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## The Emergence of Feminist Theory and Practice

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**Abstract:** Feminist theory in the present is a wide, active, and varied intellectual and political ensemble. It develops as a result of innovative, cross-disciplinary work and active political participation. In addition to being about women, feminist thought also examines the world from a critical intersectional perspective. It's a "highly collective" practice, as Mohanty (2003, pp. 5, 122) put it, expressing a shared "politics of involvement." Many of feminist theory's most significant contributions, as well as our fiercest disagreements, are rooted in and reflect passionate political opinions about the most effective ways to comprehend and improve the lives of women, men, children, all creatures, and the world. According to me, feminist theory flourishes when researchers cast a wide net across disciplines, consider power and resistance in relational terms, and collaborate with people who are both critical of the status quo and speculative about futures in which there is freedom, justice, and joy for all.

This chapter focuses on feminism, which is defined as the belief in all aspects of economic, social, and political liberty, as well as gender equality. The focus of this chapter is on the emergence of feminist philosophy and practise. There are a variety of feminist perspectives to examine, as feminism has always had a wide spectrum of varied and diverse beliefs within its ranks. It is consequently more appropriate to speak of feminism, of which my perception and construction is simply one facet.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Equality, Social Life, Gender, India, Caste.

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## THE EMERGENCE OF FEMINIST THEORY AND PRACTICE

"Feminists have highlighted the gendered nature of social relations in all spheres of public and private life. Their analyses have revealed men as privileged at the expense of women in many dimensions of social existence, including their exclusion from the waged labour domain when men collar high-paying jobs" (Armstrong, 1984; & Coyle, 1989). To know the nature of inequality of gender is its main goal. It examines the social roles, experiences, interests, chores, and feminist politics of men and women in fields as varied as anthropology and sociology, communication, media studies, psychoanalysis, political theory, home economics, literature, education, and philosophy. According to feminist studies, men dominate women's social status by acting violently, physically, and sexually against them (Rush, 1980; & Dworkin, 1981).

Some feminists have maintained that Female have the same rights to get public spaces as men if they so want, but they have also pushed for males to take on numerous responsibilities traditionally performed by women in the home (Segal, 1983). The participation of men in feminist activities has proven to be quite challenging for some feminists, thus they have resolved the conflict by declaring categorically that feminists should never associate with men (Solanas, 1971; Jo, 1981; & Frye, 1983). Therefore, the necessity to eliminate men's privilege at the expense of women is a crucial aspect of feminist critiques of the current quo. It

is also wrong. Unfortunately, conservative men who wish to maintain their privileges have started to worry about the effects of this strategy (Brooks, 1996). "Instead of welcoming an enterprise through which even their own lives can be enriched, these men remain myopically fixed in a mythologized past that has accorded them unchallenged governance"(see Bly, 1985). They also commit their efforts to an anti-feminist campaign in order to reverse feminist gets that they believe are undermining their power.(see Lyndon,1992; & Farrell, 1994).

Another set of feminists has maintained that in order for men to be fully free and remove the constraints placed on them by their commitment to patriarchal social relations, women must first achieve true freedom (Dominelli & McLeod, 1989; & Collins, 1991). They've also made an effort to include children and men in their social action. In the case of children, this has meant acknowledging them as unique individuals with their own set of intrinsic rights (Clinton, 1996; & Dominelli, 1999).

Other feminists have struggled to reconcile women's liberation needs with children's liberation needs, and have continued to deal with the paradoxes in which women live (Wise, 1985). Some feminist scholars have identified the role of the state in using women caring professionals to control other women (Wilson, 1977). This too, has been considered unacceptable (Marchant & Wearing, 1986; & Dominelli & McLeod, 1989). Despite their failure to achieve it, feminists have worked and they do not oppressive. That

is to say, feminists have not tried to address one set of oppressions that of women by men, by merely substituting another set of oppressions, that of men by women, or even by having one group of women dominate another group of women. By referencing and identifying women's experiences as women, feminist practitioners and scholars have used feminist ideas and practise to mainstream gender in social work. The gendered nature of the social work profession has been identified by Early feminist, which was dominated by Female working alongside other women on the front lines.(Wilson, 1977). Later on, the theory of social work as "women's work," with a segregated division of labour featured by female working with "clients" and males in management making policy decisions that affect practice and distribute resources, was developed.(Hallet, 1991). Professionalization and a centrally regulated reorganization of social work inside the British welfare state transformed it from a mostly volunteer activity managed on a shoestring to a vast bureaucratic empire that drew males to its ranks, particularly at the upper echelons (Walton, 1975).

