity has achieved the ideal of equality after long struggles (Yüksel, 2014: 176).

Although modernism seems to promise equality and freedom to all humanity at the beginning, the assumption of dominant/subordinate lies behind women's inability to be included



in this cluster. In the early stages of the modern period, masculinity and the phenomena related to it are attributed the qualification of being active, and the phenomena pertaining to women and femininity being passive. The gender phenomenon based on this assumption has deprived women of the possibility of universal equality (Elbeyoğlu, 2015: 291-293).

The principle of equality emerged in the first place with the aim of eliminating class differences. Today, however, social inequality clearly prevails. There are great differences between the income levels and housing conditions of families in the society. Women in all social classes are at a disadvantage compared to men (Gören, 2016: 3281).

Feminism, although its meaning has changed in different times and situations, in the most general sense, defends the claim that women should be equal to men and seeks to destroy the masculine dominance that exists between men and women due to hierarchical relations. Another important claim of feminism is that gender discrimination is intertwined with other social discriminations, and therefore, all kinds of social discrimination (regional, ethnic, class, etc.) are fed by gender discrimination and thus exist together by influencing each other. Therefore, it has been defended that gender hierarchies/inequalities should also be destroyed in order to eliminate social discriminations (Sancar, 2011: 55).

These gender inequalities are historically older than class systems. Men had more influence than women, both in terms of wages and status, in many aspects of social life in all societies. Since women are generally economically dependent on their husbands due to traditional culture, the class position of women is determined by the class position of their husbands (Giddens, 2013: 368-369).

Literacy rates of women, who could not obtain the right to vote and be elected for years, remained quite low compared to men in almost all societies. Women are faced with indirect or direct discrimination. For example, different salary practices just because of gender is a direct discrimination. Some laws, norms or practices that do not discriminate between the sexes can deepen inequality. These kinds of measures show that women have the same opportunity and advantage as men in accessing some services, thus rendering biological, historical and traditional differences unimportant (Albal, 2020: 214).

Gender equality was recognized by the United Nations in 1945. From this date on, legal regulations in favor of women started to be made, but due to reasons such as not being sufficient and not being implemented, the masses of women in Western societies rose up to defend women's rights. They fought effectively against bureaucracy and the historical background of the image of women. This struggle of women, which led to the emergence of the concept of feminism, which continues even today, has produced very important results in favor of women in Western societies.

In fact, we can say that most of the Western societies have managed to overcome the patriarchal heritage to a large extent (Kale, 1996: 65).

In Turkey, starting from October 29, 1923, in the first decade following the proclamation of the Republic, structural and legal revolutions that enabled women to obtain the status of “individuals with equal rights” in the family, social life, politics and education were implemented quickly (Kaypak and Kahraman, 2016: 307). When we make a comparison specific to Turkish modernization, it is seen that there is a difference. While it is observed that some rights have been achieved as a result of long struggles for women’s rights, especially in Western countries, we see that these rights are given to women by the state in Turkey. Within the scope of modernization moves in the Early Republic period, these civil and social rights were given to women (Sivacıoğlu, 1991: 5).

Today, almost all constitutions and international conventions are based on the principle of equality. This principle is accepted as the most important principle of the rule of law in the modern legal order. When we look at the developments in Turkish constitutional law, we see that the principle was included in the 1876, 1924, 1961 and 1982 Constitutions (İnceoğlu, 2006: 45-47). The principle of equality is stated in the 10th article of the 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey:

“All individuals are equal without any discrimination before the law, irrespective of language, race, color, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such considerations. No privilege may be granted to any individual, family, group or class. State organs and administrative authorities shall act in compliance with the principle of equality before the law in all their proceedings” (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, 18 Ekim 1982).

Considering the scope and content of the article, it is understood that women have equal rights with men in the legal sense.

Odyakmaz and Keskin (2017: 21) express the following regarding the abolition of certain regulations in the Turkish Civil Code that are contrary to the equality of women and men: “The new Turkish Civil Code in 2002, the new Labor Law in 2003, and the new Turkish Penal Code in 2005 came into force, and almost all of the regulations in which men and women were not equal were abolished from our laws. Thus, legal equality between men and women has been achieved.”

Gören (2016: 3295-3296) states that constitutional amendments were made, which brought into question the necessity of the state to take an active position in the issue of equality between women and men:

“The principle that women and men have equal rights, guaranteed in the Constitution with the constitutional amendments dated May 7, 2004 and September 12, 2010 in Turkey, not only prohibits attacks on fundamental rights protection areas, but also orders the State, which



dominated the initial understanding of fundamental rights, to take active actions towards the realization of this principle. This obligation to ensure equal rights is primarily directed at the State and other public legal entities. However, the scope of regulation of women and men having equal rights is not limited to this. The principle of equal rights for women and men is not only an obligation for the State to equip them with equal rights before the State, with this principle, the State is obliged to ensure that men and women have equal rights, also in the relations of citizens regarding private law”.

Result

Since the 18th century, women have begun to question their disadvantaged position in society due to the inequalities they face. Experiencing inequalities in legal, political, economic, administrative, social and cultural areas caused them to question their positions and thus to start a struggle. The concept of feminism has emerged since the middle of the 19th century as a result of the struggles of women, especially with men, to have equal rights, equal positions and freedoms.

When we look at the origin of the word feminism, we encounter the word “femine”, which means woman in Latin. Feminism advocates for women to be equal with men in the private and public spheres, to be free without restrictions, and to eliminate the oppression and difficulties that women are exposed to because they are women.

Historically, feminism first appeared in England in the 18th century. Feminism opposes the inequality that exists between men and women, and advocates social, cultural, political and economic equality between men and women. Feminism, whose main purpose is to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of women, strives for women to have equal rights with men. Feminism involves women making politics in their struggle for their fundamental rights and freedoms. Feminist movement, which was initiated by women to be equal with men in the private and public sphere, to liberate them and to get rid of social pressure, has undergone changes and transformations in the historical process, in different times and situations, conceptually and theoretically. However, in general, feminism claims that women should be equal to men and aims to destroy the masculine oppression on women.

It is known that feminism is divided into three waves from the 19th century to the 21st century. In all three waves, it is seen that women struggle to have equal rights and freedoms with men. Women’s struggle for feminism has been shaped by feeding from different theories and ideologies, and thus different feminist approaches have emerged.

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