



INTERNATIONAL

JOURNAL of HUMAN STUDIES

ULUSLARARASI İNSAN ÇALIŞMALARI DERGİSİ

ISSN: 2636-8641

Cilt/VOLUME 5 Sayı/ISSUE 9 Yıl/YEAR: 2022

Alındı/RECEIVED: 22-11-2021 – Kabul/ACCEPTED: 30-06-2022

Postcolonial Feminist Theory: The Case of India *Postkolonyal Feminist Teori: Hindistan Örneği*

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Abstract

Feminism is a theory which emerged in the West as a result of the gender inequality women exposed and the unequal rights when compared to men. First, women struggled for their political rights and then their expectations changed and the perception of feminism has changed over the years. As the Western feminism has only protected the White women and ignored the differences among women. Third world countries, which were the colony of the Western countries for years, tried to reconstruct their own culture and their localness, interpreted feminism in a different way. The standardized woman which is accepted by the West ignores the 'other women' and degrades the problems of them only into the gender inequality.

Öz

Feminizm, kadınların erkeklerle eşit haklara sahip olmamaları ve toplumsal cinsiyet ayrımına maruz kalmaları nedeniyle, Batı'da ortaya çıkmış bir teoridir. Önceleri kadınların siyasi haklarını kazanabilmeleri amacı ile verilen mücadeleler, daha sonra kadınların hakları ve beklentileri konusunda farklı bir boyut almıştır. Batı'da ortaya çıkan feminizm, sadece beyaz kadınların haklarını korumakta, kadınlar arasındaki farklılıkları görmezden gelmektedir. Yıllarca Batı'nın bir sömürgesi olarak yaşayıp, bağımsızlıklarını kazanmaları ile kendi kültürlerini ve yerellik anlayışlarını yeniden inşa etmeye çalışan üçüncü dünya ülkeleri, feminizmi de farklı yorumlamışlardır. Batı feminizminin kabul ettiği tek tip kadın modeli, 'öteki' kadınları

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Postcolonial feminism emerged as a reaction to the standard feminist ideas. It desired to be a voice for the other women who are not Western and different from others. In this regard, India is the country where feminism has been interpreted in a different way. India is a country where the postcolonial feminist ideas were born. The aim of this article is to analyze the feminism and status of women in the Indian society in the context of postcolonial feminism by using the literature review method.

Keywords: Feminism, Postcolonial Feminism, Women, India.

görmezden gelmekte, onların sorunlarını sadece toplumsal cinsiyet meselesine indirgemektedir. Postkolonyal feminizm bu standart feminist görüşlere bir tepki olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bağlamda Hindistan, feminizmin farklı bir biçimde yorumlandığı ülkelerden biri olmuştur. Hindistan postkolonyal feminist fikirlerin doğduğu ülkedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, literatür taraması yöntemiyle postkolonyal feminizm bağlamında Hindistan'da feminizmi ve kadının statüsünü analiz etmektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminizm, Postkolonyal Feminizm, Kadınlar, Hindistan.

Introduction

The first women movements began with the struggles of political rights in history. When women acquired their political rights, they began to struggle for being equal in social life, occupational life and all aspects of life. Over the years, new perceptions of feminism have emerged. After the Second World War, a new world order came forward and new governments in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East which had been the colonies before, strived to resurrect their obsessed cultures. The postcolonial feminist theory which emerged under this conjuncture, was a reaction to the Western feminism because it only concerned the problems of White and Western women. The only struggle point of Western feminists was gender and patriarchy. On the other hand, postcolonial feminism emphasizes the third world women are exposed to racism, discrimination, poverty, lack of education and as a theory, it justifies that feminism can't be degraded into one reality.

The starting point of the postcolonial feminism is India. India gained its independence after colonial period and some Indian theoreticians enhanced a new perception for feminism. They pointed out the othering of the Western feminism and created awareness to this reality. This critical view of feminism and the awareness created among the third world women are really crucial and make India very significant for feminism.

The main purpose of this article is to shed light on the history of non-western women by reading postcolonial feminism, which sees classical feminism as Western feminism, through India. The main argument is that the problems experienced by non-western women are quite different from western ones. Classical feminism ignores the cultural differences between women and reads women's

problems through political and economic inequalities. However, postcolonial feminism tries to explain that women in non-Western countries are left alone with huge problems and marginalization under more dominant patriarchal traditions.

