



## Dream of a Fair World in We Should All Be Feminists

Prafulkumar Prakash Vaidhya, Ph.D., Department of English  
Sardar Patel Mahavidyalaya, Ganj Ward, Chandrapur, Maharashtra, INDIA

### ORIGINAL ARTICLE



#### Author

Prafulkumar Prakash Vaidhya, Ph.D.

E-mail : prafulvaidya83@gmail.com

shodhsamagam1@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

The research paper focuses on the modified version of the talk delivered by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie at TEDxEuston in December 2012. Its modified version is in the form of book entitled *We Should All Be Feminists*. Adichie, being a feminist in her views, desires a world which is free and fair to all human beings. She envisages a world which poise man and woman equal in all fields. The paper examines the role assigned to women by the society especially Nigerian which is inappropriate from the point of view of feminists. Through the personal anecdotes of Adichie, attempt has been made to highlight the disparity of treatment to male and female. This disparity comes in the way of human beings especially women having a dream of fair world to be fulfilled. Though the lowest status quo of Nigerian woman in her society is highlighted, it is not restricted to Nigerian society but it is the position of women in all countries. The realistic presentation of various unnoticed shades of women's daily life is portrayed in the book.

### KEY WORDS

Chimamanda Adichie, Feminists, Gender, Patriarchy.

### INTRODUCTION

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a celebrity feminist Nigerian writer. Her literary writings range from short stories to novel and to non-fiction. Adichie deals with burning issues in the modern discourses of feminism in her writings. She believes that men and women are the two wheels of the same chariot. The chariot runs smoothly when the two wheels are in proper arrangement.

Adichie narrates that she is feminist right from her childhood when she was unknown to the meaning

of the word 'feminist'. Her close friend of childhood, Okoloma, called her feminist when she was of just fourteen years old. However his statement was ironical. His tone revealed that it was not a complement but unkind comment like saying 'you are supporter of terrorism' (Adichie 8).

Another episode which is mentioned in the book is of while going for the promotion of her novel called Purple Hibiscus. It is about a man who beats his wife severely. She has been advised by a journalist that she should not call herself a feminist. He further says that feminists are women who are unhappy because they cannot find husbands. Adichie believes that it is a false assumption of people concerning feminist. This type of assumption may create an imbalanced world. This negative thinking against feminist must be dropped at the earliest for the fair world.

Her childhood incident is to be narrated here which shows the favoritism for boys. In her primary school in Nsukka, there is a practice of selecting class monitor on the basis of highest score in a class test at the beginning of the term. She wants to be a class monitor. She scores the highest marks in the class. But to her surprise, she is not selected as a class monitor. But a boy who had the second-highest score has been selected. Her teacher said, "The monitor had to be a boy" (Adichie 12). She is interested and full of ambition in becoming a class monitor and patrolling the class. But she is negated that on the base of being a female. This is not a fair selection. But still it seems normal. When people do anything over and over again, it becomes quite normal. By and large mostly boys are made class monitor hence the teacher followed that. It is a habit of people of seeing male as a head of corporation, entrepreneur, etc., then it becomes very natural of seeing men as the heads of all.

Adichie very strongly proposes that gender matters everywhere in the world. Men are holding the positions of power and prestige everywhere because of their being male. Hence she dreams that there should be a fair world for women. She states "A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves" (Adichie 25). For such type of fair world, she suggests to raise daughters and sons differently. This will help to have fair world for all human beings.

Adiche further states that the one sided compromises in relationships play very crucial role in having no fair world. Marriage is a very complicated relationship because it is not a blood tie. By and large compromises are mostly made by the women folk. Women, suppose in marriage, have to sacrifice their dream, a career goal and sometimes even job for maintaining peace in marriage. Betty Friedan in her book *The Feminine Mystique* holds the opinion that the search for identity is often considered to be man's exclusive prerogative while women are told that truly feminine women do not want career, higher education, political rights, independence and other opportunities. It is mostly considered all over the world that for women the greatest happiness and satisfaction lies in marriage and motherhood. Thus women lose their identity and autonomy in marriage. This is true not only for Nigerian women but also for Indian women too.

Adichie further adds, the language in marriage is often a language of ownership and not a language of partnership. All this happen because of being social animals and our ideas are internalized from our socialization. This proves detrimental for making the fair world. Adichie states that if a woman is a breadwinner in a relationship with a husband, she has to pretend in public that she is not so. Otherwise she will weaken the power and prestige of her husband.

Women are expected to aspire to marriage. They are expected to make life choices always keeping in mind that marriage is most important for them. On the contrary men are not expected to do the same. Society does not teach them to behave like that. Woman feels much pressure from family, friends and relatives if she is unmarried. The pressure increases if she crosses the marriageable age. It may be considered a personal failure of a woman. This is not the case with man. He may cite the reason of his being unmarried as not getting the proper match. Woman may possibly never cite this reason. This is not fair with women in the world.

Society teach girls shame. “Close your legs. Cover yourself” (33). Society teaches them this in such a way like they are guilty of something being born female. But the same is not taught to boys. This is unfair.

It is a known fact without doubt that boys and girls are biologically different, but socialization exaggerates the differences between them. Example of cooking and cleaning can be cited in this regard. Women are more likely to do household chores than men. Here the question arises, “is it because women are born with cooking gene or because over the years they have been socialized to see cooking as their role?” (Adichie 35). If it is true, then why there are legion of cooks in the world who given the fancy title of ‘Chef’ are men. The socialization prescribes the role for genders that poses problems to have fair world. The socialization lay down norms which focus on how we should be rather than recognizing how we are.

Adichie states an example of a family which is known to her. This family has a son and a daughter who are both brilliant at school. They are a year apart in age. When the boy is hungry, the parents say to the girl, “Go and cook Indomie noodles for your brother” (Adichie 36). Now imagine, if a girl is hungry, will the parents say the same to boy? This reverse condition seems unimaginable and impossible too in the society where the socialization fixes everything for a boy and a girl. It should be learned by all that cooking is a very useful and practical life skill even for a boy. This will help to create the fair world for boys and girls.

Adichie cites another example of a woman who has same degree and same job as her husband. When they come back home from the work, a woman has to do most of the household chores. If a man changes the baby’s nappy, she thanks him. Is there a need of thanking him? Isn’t it a normal and natural thing? Isn’t it a duty of a man (husband) of taking care of his child? Answers to these questions are negative for the first and affirmative for the rest. It is a bounded duty of a man (husband) to take care of his either daughter or son. It needs to be understood by all men and women and then we can have fair world.

## CONCLUSION

It is quite clear that her personal experiences and stories revolve around the idea of struggle of female self and her continuous conflict with her intellectual self but she views the whole process with an objective, comprehensive and deep humanitarian vision. Thus is her concept of feminism. Adichie’s idea of feminism is liberal in the sense that it is tempted by humanism. She is of the belief that we need to have a world which we should recognise as a place for all of us human beings. There should be no superior and inferior. We are two halves of one species. She corroborates the stand of feminists that we are human is much more important than our being men and women.

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