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East and West Encounter Feminism Thoughts

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INTRODUCTION TO FAMINISM

Abstract : Feminism in India is a set of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women in India. It is the pursuit of women's rights within the society of India. Like their feminist counterparts all over the world, feminists in India seek gender equality: the right to work for equal wages, the right to equal access to health and education, and equal political rights. Indian feminists also have fought against culture-specific issues within India's patriarchal society, such as inheritance laws.

The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase, beginning in the mid-19th century, initiated when male European colonists began to speak out against the social evils of Sati the second phase, from 1915 to Indian independence, when Gandhi incorporated women's movements into the Quit India movement and independent women's organisations began to emerge, and finally, the third phase, post-independence, which has focused on fair treatment of women at home after marriage, in the work force and right to political parity

Despite the progress made by Indian feminist movements, women living in modern India still face many issues of discrimination. India's patriarchal culture has made the process of gaining land-ownership rights and access to education challenging. In the past two decades, there has also emerged a trend of sex-selective abortion. Indian feminists, these are seen as injustices worth struggling against.

Key words: Gender equality, suffrogate, feminist movement, patriarchal system, male centric dominated society, self-reliance, and independence

EAST AND WEST ENCOUNTER FEMINISM THOUGHTS

As in the West, there has been some criticism of feminist movements in India. They have especially been criticised for focusing too much on women already privileged, and neglecting the needs and representation of poorer or lower caste women. This has led to the creation of caste-specific feminist organisations and movements. According to Maitrayee Chaudhari, unlike the Western feminist movement, India's movement was initiated by men, and later joined by women. But feminism as an initiative by women started independently a little later in Maharashtra by pioneering advocates of women's rights and education: Savitribai Phule, who started the first school for girls in India (1848); Tarabai Shinde, who wrote India's first feminist text *Stri Purush Tulana* (*A Comparison Between Women and Men*) in 1882; and Pandita Ramabai, who criticized patriarchy and caste-system in Hinduism, married outside her caste and converted to Christianity (1880s). The efforts of Bengali reformers included abolishing sati, which was a widow's death by burning on her husband's funeral pyre, abolishing the custom of child marriage, abolishing the disfiguring of widows, introducing the marriage of upper caste Hindu widows, promoting

women's education, obtaining legal rights for women to own property, and requiring the law to acknowledge women's status by granting them basic rights in matters such as adoption.]

The 19th century was the period that saw a majority of women's issues which came under the spotlight and reforms began to be made. Much of the early reforms for Indian women were conducted by men. However, by the late 19th century they were joined in their efforts by their wives, sisters, daughters, protégées and other individuals directly affected by campaigns such as those carried out for women's education. By the late 20th century, women gained greater autonomy through the formation of independent women's own organisations. By the late thirties and forties a new narrative began to be constructed regarding "women's activism". This was newly researched and expanded with the vision to create 'logical' and organic links between feminism and Marxism, as well as with anti-communalism and anti-casteism, etc. The Constitution of India did guarantee 'equality between the sexes,' which created a relative lull in women's movements until the 1970s.

During the formative years of women's rights movements, the difference between the sexes was more or less taken for granted in that their roles, functions, aims and desires were different. As a result, they were not only to be reared differently but treated differently also. Over the course of time, this difference itself became a major reason for initiating women's movements. Early 19th century reformers argued that the difference between men and women was no reason for the subjection of women in society. However, later reformers were of the opinion that indeed it was this particular difference that subjugated women to their roles in society, for example, as mothers. Therefore, there was a need for the proper care of women's rights. With the formation of women's organisations and their own participation in campaigns, their roles as mothers was again stressed but in a different light: this time the argument was for women's rights to speech, education and emancipation. However, the image of women with the mother as a symbol underwent changes over time – from an emphasis on family to the creation of an archetypal mother figure, evoking deep, often atavistic images.

