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# From Print To Digital: The Role Of Literature And Technology In Shaping Gender Equality For Past And Modern Readers

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**Abstract**— This study explores the role of literature and technology in shaping ideas of gender equality among readers across different historical periods. In earlier centuries, printed literature such as novels, essays, and poems played a significant role in highlighting social issues and challenging traditional gender roles. However, access to education and literature was limited, particularly for women and marginalized communities, which restricted their ability to recognize and question gender inequality. In contrast, the modern digital era has transformed the way literature is created, shared, and consumed. Digital platforms such as e-books, blogs, online journals, and social media enable a wider audience to access and discuss issues related to gender equality. Technology has also provided women and marginalized voices with platforms to express their perspectives freely. This study compares printed and digital forms of literature and examines how both have influenced readers' understanding of gender equality. The research demonstrates that traditional literature laid the foundation for feminist thought, while digital technology has expanded its reach and impact.

**Keywords**-- digital literature, feminism, gender equality, print literature, technology

## I. INTRODUCTION

Literature has always played an important role in shaping human thoughts, beliefs, and social values. From ancient civilizations to the modern era, literary works have influenced how individuals understand society and their roles within it. One of the most important themes addressed through literature is gender equality. Writers across different historical periods have used literature as a tool to question gender roles and highlight the inequalities faced by women.

In earlier centuries, printed literature was the primary medium for spreading knowledge and awareness. Books, newspapers, and magazines played a powerful role in influencing public opinion. Many writers used print literature to advocate for women's education, rights, and freedom. However, access to education and literature was limited mainly to educated and financially privileged individuals. Women often did not receive opportunities to study or publish their works.

With technological advancement, literature is no longer restricted to printed books. Digital technologies such as e-books, blogs, websites, online journals, and social media platforms allow readers to access literature globally and discuss issues such as feminism and gender equality more widely.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between literature and gender equality has been widely discussed by feminist scholars and writers. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* challenged patriarchal structures and advocated women's intellectual equality.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* highlighted the social and economic barriers faced by women writers and emphasized the need for financial independence and intellectual freedom.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* examined how society constructs the concept of womanhood and how literature contributes to gender identity. Contemporary writers such as Margaret Atwood further expanded feminist discussions through literary works addressing gender inequality in modern societies.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative research approach to analyze the role of literature and technology in shaping perceptions of gender equality.

**Literary Survey** – Analysis of feminist authors including Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and Margaret Atwood.

**Technological Analysis** – Examination of the transition from print publishing to digital platforms such as e-books and online journals.

**Comparative Analysis** – Comparison between print literature and digital literature in terms of accessibility and social influence.

**Case Study** – Analysis of online feminist communities and social media platforms.



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Interpretative Analysis – Interpretation of collected data using feminist theoretical perspectives.

#### IV. WOMEN WRITING IN THE PAST

Reading the writings of women in the past, it shows how women were suppressed and how they faced many problems, but they fought and expressed their views through writing. In the past, women were never independent, and due to this reason, they were always dominated by men in society, who were considered superior to women. Women were supposed to only take care of household chores, such as marriage, family, and children, and were not even permitted to study or read the Bible.

Women expressed their feelings, work, and the fact that society was ignoring their presence. Writing was considered a task for men only, while women were forced to work inside and outside the home. Women writers were criticised and ignored by society, as the society believed that women were too emotional and imaginative. Most of the women writers published their work anonymously, without their real names, or under a man's name. For example, the renowned writer Jane Austen published her first novel *\*Sense and Sensibility\**, in 1811 anonymously as "A Lady." This reveals that the writer was afraid of being criticised and ignored if she had released the novel under her proper name.

However, women did not give up, and literature helped them express their feelings about what happened to them in society. Women's literature, which surfaced early, dealt with themes such as love, marriage, freedom, idealism, and morality. Women's literature depicted what happened to women in society, which was dominated by men, through their novels, letters, and poems that contained pain and suffering. Women writers such as Jane Austen, the sisters Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and Virginia Woolf challenged social norms and women's roles through their work, portraying women's inner lives and the importance of independence and respect for themselves.

These women used literature as a medium to fight against social norms, advocate for women's education, and, more importantly, fight for women's rights. They felt literature could play a significant role in transforming the attitude of society toward women. Their influence also remains relevant even today, which laid the foundation for the women who followed after them.

#### V. GROWTH OF TECHNOLOGY

The role of technology developed in the olden period has been significant in the development and moulding of human life and literature as well. In the ancient period, technology was just in its primary stages of development. People made use of simple tools constructed of stone, wood, and metal. Writing is considered a primary technology as well. Initially, stories and things were shared as songs, myths, and stories. During a certain point in time, writing was introduced in the form of cuneiform, hieroglyphic, and manuscript writing, which allowed stories, poems, and religion to be written. Books were written in a manuscript style on palm leaves and scrolls.