In this study, after the definition of feminism, the historical background of the theory has been revealed. After addressing the definitions and the backgrounds of the postcolonial theory in India, the current social, economic and political status of women in India have been examined. Indian feminism has very deep roots and as a country, India is an important country for feminist ideas and doctrines. Today, it can be said that Indian government have enacted very important laws to protect the rights of women and to promote them in the political and social life in theory, but there are also some serious problems when it comes to women, in practice.

1. The Definition of Feminism

The feminist movement is defined as a doctrine which tries to advance the roles and status of women in the society and it appeared in the 18th century (Sevim, 2005, p.8). Feminism is based on the equality of men and women and tries to change the power relations between them. This thought is a doctrine of the release movement of a demographical group which has been exposed to the discrimination and exclusion from the important decision-making mechanisms along the history of the civilization. The word 'feminism' is derived from a Latin word 'femine' which means 'woman'. In French, it is derived from 'feme' which means 'woman' as well (Arat, 1991, p.16).

It is also essential to refer to the various definitions of the concept because it is quite difficult to make a common definition of it. According to J. Mitchel, feminism is a conflict in social relations between men and women in the context of status, without a biological perspective. This conflict is not a biologically based conflict, but a non-fixed one and is characterized as a force that brings along dynamic movement, triggers a change, and affects the flow of human history (Mitchel, 1984, p.28). In other words, it is a point of view which is based on the gender concept and includes various disciplines (Zalewski, 1995, p.341). In spite of being a lot of different feminist views, all of them tries to reach a society that women and men are all equal. Bell Hooks's book which is called "Feminism is for Everybody" aims to end sexism or sexist exploitation and persecution in every aspect of life. In this book, she considers sexism as a problem and she emphasized that it brings about a problem in the social life. Also, she describes the feminist politics that form the basis of her political life, by mixing it with racial and class discrimination. In each chapter, the book explains how sexist thinking can harm us in areas within life (working life, family life, parenthood, sexuality, marriage, spirituality etc.). By doing so, she criticizes some of the ideas within the feminist movement, which are the reasons for prejudices against feminism. She desires feminism not only to advance in the academic field, but also to be a doctrine that should be spread throughout the society (Hooks, 2002, p.25).

According to the feminist theory, the governments in power are all controlled by men and the history has been made by men. The roles of women and their movements have always been ignored. In short, feminism grounds on the inequalities which women are exposed in public realm and private space by the economic, formal, political and social regulations and implements. Feminism tries to

change the power relations basing upon these inequalities. Also, it tries to change and improve the social and political sides of women and it is an attitude to all imparities.

There are some important concepts that feminism emphasizes and one of the most important of all is 'women's subordination'. The term 'women's subordination' refers to the lower situation of women, their lack of access to resources when compared to men. The feeling of barrenness, discrimination and the experience of restrained self-esteem and self-confidence contribute to the subordination of women. Thus, women's subordination is a situation, where a power relationship exists and women are dominated by men. The subordination of women is a main characteristic of all structures of interpersonal domination, but feminists choose different causes of the notion. Simone de Beauvoir argues that because men view women as different from themselves, women are reduced to the status of the second sex and thus subordinate (Beauvior, 1974, p.22). Kate Millet's theory of subordination reveals that women are a dependent sex class under patriarchal domination of men (Millet, 1977, p.25).

The other most important one that it draws attention to is patriarchy. Patriarchy is closely related to the supremacy and the subjection of women. The concept of patriarch emphasizes the reality of gender which is imposed, but not the biological differences between men and women (Heywood, 2015, p.75) Patriarchy is a system which women are kept inferior in every aspect of life. The subordination that they experience at a daily level, takes various forms such as discrimination, overlook, insult, exploitation, repression, violence within the family, at workplace and in the society.

According to the most of the feminists, gender is a political construction which is based on the social patterns and masculine and feminine behaviors. When it is considered into the political science and international relations discipline, it uses gender inequality as a base. Power relations in the world have a masculine system and they exclude women from important decision-making mechanisms. Women must be equal to men and gender inequality in political and social life must be repressed. Moreover, settled political customs must be revised and a new way of thinking must be internalized.