One of the key questions for feminists is who to build alliances with. Their ideological leanings have in part supplied the answer. In Britain and America in the 1970s, for example, separatists argued that women’s movements had to rely on their own resources and that there was no scope for emancipator alliances with others; liberals, at the opposite end of the spectrum, held that there was no fundamental reason why alliances could not even be made with current power holders within existing structures. Historical and national specificities complicate this matter further.

n some contexts, for example, feminism has been able to exercise substantial influence on men’s movements (Messner, 1997), whereas in others men’s mobilisation has been markedly anti-feminist. One dramatic example of context driving the character of alliances is supplied by the Republic of Ireland, where the power of the church over women’s bodies meant that contraception, divorce and abortion became the central political battlefield and one on which feminists allied with liberals, socialists and cultural radicals of all colours against a common enemy for over three decades. Struggles over LGBTQ rights, and more recently movements of survivors of clerical child abuse, have taken this situation in new directions, but the foundational importance of the critique of the church to feminist choices of alliance partners in Ireland is by no means dead Another, perhaps more strategic way of thinking about the issue

of which group or movement to join with in struggle is to consider the gendered power structures and political dynamics at work within potential alliance partners. Some organising traditions have patriarchy built into their DNA: not only (most) religious and nationalist movements, but also (most) authoritarian kinds of left and union politics. The struggles of 1968 and subsequent movements - often in direct opposition to orthodox left politics - have left their own traces: a smaller number of organising traditions, particularly on the sub cultural and libertarian left, have been shaped by feminism to such an extent that expressions of patriarchal attitudes and behaviour amount to de facto self exclusion. In a crucial middle terrain are movements which are neither constitutively patriarchal, nor significantly feminist in their orientation. Such movements may be political fields in which the patriarchal assumptions and Another, perhaps more strategic way of thinking about the issue of which group or movement to join with in struggle is to consider the gendered power structures and political dynamics at work within potential alliance partners. Some organising traditions have patriarchy built into their DNA: not only (most) religious and nationalist movements, but also (most) authoritarian kinds of left and union politics. The struggles of 1968 and subsequent movements - often in direct opposition to orthodox left politics - have left their own traces: a smaller number of organising traditions, particularly on the sub cultural and libertarian left, have been shaped by feminism to such an extent that expression of patriarchal attitudes and behaviour amount to de facto self exclusion. In a crucial middle terrain is movements which are neither constitutively patriarchal, nor significantly feminist in their orientation. Such movements may be political fields in which the patriarchal assumptions and behaviours of the wider society are reflected and need to be challenged, but also where women's battles can be fought and won, alliances can be made, and so on. Examples range from some indigenous movements, to the direct action wing of the US ecology movement and European alter-globalisation activist communities. A key practical test in such contexts is how movements respond to sexual violence within their ranks; at its simplest, do they support the victim or the perpetrator Matters are obviously more complex than this, and internal quasi-legal processes are fraught at the best of times, but there is clearly a fundamental distinction between situations where known rapists are named, shamed, excluded and otherwise sanctioned and those where assaults are denied, covered over or fudged. In a world where perhaps one in four women has experienced sexual assault, how movements respond is often decisive in terms of defining their future direction. "Safe space" policies are an outcome of this, but have to be made to mean something in concrete situations in order to be genuinely assimilated and practiced.

Another test has to do with movement culture and practices. Does a movement institute feminist mentoring or rely on old boys' networks? Does it encourage modes of discussion which privilege heroic rhetoricians or open up space for the conversational, the inclusive and the participatory, Is there a willingness to respond to individual needs as they appear or are such issues relegated to the private sphere? And what kinds of political actor or subject are implied by organisational practicalities, such as the time of day the group meets, the safety and accessibility of the space it meets in, and the modes of performance it deems valuable.

conclusion

Lastly is the question of the extent to which feminism, like anti-racism or opposition to class inequality, becomes a basic touchstone of a movement's politics. Do organisers think through the implications of their actions in terms of women's participation, and tackling patriarchy in the wider society, Are patriarchal attitudes challenged and gender issues thematised as a matter of course, And so on. Feminists

need to consider these and other dimensions of actual and potential movement allies when choosing who to work with and when evaluating efforts to transform movements from the inside.

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