

Roots of Feminism in the West: A Brief History & Theories of Some Feminist Concepts

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Abstract

Feminism is a range of movements and ideologies that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, cultural, personal, and social rights for women. A number of terms have been used to refer to women like 'the fairer sex', the weaker sex' and 'the second sex.' The concern for women's rights first found expression in Mary Wollstonecraft's 'A Vindication of Rights of Women' (1792). Later during the year 1848 'The Seneca Falls Convention' which was convened by Elizabeth Candy Stanton, Lucretia Matt and others, called for full equality for women with men, education, opportunities and other equal compensation. From here onwards, the women's suffrage movement began to catch momentum. The constitutional amendment in 1920 gave women the right to vote. However, their participation in their work place still confined their status to homes. From America the movement gradually spread to Europe. There is not a single concept of 'feminism' but many thoughts and ideologies of 'feminisms.' The feminist struggle has a long history which originated in the west and sooner or later spread across most countries of the world. The study of some basic concepts, ideas and movements in western feminism thus becomes relevant to the study of feminism in any other country. Even in the west, feminist thoughts have been diverse. Hence, the reading of some basic feminist texts becomes essential to understand the developments and diversity of this concept. The present paper tries to explore diverse feminist thoughts, developments and movements in western feminism as reflected through the scholarly books and articles of some eminent scholars.

Keywords: western feminist thought, the three waves of feminism, eminent feminist scholars.

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