2. The History of Feminism and Waves

The arise of the feminist movement and the changes it went through, occurred in a process which are called 'waves'. Before mentioning the first wave of feminism, it is necessary to focus on the status of women in Old Greek. In Old Greek, women weren't given significance in public realm. For instance, Olympic Games were only for men. Girls weren't accepted to the schools and only a specific group of girls could get education in schools. Men could get divorced as arbitrary. The heritage was assigned to the boys. If the family didn't have a boy child, the father left his heritage to his grandson from his daughter. Old Greek philosophers didn't consider women and men as equal. According to Platon, there must be an elite class which governs the state. Others cannot transfer to this class. In this class, women who are educated and elite are necessary as a voting power. Platon thought that this elite class of women can participate in voting. Aristoteles, another Greek philosopher, believes that women are not equal to the men in justice, courage and prudence because men are superior than women by nature (Sautet, 1998, p.79).

During the Roman Empire Period, women did not have any legal rights, but still they exercised some rights. They were able to work and some were occupied with artistry. Then, they became rich but still marriage settlements were prepared on behalf of men. (Sevim, 2005, pp.22-25). During the Medieval Age, women were in a better status than before. Until the 13th century, they participated all religious activities and worked freely. They took up business and they worked as doctors, greengrocers, hairdressers and tailors. On the other hand, some adverse events occurred on behalf of women. They were even banned from religious ceremonies and their testimony wasn't accepted in the court. In the 15th century, women were even accused of being witches and magicians and the ones who were accused were burnt in front of the crowds. During the New Age, women could not have any legal rights and they had to disclaim their rights which they had before (Kieckhefer, 2014, pp.1-2).

The first wave of feminism was at 17th century when women were organized against the patriarchy for the first time. This era is called Guerelle des Femmes (The Battle of Genders) by the Western historians. The book "The Equality of The Sexes" written by Poullain de la Barre is the one which planted the seeds of feminism. During this period, women protested the inequalities and the civil war (Michel, 2002, p.68). They struggled for the freedom during the American and French Revolution like men. In the French Revolution, there were three prominent women who struggled for women rights: Pauline Leon, Clarire Lacombe, Olympe de Gouge. Olympe de Gouge was a symbol who declared 'Women Rights Declaration'. In her speech, she said 'If women can be sent to the guillotine, they can be sent the rostrums, as well. 'She mentioned that French Revolution brought freedom for only men, not women and she were executed. Women and the Black were excluded from all rights in spite of the freedom that the revolution had brought. For this reason, the feminists criticized the French and American Revolution and named them as 'the revolutions of men and the White'. Whether it is criticized, the idea of equality between genders appeared first during the French Revolution with the ideas of enlightens (Ecevit&Karkiner, 2011, p.66). The first feminist wave was a period that women questioned everything from their political rights to educational rights. The most important classic work of this period is the "Vindication of The Rights of Women" written by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792. In this work, she emphasized women were regarded as dependent and weak by men so lots of women accepted this way of thinking without questioning (Arat, 1991). Wollstonecraft disagreed with 18th century theorists who believed that women should not receive a rational education, stressing that the education of women is significant and also argued that women are individuals who deserve the same rights as men, and treating them as a property of men undermines the moral bases of society.

Revolutions that emerged in the light of the enlightened ideas in the 18th and 19th centuries were the years when women sought and fought for their individual rights and freedoms as much as men. In this period, one of the most important rights acquired on behalf of women was political rights. It has been through long struggles that women have been able to obtain their political rights. One of the most important reasons for this is the belief that women are best represented by their fathers, brothers and spouses politically, legally and economically.

Therefore, the political representation of women was initially important neither for ancient Greek democracy nor for parliamentary democracies. The problem of women's political representation was accepted naturally by prominent figures of Western political thought such as Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Niccolo Machiavelli, Hegel, Rousseau, Locke, and Hobbes (Darcy, Welch&Clark, 1987, p.77). However, the equal access of all citizens to the policy making process expresses the understanding that a modern democratic society. Theoretically, the free and equal individual understanding here should oppose all distinctions arising from differences such as class, ethnicity, and gender.