In low-income nations, female have paid the price by fleeing confining lives inside specific arrangements in the private realm (Kassinjda, 1998), attempting suicide (Croll, 1978), or being murdered by patriarchal upholders (Basu, 1997).

At this time, many women have benefited from their caring responsibilities and found fulfilment in successfully addressing these requirement. They were proud of their children's achievements and delighted to see their husbands succeed in a competitive world. Since millions of hours of arduous work, love, and dedication have been fervently and cheerfully poured into continuing the activities of loved ones, the victories of those whom women have supported are evident as reflected glory.

A set of guidelines that are focused on a woman's role as a nurturer regulate daily life. Controlling the private realm is inconsistent. Women's space policies damage their standing in it. The twin demands for individual accountability and cultural politicisation pose a challenge to the sanctity of the family, a feature of liberal society. Women frequently come up in cultural conversations, particularly in relation to their bodies as markers of particular nationalities. This is connected to women's roles as cultural reproducers through their responsibilities as mothers, who are tasked with carrying, nurturing, and ingrain cultural beliefs into children as well as incorporating cultural considerations as regular elements of daily life. Politicization of culture and culturalization of politics have emerged in gender-specific ways.

These changes are the result of strategic rectification, which portrays culture as having

unchangeable traits that have existed as part of the 'natural' order from the dawn of time. This is what I call 'cultural ossification' (Dominelli, 1996). Feminists' challenge to ossification of culture and assumed masculine advantages has been portrayed by rightwing ideologues as a "cultural war" pitting men against women and vice versa (Bloom, 1992). Along with other religious groups, conservative media commentators and anti-feminist men's organisations have criticised feminists' opposition to conventional notions of what it means to be a woman and the societal advancements brought about by feminist struggles. Or, to put it another way, gender interactions are how culture is expressed.

## FEMINIST THEORY IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

To take a narrow perspective of the early intellectual and activist activities of feminism in IR is the typical approach among feminists in IR and other IR researchers when assigning the origins of feminism in IR to the early 1980s. The three main conferences held to discuss and articulate on the issue of feminist thought on the IR scene were the 1988 Millennium: conference of the Journal of International Studies, held at the London School of Economics, the 1989 conference at the University of Southern California, and the 1990 conference at Wellesley.

Feminist approaches to international relations have given gender as a crucial tool for analysing the interactions between states in the global framework. Feminist analysis has had little influence on global politics despite efforts to strengthen the International Relations Theory; policymakers and decision-makers seem to dismiss feminist views without hesitation. Furthermore, it has been argued that women's contributions to the development and upkeep of international politics are natural and unremarkable. (Tickner, 1992; True, 2001; & Hutchings, 1999).

“Feminist analysts argue that perhaps this lack of feminist ideas in international politics has been because for many years it has been thought that the international politics elite is just for men. Therefore, only men and not women are capable of dealing with the issues of international politics, under those circumstances, foreign policy actors and decision-makers are male” (Enloe, 1993).

In order to categorise feminist theory or thought, Rosemary Tong proposed six strands or classifications: liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, psychoanalytic and existential feminist thought, and postmodern feminism. The following classification treats Marxist and Socialist feminism as one and then briefly explores each of them separately because the differences between the two are so slight.

### **Liberal feminism**

Olympe de Gouges, a renowned feminist theorist in 18th century Europe, was the first to express liberal feminist thinking, followed by Mary Wollstonecraft of the United Kingdom. The French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir belongs to the liberal feminist school of thinking. Liberal feminists argued that because of different socialisation processes and discriminatory social and cultural practises, women were given fewer opportunities than men in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to realise their full potential as human beings. As a result, women were forced to stay at home and take care of their husbands and kids, having little opportunity to use their brains or learn skills outside of those deemed appropriate for household responsibilities.

### **Marxist and Socialist Feminism**

Marxist feminism has its roots in Frederick Engel's 1884 article *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, which claimed that the emergence of private property marked the beginning of women's slavery. The introduction of male private ownership created a class system that led to the customary division of the "public" and "private" spheres. Production was moved from the home to the workplace with the advent of industrialization and capitalism, and the workplace was seen as the public domain, free of women because they were seen as belonging to the "private" world. Production came to be seen as constitutive of the world of freedom as it was in the 'public' realm along with what was deemed valuable, while women were regarded as the private property of men and later denigrated as second-class citizens. Women were first seen as the private property of men and later denigrated as second-class citizens. Despite the patriarchal nature of the culture, the advent of industry marked a significant shift from the pre-industrial age, when women's work consisted of providing for daily needs and was valued equally to that of males.

