

FEMINIST RESPONSE TO NATIONALISM

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Abstract

Feminism and Nationalism are the two different and conflicting/contradictory ideas. Feminist response to nationalism is not only a feminist critique of nationalism but also an identity struggle of the two distinct identities. Nationalism claims itself a superior identity and other identities are inferior to it. This paper focuses on India i.e. British India and Independent India. It tries to cover all major issues which divided both of them and, which made them to work together especially during India's freedom struggle. Women activists raised their voice against their oppression in the society but they were successfully convinced by the nationalists that once India becomes freedom their issues would be addressed; and demanded their support in the freedom struggle against British. But the independent India was not as per the idea of the feminists and even nationalism in later days has taken a new form and culminated with Hindu nationalism. All these developments in independent India created different kinds of issues not only with feminism but also with other identities.

Key words: Feminism, Nationalism, Freedom struggle, Identity, Hindu Nationalism

Introduction:

The concept of feminism had evolved to address the problems faced by the women. Defining feminism merely as a demand for gender equality leads us to wrong perception of the concept. Because feminism is a voice of an oppressed people/class. The concept has its origin in the west. Later spread to Africa and Asia. In India the feminist movement had started from mid-19th century. On the other side nationalism had origin from Europe and spread to the entire globe. The French Revolution of 1789 coined the concept of Nationalism and thus, emerged nation-state concept. The context of origin of nationalism in the west and in the east is altogether different. In Europe industrialisation contributed its evolve but in east anti-colonialism was the reason. The growing anti-British rule sentiment had led to the development of nationalism in India. The feeling of one's towards his/her land, culture, history, language and people are called nationalism. But this feeling is not inherent to the humans. It was developed over a period of time, in the sense that it was constructed for political reasons. This construction is so powerful and surpasses all other social constructions and also dominates other identities. People will forget their problems and unite for the nation by cornering all other issues. Importantly we need to observe no issues become crucial before national issues. Benedict Anderson says Nationalism "is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings"(Anderson, 2006).

The Feminism speaks about the liberation of women from oppression. Feminism is an ideology which criticises the gender construction in the society. The society constructed the qualities of women and then applied it on biological women. Such application of qualities has created a problem and made distinction between men and women and this led to oppression. Mary Wollstonecraft "strongly disagrees with prevailing idea about the virtue of women and men in general and in particular with Jean Jacques Rousseau that virtue is not relative to gender. Reason is lacking among women that subjugated women" (Keerthiraj, 2019).

This paper aimed to understand the contradictions and struggle for survival between two identities i.e. Nationalism and Feminism. The contradiction between the two identities is due to modernity. Nationalism is always associated with the culture of the majority people of the land.