It is seen that women did not take part in the theory and practice of democracy that started with the liberal, equal and free citizen perception spread in the West. Olympe de Gouges, who asked women to speak and vote during the French Revolution, was sent to the guillotine instead of standing on the podium in 1793. Thanks to the courageous women activists, writers and thinkers such as Olympe de Gouges, it can be said that the transformation began in terms of women's political identity, representation and rights in the 17th and 18th centuries. Nancy Astor, the first woman to enter the House of Commons in England, home of Magna Carta, was chosen in 1919. The voices of women trying to question their status, such as E. Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Virginia Woolf, Mary Astell, and Mary Wollstonecraft, started to be heard (Jones, 1993, p.55). It should also be stated that these inquiries coincided with a period in which secular and political claims were discussed in America and Europe. In this way, some dogmas and natural inequalities in society could not play a more preventive role in front of the question of why women cannot demand the same rights. These considerations are very important in terms of bringing up the issue of women's political representation as a problem for the first time. As a result of these spreading struggles, women gained certain legal and economic rights such as the right to elect and be elected, the right to work and education; they have achieved certain social gains and awareness. Although these rights are especially important for women in a political sense, it has been observed that they are not sufficient for the representation of women's interests and transformation of the public sphere towards women.

Second Wave Feminism appeared after the Second World War when women gained citizenship rights and started to oppose the masculine system that dominated their own bodies. Feminism started to take on a different dimension. In the words of Andree Michel, a famous feminist, "A new generation of feminists born in the USA, England, France and many European countries between 1935 and 1945, exhausted themselves in anti-racist and anti-colonialist struggles. Many of them were educated in mixed schools and were well educated" (Michel, 2002). These young and educated women were perceived as a sexual object in daily life; rape was not a serious crime. While having a profession like men, they still had to do the daily work at home and society treated them as second-class people in all areas.

During this period called Second Wave Feminism, women operated in a more organized way. In the USA, Betty Friedan founded NOW (National Organization of Women) in 1966. NOW has been an organization emphasizing that women should be equal with men in all fields. She tried to draw attention to issues such as women's employment, wage equality, revision of family law and the sexist

nature of the media. Second-wave feminists also questioned sexist approaches in media, literature, science, culture and art (Dodovan, 2005, p.273).

When looking at the third wave feminism, it is seen that an understanding that takes into account the differences, emerged in the world with the effect of globalization in the 1990s. During this period, a consciousness was developed that they were different in their inequality due to differences among themselves. Feminists emphasized the importance of seeing differences and producing policies according to the types of oppression in this process. In this period, in addition to the problems faced by women, efforts were made to make the world a more livable place. The third wave feminism, which represents a stance against all kinds of wars, environmental pollution, and all kinds of threats that threaten world peace, tried to create a consciousness against all these issues (Hooks, 2002). The number of people involved in the feminist movement has increased day by day. Black women in the 1960s and Asian women in the 1990s joined women's organizations and movements, and drew attention to the problems related to the ethnicity. Although these movements are mostly shaped on women's rights, they have also focused on the problems brought by global capitalism. Criticizing earlier generations of feminists who saw women's issues as the only problem of white and Western women, this period also defended political women, the working class, and those with different sexual orientations, and dreamed of a wider range of freedom.

Feminists opposing the history written from men's point of view, questioned all the structures that are masculine in a systematic way. Gabriel Dietze, a German feminist, in his work titled "Defeating the Silence: Selections from the Women's Movement", expressed the changes to be made in only one area would not eliminate the prejudices. Our thought systems, lifestyles, business life, families, our emotions and even the way we laugh and cry must change (Arat, 1991).

Feminists believed that these radical changes could only be achieved through education. Therefore, studies under the name of 'Women's Studies' were conducted in various universities and departments. Various countries prioritized feminist linguistics studies in order to extract sexist words in their own language. In parallel with the events taking place in the world, although feminism has undergone changes over time, it emerged as a reaction to the state and social structure that excludes women, and tried to find a solution to the 'women's issue' as well as the sexist structure in international politics. Other critical theories dealing with this problem have supported feminism in some ways, while revealing the deficiencies of feminism in a critical way.