### **Radical Feminism**

Radical Feminism emphasised the importance of developing a "women-centered" analysis to question all male-defined systems and norms. They oppose both liberal and Marxist feminisms, believing that both present a paradigm of women's liberation based on male norms, encouraging women to strive to what are basically patriarchal principles. This is because the radical feminist sees patriarchy as the core of women's oppression, not as a byproduct of capitalism.

### **Postmodernist feminism**

As it extends beyond the polarities of liberal feminism and radical feminist, postmodern feminism has absorbed two theoretical traditions, namely postmodern and post-structuralist theory. It has criticised Enlightenment values because, although championing the values of progress and human rights, it

was accompanied by widespread oppression of people in the name of "civilisation advancement," "progress," and "freedom." As they attacked all-encompassing conceptions of human liberation and emancipations built in 'universal truth,' their main goal is to reveal the hidden assumptions and presuppositions that underpin attempts to theorise or convey 'one true story' about human conditions.

### **Feminist Critical Theory**

Critical theorists believe that there is no direct comprehension of the world and that knowledge is formed through a dialectical process. Conceptualization and conceptual framework are produced as a result of the concrete understanding of the meaning of social "facts" created through the process of reflection and reasoning. By connecting the concept of knowledge generation to a theory of identity and interests, they explained how "theory is always for someone and for some purpose." All human knowledge, according to Habermas, is historically based and interest bound. In other words, history, social 'reality,' and 'nature' are all products of the human species' constitutive labour. Knowledge is formed as a result of a person's attempts to bring about his or her own existence. Gramsci also argued that 'reality' is independent of the process of knowledge production to some extent, and that the 'truths' of social reality are intractable because they involve the thoughts, motivations, and intersubjective meanings of individuals with various levels of self-consciousness and awareness of the social nature of their actions.

### **Feminist Constructivism**

In *The Global Construction of Gender*, Elisabeth Prugl writes from a feminist constructivist perspective (1999). In this work, Ms. Prugl makes the case that gender politics have entered international affairs, leading to the creation of language norms for how countries interact with one another and with their own inhabitants. Because women make up the majority of those working from home, this type of involvement must be regulated as employment. Prugl has shown how ideas about feminism have affected the debate over formalising women's domestic labour in the international community. The claim that home-based employment is not "real work" because it is carried out within the private reproductive sphere of wage-based production is commonly used to defend low pay and unfavourable working conditions.

### **Post-Colonial feminism**

Post-colonialists concentrate on the colonial relations of dominance and subordination created by European empire in the 18th and 19th centuries. They assert that these authoritarian ties are still present and deeply engrained in how Western knowledge portrays Eastern people and nations. Numerous colonial powers imposed the western set of norms, or their own set of norms, on colonial countries throughout this time,

which the colonised countries backed and internalised. This had major and far-reaching effects on the economy, communities, and governments of colonized nations as well as on the psychological makeup of its citizens.

## INDIAN CONTEXT

Scholars agree that it is very difficult to measure the 'status of women' especially in the context of a large and diverse country such as India (Devi 1993; & Kishor & Gupta 2004). While women in India have a lot of legal rights in theory, they are denied in fact. Equal legal protection for men and women (Article 14), equal access to public areas (Article 15), equal opportunity in terms of public employment (Article 16), and equal pay for equal work (Article 39) are among the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Indian constitution. In addition, statutory provisions such as the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 and the Maternity Benefit Act of 1976 protect these rights. The Indian Penal Code, Section 498 A, criminalises physical and emotional cruelty to married women perpetrated by their husbands or in-laws, while the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, forbids the giving and taking of dowry. The Hindu Succession Act of 1955 gave Hindu women equal access to parental self-acquired property in the event of intestate succession, but not to ancestral property. Widows had a complete right in the case of intestate succession, but not to ancestral property. Affinal property was completely under the jurisdiction of widows. (Kishwar 1993).

Reformers in the early nineteenth century argued that there was no justification for women's social enslavement based on the differences between men and women. On the other hand, later reformers thought that it was just this differentiation that bound women to their social roles, like mothers. Therefore, adequate protection of women's rights was necessary. Women's roles as mothers were once again stressed with the creation of women's organizations and their own participation in campaigns, but this time in a new way: the argument was for women's rights to speech, education, and liberation. The image of women with the mother as a symbol, on the other hand, has evolved over time, from a focus on family to the formation of an archetypal mother figure, evoking profound, often atavistic ideas.