Literature was able to reach a wider audience with the invention of the use of paper and the printing press, especially in the period of the Renaissance. Modern literature was able to spread, while classical literature developed due to the support of technology, which helped in the popularization of education and the spread of knowledge through literature. During this period, writers were able to communicate their ideas to the general population, who were able to read different types of literature, such as novels, poems, and drama.

During the Industrial Revolution, technological advancements influenced literary themes and forms. Machines and factories, as well as the influence of technology on urban culture, greatly dominated the themes of literary works. Charles Dickens, a renowned writer of that age, wrote literary works reflecting the influences of industrialization on the emotions of people, society, and values. As a result, technology was not only employed to produce literary works but also became a theme of such works itself.

In this present modern, really technological world, literature has changed a lot. Computers, the internet, and digital publishing have totally altered the writing, reading, and dissemination of literature. E-books, online journals, and audiobooks have made literature more accessible than ever. Contemporary writers explore topics such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and technological dependence. To sum up, technology from its growth in the olden period right up to the present day has heavily affected literature by changing the form, reach, and themes that it presents, even while continuing to reflect human experiences in a changing world.



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VI. EVOLUTION OF WOMEN WRITERS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Women's literary contributions have historically been marginalized, silenced, and excluded from traditional forms of literature due to the patriarchal lens through which literature has existed, including education, publishing, and literary criticism. Women's writing was often viewed as inferior or not valued, not because of the lack of quality of the work, but because it challenged male authority and societal norms. For centuries, women experienced rigid societal expectations, lack of access to education, and gender bias, which kept them from having a voice in the literary world. Consequently, literature became one of the few areas where women could resist oppression and express their psychological, emotional, and intellectual realities. To navigate the highly biased and male-dominated literary world, women writers have had to use pseudonyms or anonymity when publishing their work to evade the sex-based bias in the literary world. This practice indicates that women had to hide their identities to achieve legitimacy as authors; the separation of their creative expression from their true identity led to the complete erasure of women's authorship from literary history. The denial of identity and recognition continues to reinforce the idea that women's experiences and perspectives are not primary or important.

Through its evocative story and themes, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* offers a powerful reflection on women's oppression. As depicted in the book, women are deprived of their identities and are assigned functional roles within a strict patriarchal society. For instance, when Atwood writes, "My name isn't Offered, I have another name, but it's not used now," it illustrates the loss of one's name as indicative of one's own self-concept, and the entirety of women lacking in autonomy and voice. Similar to how women writers experienced marginalisation and anonymity, women living in Gilead are without independent identity and exist only as owners of the society.

Yet despite such overwhelming oppression, women writers continue to play significant roles in shaping contemporary literature with both grit and originality. Margaret Atwood exemplifies the reclaimed powers of women writers through her speculative fiction that challenges existing systemic oppression from governmental, medical and technological sources, while demonstrating how women's bodies are being governed as a result of their reproductive capabilities. As illustrated by the quote "We are containers, only the contents of our bodies are significant,"

Atwood alludes to society discounting women as a result of their biological function and subsequently diminishing their intellectual, emotional and creative contributions in the past.

Atwood cautions about both the perils of silence and the passivity in accepting injustice, stating, "We didn't wake up," in reference to how slowly oppression can move forward because we consider their actions to be 'normal' and become indifferent. In addition to how long it takes for oppression to develop through patterns of normalization and indifference, the way in which women have historically been excluded from the literary record, has not happened abruptly but has instead developed as a result of many acts of neglect, dismissal, and silence over a long period of time.

Also different than in the past, the current body of literature demonstrates a substantial shift regarding the representation of women. Women's narrative contributions to humanity are widely accepted as a shared humanity experience. Women's access to education, publishing opportunities, and use of digital technology has given them access to new creations and thus provided them the opportunity to reclaim their voices and positions of authority. Technology has opened many doors to the worldwide audience of women writers, allowing them to challenge patriarchal customs and write publicly about their identity and trauma, as well as about the nature of power and resistance. The increasing recognition in modern literature that women's unique experiences are not secondary to the human experience, but are instead fundamental to developing a broader understanding of human relations and social structures.

VII. CONCLUSION

Women's writing has progressed from marginalization to acceptance as a result of the transformational potential of literature and its intersection with technology and/or social change. Various forms of literary suppression have previously forced women writers to seek voice through pseudonyms, have limited or no literary recognition and so on, yet they persevered with their passion for writing and a commitment to their craft. They created the environment to develop an inclusive literary culture.

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* illustrates the negative consequences of technological or social advancement when there is no ethical responsibility associated with progress. Her admonishment that "better never means better for everyone, it always means worse for some," implores us to consider to what extent technological or social advancements serve particular people.



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In today's digital environment, women authors are no longer silenced nor are they developing the literary culture, but rather, they are developing literary discourse, challenging oppressive systems and promoting that women's voices are at the forefront of cultural and social understanding.

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