3. The History of Feminism in India and Postcolonial Feminism

As known, India was a British colony until 1949. The colonial intervention in the 19th century was not only confined only to the market or civil order but was also entering into the areas of Indian culture and society. This potential threat was noticed by the Indian thinkers, who were exposed to Western ideas and values for years. To prevent this, they searched for ways of resisting this colonial hegemony which is called 'Cultural Defense' (Pande, 2018, p.22).

This cultural defense was very vital for the Indian intellectuals and notables. Aroused by new European ideas of rationalism and progress, the reformers wanted to create a new society, grounded

in Indian tradition. They began a critical evaluation of Indian society in an attempt to create a new mentality and prevent all the issues like polygamy, casteism, sati, child marriage, illiteracy which were real barriers to the progress of women. All the social reformers thought that no society could progress if its women were backward and unequal. They noticed the fact that the position of Indian women was lower than many countries in the world. Hence, they directed their efforts to improve the status of women through enactment, political actions and education. This was mainly the period of first wave feminism in India (Pande, 2018). During this period, the first generation of English educated women struggled hard for women rights, but it only affected women from the upper caste and class. The first generation of English educated women started women's movement before the independence.

After the independence, Indian feminism took on a different dimension. Non-violent protests under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi led a way to the enormous participation of women in the national liberation movement. Women protesters who were participated in demonstrations were sent to the prison. Even if they coped with too many difficulties, they got involved in public sphere and joined educational institutions, public service boards, and work life. The rest of the women became conscious about the education of the girls. The movements that began with the 19th century and ended with the 20th century freedom movements, gave rise to the constitutional guarantees of equality, freedom and equal opportunity for women regardless of their class, caste, and religion (Kasturi&Mazumdar, 1994, p.14).

In the second wave of feminism that began in the mid- 1970s, Indian educated middle-class women were actively involved in different social movements of students, workers, peasants, low castes and they played an important role in all these social movements. Women's rights movement in the post-1975 period called attention to a wide range of women's concerns. (Patel&Khajura, 2013, pp.25-29). Later, women's movements in India were influenced by different ideologies. The previous women's organizations were believed that they have an elitist approach by the new women's groups. According to them, these were wealthy women from good families that did some voluntary social work activities for poor and afflicted women. What they did never changed anything for the ones who were not alike to them. Feminists also claimed that the previous women's movements were followed by the rules of caste system and were generally realized to protect the status quo.

The later stage of feminism is considered to be the 'third wave of feminism' whose ideological base is in the post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality. They criticize male-female dichotomy that are artificial forms, created to maintain the power of dominant power groups. The supporters of third-wave feminism thinks that women should define feminism for themselves by associating their own ideas into the belief system of what feminism is and what it can be. This wave basically includes perspectives from marginalized women groups – women of different color, women from the post-colonial countries, differently-abled women, women from different ethnic and religious minorities. In spite of all these struggles, this wave has expanded the discourse of depression among women (Forbes, 2000, p.13).

The UN Declaration of 1975 as an International Women's Year appeared with the emergency rule in India. Before it was lifted in 1977, several women's groups had emerged as a struggle for the

democratic rights of women. The press took “action” after the imposed silence of nearly two years. Crimes committed against women during this period were openly documented and reported. These were all committed within the family, on the streets and at the workplace. The starting point of this process took place in 1980 when many women’s groups protested the inequalities.

During the 1980s, the issue of gender inequality was discussed not only in discussion forums, seminars and the articles but also in the media. Women, who had identified the reasons of their problems on their own, began to form a common language, an organizational platform, a collective identity and justice that they did not have earlier. Nationwide anti-rape campaigns in 1980 resulted in the emergence and the proliferation of women’s organizations in several cities. These groups, such as Forum against Oppression of Women (Mumbai) and Saheli (Delhi) managed to get astounding publicity in media and ‘violence against women’ became the most noticeable and the newest issue. Family members, especially fathers and brothers of the women victims participated in some protests against violence (Katzenstein, 1989, p.53).

Postcolonial theory is a theory which emerged as an opposition to the West-centered, state and security-oriented theories. Bringing a critical perspective to the basic concepts used by these theories it offers an alternative approach. Indeed, postcolonial theorists, like all critical theorists, are "not very international"(Weaver,1998, p.367). Changing and decolonizing the classical “Western way of thinking” in the discipline of International Relations, it tries to liberate the discipline from hegemonic conceptualizations and discourses. Postcolonial theory, which can be said to act in general with this basic argument, is not a single theory, but a group of theories made up of many different theories.