### First phase (1850–1915)

The colonial drive for modernity was responsible for the introduction of ideas like democracy, equality, and individual rights. As nationalism grew and unfair practises were examined, social reform movements related to caste and gender relations emerged. The first wave of feminism in India was led by men, who wanted to end social ills like sati (widow immolation), permit widow remarriage, forbid child marriage, lower illiteracy, lower the age of consent, and safeguard property rights through the use

of law. In addition, several Hindu women of the upper caste complained about the limitations imposed by brahminical norms. However, efforts to advance the position of women in Indian society were hampered as nationalist movements took root there in the late nineteenth century. These movements fought against "colonial interference in gender relations," notably in the household. In the middle to end of the nineteenth century, there was widespread opposition to any attempts by the British to "modernise" the Hindu family. The government's attempt to increase the legal age of marriage for women sparked the Age of Consent controversy. Several Indian republics, notably Jhansi (Rani Laxmibai), Kittur (Rani Chennama), Bhopal (Quidisa Begum), and Punjab (Rani Laxmibai), were ruled by women during the British colonial expansion (Jind Kaur).

### Second Phase (1915–1947)

The resistance against colonial rule developed throughout this period. The primary cause gained popularity and became nationalism. The idea that Indian women were superior to other women became a strategy of cultural revivalism, and it culminated in an essential idea of Indian femininity that was similar to Victorian womanhood: different but not of the public sphere. Gandhi gave Indian women a voice and expanded their visibility in the nonviolent civil disobedience struggle against the British Raj. He elevated their traditionally female responsibilities of compassion, self-sacrifice, tolerance, and sacrifice and gave them a position in society. Peasant women were involved in the rural satyagrahas in Borsad and Bardoli. The All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) emerged as women-only organizations. Women were debating issues such as the scope of women's political engagement, women's franchise, communal rewards, and political party leadership responsibilities.

Women's involvement in the liberation fight helped to develop a critical understanding of their place and rights in a free India. As a result, women now have the right to vote and other civic rights under the Indian constitution. For the empowerment of women, measures were developed for affirmative action, maternal health and child care (crèches), equal pay for equal effort, and other issues. Women were treated paternally by the authorities. For instance, the constitution of India clearly states that women are a "weaker part" of society who need assistance to function as equals. Indian women did not have to battle for basic rights, unlike women in the West. The utopia was destroyed when social and cultural ideas and systems disregarded the freshly acquired concepts of democracy and fundamental rights.

### After Independence

After the nation attained its independence, feminists started to evaluate the extent to which women

were permitted to work. The majority of feminists acknowledged the female pay gap in the workplace before independence. Feminists started to see power imbalances in power structures including caste, tribe, language, religion, geography, and class in the 1970s, in addition to those between men and women. Early in the twenty-first century, the Indian feminist movement changed its emphasis from viewing women as contributing members of society to focusing on their autonomy and right to self-determination.

Indira Gandhi became India's first female Prime Minister in 1966. She was India's Prime Minister for three years (1966–77) and a fourth term (1980–1984) before being killed in 1984. Section 53A of the Indian law's Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, establishes some requirements for the accused's medical examination. The medical examination of the victim is covered by Section 164A of the Constitution.

India's Parliament passed the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 to safeguard women from this type of abuse. The Indian government signed it on October 26, 2006, and it became operative. For the first time in Indian law, the phrase "domestic violence" is established by the Act. It has a broad definition that includes not just physical violence but also other types of violence like emotional/verbal, sexual, and economic abuse.

A 2013 Indian law called the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act seeks to safeguard women at work against sexual harassment. The law becomes operative on December 9, 2013. As of 2013, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act made sexual harassment an express offence under Section 354 A of the Indian Penal Code, punishable by up to three years in prison and/or a fine. The Amendment's new clauses make it unlawful to strip a woman off without her permission, stalk a woman, or have sex with someone in authority.

Additionally, it designated acid attacks as a separate offence that carries a minimum ten-year jail sentence and a maximum life sentence, as well as a monetary fine. The 2013 law also increased the age of consent from 16 to 18, and any sexual interaction with a person under the age of 18 is now regarded as statutory rape, regardless of permission.

## CONCLUSION

As we concluded in this chapter, feminists want to affect change in areas where these intersectionalities result in power disparity. Feminist theory now attempts to analyse inequalities and injustices along the intersectional lines of ability, class, gender, racism, sex, and sexuality. In any event, analysing these inequities intellectually and academically enables people to go out into the world

cognizant of injustices and seek to change harmful dynamics.

This chapter identifies the concerns that feminist political activists fight for, including family leave, equal pay, sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace, as well as issues related to reproductive rights, domestic violence, fairness, and social justice.

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