Postcolonial Feminism emerged in the 1980s, inspired by Postcolonial Theory. Many women who migrated to the West for education, tended to question the problems of women and how they were handled in a western-centered way. The postcolonial feminist theory emerged when Women who weren’t Western became to question their status and the reason why they were seen as different from the Western women. Postcolonial Feminism is an effective form of cross-cultural criticism that questions social institutions.

Feminists who came to the fore in the 1980s faced the problems of the other women. For them, mainstream Feminist Theory is white, middle-class limited to addressing the issues of its members and English-speaking women. Kumari Jayawardena (1986 and 1995), Nawal al Saadawi(1978), Fatima Mernissi (1992), Isabel Letelier (1985) and Achola Pala (1976 and 1995).All names such as Asian, Middle Eastern, Latino, and African women's national economic development of colonized countries in and before liberation struggles and theorized how it plays a role in the democratization process (Mohanty,1991,p.8). Postcolonial Feminists, just like post colonialists, are educated in the West. They saw many Western feminist projects, race-based and colonialist politics. They criticized Western ideas for neglecting the others (Loomba, 2000, p.191).

India was one of the first countries to come to mind when considering postcolonial feminism. India, as a state that had been under the colonization of England for years, declared its independence in the light of anti-colonial ideas and actions. The Indian feminism was also different from Western

feminism. Western feminism's purely gender-based approach to the problems of white women and only protecting the rights of white women was incompatible with the problems of women in India and many other countries with colonial backgrounds. Women in India were struggling not only with patriarchy, but also with racism and exploitation. In this context, it is not accidental that many postcolonial feminist thinkers and theorists came out of India.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of the most important of these theorists and his work "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is a very important symbol of postcolonial feminism. She has been added to feminist readings with this article and it is accepted as the beginning of the third feminist wave. In her article, by the term 'subaltern'; she meant "Those who are out of hegemonic powers, those who are not represented, whose voice disappeared". It also deals with the concepts of "Western subject", "West as subject", "ruling class". She mainly tries to make the oppressed ones to be heard and she approaches the subaltern issue with a feminist approach addressing the third world women as subalterns. (Kiraz&Kestel, 2017, p.145).

Postcolonial Feminism, which is among the deconstructive theories, in this sense, demolished the denominator of "common experience" that Western Feminists have long voiced. In this respect, it has taken its place among the deconstructive theories, emphasizing that the demands of Third World Women are not what Western Feminists say, rather than what they are, because of their efforts to dismantle the generally accepted understandings of today's world. In response to this situation in 1999, Spivak, who proposed "a new politics of reading" with his book "A Critique of Postcolonial Reason", criticized the post-colonial mind through the fields of philosophy, literature, history and culture and tried to put the inverted post-colonial thought back to its homeland. However, after the 2000s, post-colonialism continues to be instrumentalized as a new mechanism that increases the possibilities of criticizing the elements that are claimed to be a slowing barrier to faster participation in the transnational division of labor (Spivak, 2013, p.45).

Chandra Talpade Mohanty holds an important place among postcolonial feminists as much as Spivak. Defining herself as an anti-racist and deconstructionist feminist, Mohanty drew attention to postcolonial feminism by offering solutions beyond criticism. In this sense, she called the Third World Women to gather the common ground of struggle and led women from all over the world to weave a network of solidarity (Mohanty,1991).

Feminists, who came to the fore in the 1980s, focused on the problems of Third World Women. People such as Kumari Jayawardena, Nawal el Saadawi, and Achola Pala all theorized how Asian and Indian women occupied a place in the national liberation struggles and in the process of economic development and democratization of previously colonized countries (Mohanty, 1991). Postcolonial feminists, like post colonialists, criticized many Western feminist projects for neglecting race-based and colonialist politics. For example; Hazel Carby pointed out the 'limits of sisterhood' drawn by the differences that emerged in terms of understanding the role played by the race in understanding women's experience, and 'the limits of sisterhood' as an analytical category in feminist thought (Arman&Şerbetçi, 2012, p.67).

The understanding that sisterhood is universal and it has emerged as a result of feminist studies that try to cross national, ethnic and racial boundaries. However, post-colonial feminists like Carby, do not adopt the notion that sisterhood is global because Western feminists, who have different political views, defend the identity between women on the basis of common experiences (Mohanty, 1991). However, according to post-colonial feminists, it cannot be claimed that they have had an identical type of experience for female identities or lesbian identities fighting racism. Post-colonial feminists also argue that Western feminism addresses only the demands of middle-class, white Western women. (Arman&Şerbetçi, 2012). For this reason, it is not considered realistic for postcolonial feminists to speak of a global sisterhood by Western feminism since it does not include other women. The situation that arises as a result of global sisterhood is to assume that women are impotent, sexually abused, exploited, and similar, rather than revealing what the conditions are that make them impotent. However, what needs to be done is not the idea of sisterhood on the basis of gender (like the idea that women have common experiences); but to think of it as a concrete, historical, political practice and analysis.

4. Being a Women in India

After the independence, India had to cope with different problems. Besides the financial problems of the country, years of colonial domination destroyed the country's indigenous crafts and depleted all-natural resources. Industrialization, changing technologies, illiteracy, and lack of mobility resulted in the inability of women to be in public sphere. Once their labor was regarded as unimportant in the productive market, their role in the family also became very heavy. Even though India is a country that led the way for the postcolonial feminism throughout the history, women in India today couldn't take their rightful place and the status of women is still low when compared to the men.

After Indian Independence, women have had very important rights, but still, they are not sufficient enough to provide gender equality. Due to the efforts of women and their role during the freedom struggle, women got their political rights and these rights are guaranteed in the constitution in India. Article 15 empowers the State to make special provisions for women. There were also a lot of legal changes to enhance the status of women, but what really happened was that a great gap arose between the theoretical status of women as defined in these and what existed in reality (Pande, 2018).

The Indian government has made significant changes in laws and institutions with the intention of eliminating gender inequality. As early as 1931, the Indian national assembly protected women's fundamental rights such as dignity, freedom, justice, and equality (Patel, 2013,). In India's constitution, women were given equal rights with men. This equality is guaranteed by Articles 14, 15 and 16. According to the Article 14, the state cannot postpone gender equality and individual equality in all regions of India. Article 15 enabled the state to take action for women and children in special circumstances. Article 16 deals with the equality of opportunity of citizens in services and duties by all institutions and organizations of the state. In addition to these articles, there are several other laws for the special protection of women. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, the Property Rights Act of Hindu Women of 1937, the Hindu Inheritance Act of 1956, the obstruction of the Sati tradition of 1987, the Act 2005 to protect women from violence (Government

of India, 2020). The government also established the National Commission for Women (NCW) to protect women rights (Ministry of Women, 2021).

As a result, although women's rights are protected by laws and various regulations, it is clear that there are problems in practice. Although Indian feminism has been trying to exist for years as a basis of postcolonial feminism, flexibility and delays in the implementation of the laws in favor of men also prevent deterrence. Even if women rights are protected by laws, they are oppressed based on traditions and no sanctions are applied. In this country where domestic violence and rape are quite common, violence does not make any class difference like the upper income group or lower income group. Because of the traditional family structure, women quietly accept these situations.

4.1 Women's education and health opportunities

According to the Indian constitution, education for both boys and girls is compulsory and free from the age of six to fourteen. However, literacy rate in India varies from region to region and male literacy rate is higher. The inequality in education is more common in rural areas (Nair, 2010, p.101).

In India, schooling has become a norm now and imagine that every child by the age of 3 starts the school. But still in some areas, if the child is a girl, there are many obstacles for her access to education. Women's education in India is still perceived as unnecessary in some parts of the country. While Kerala tops the charts with 92.07% female literacy, Bihar scores much lesser with 51.50% of female literacy. The number of illiterate girls under the age of 15 is also too high. The under 15 age group is important because this group will form the adults in the next 20 to 30 years. The number of married girls under the age of 15 who can read and write is 9,899. As can be understood from the numerical data, girls who have started their education life generally continue their education up to the secondary school and high school level, and the part who cannot find the opportunity to study in rural areas completely dismisses from education when they get married. (Census India, 2020).

Without education, women don't feel confident or they don't have the necessary knowledge to make their own choice. When they lack of the self-confidence and self-esteem, they can never participate in the public sphere. Also, they are forced to the early marriage by their families. India, which has the number of 24 million, holds the miserable record of having the highest absolute number of child marriages. This represents 40% of the world's 60 million child marriages. Early marriage forces girls into adulthood and, frequently, motherhood before they are emotionally or physically ready. This thoroughly affects a girl's life, not only by substantially lowering her educational prospects, but also by causing health issues and harming their psychology (Wodon, 2014, p.24). Furthermore, unequal power relations and the low status of women weaken the ability of women to protect themselves and negotiate safer sex both within and outside of marriage, thereby increasing their vulnerability. The Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2019) stated that the lack of power of women in most cultural frames also impacts the nutritional intake and health status of women and girls. This in turn causes illnesses like anemia. If a woman gives birth to a female child while malnourished, then the child's survival and nutritional issues emerge (UN Women, 2020).

4.2 Women employment

Most destruction by Third World women's international division of labor it is the section that goes through within the scope of international division of labor. Third World women are either employed in some so-called income-generating activities or they are made into housewives (Şerbetçi, 2013, p.45). Third World women, who are generally positioned in the international division of labor, is a part of sex tourism. Goa, a coastal state, has become one of the regions where sex tourism is promoted. Women's other positions in the division of labor are as workers in unhealthy jobs, like taking part in the colonialist and dangerous experiments in the field as the cheapest laborers like the guinea pigs, large multinational corporations as well as smaller industries. (Enloe, 2003, p.70).

A fundamental factor responsible for gender inequality in India, and affably, one of the most powerful, is poverty. Out of the total of 30 per cent poor people, 70 per cent are female. This factor is closely related to the gender inequalities in work life. While the share of employed men remained constant between 2009 and 2019, women's employment dropped from 18 per cent to 16 per cent. Only 13.4 per cent of working-age women (aged 15-59 years) have a regular job compared to 21.2 per cent of working-age men (International Labor Organization, 2020). Women earn 56 per cent of what their male colleagues earn for performing the same work (World Economic Forum, 2020).

As estimated by the World Bank, 90 per cent of Indian working women are employed in the informal sector and they do tasks involving heavy physical work with long working hours with limited payment, lack of guarantee and even lack of minimum facilities at the work place. In turn, the incongruity in employment opportunities and the nature of the work in which they are engaged causes economic problems. Poverty has various indications, including lack of income, hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other services, increasing mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments and social discrimination. It is also defined by the absence of participation in important decision-making mechanisms (World Bank, 2020).

4.3 Women's political participation

India has been more successful than other fields in terms of women's participation in politics. In pre-independence India, women gained the right to vote at a rather earlier date than in other countries in the world, such as 1917. Also, leaders like Indira Gandhi, who had an important place in the history of women leaders, were raised. In addition to some law changes, international and non-governmental organizations played an important role in women's being active in politics in the country.

After the United Nations General Assembly declared 1975 as the year of women, many developments on women's rights took place in India. The General Assembly adopted the International Rights Document for Women in 1979 and stipulated their participation in political and social life with articles 7 and 8. Conferences held in Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995 also affected India. Non-governmental organizations such as South Asia Watch (SAW), Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW) also prioritized participation in political and social life and conducted studies in this area (Menon, 1975, p.276).

At this point, women's participation in political life has been able to sustain this success until today. It is possible to say that women play an active role in the international system thanks to political

participation. According to Figure 1, women began to exist in the Lok Sabha, the Indian parliament, after 1952. While 20 women parliament members entered the parliament in 1952, this number increased to a certain extent, although it had ups and downs. In 2019, when the last elections were held, the number of women deputies was 80. This figure corresponds to 15 percent.

We can say that after 2000s, The Bill of Seat Reservation supported and increased women's political participation in both general and local politics by providing a gender quota for women in Lok Sabha. The peculiarity of this law is that it reserves 1/3 seat reserves for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures (including Delhi). Of the 543 seats in Lok Sabha, 181 will be reserved for women only. With the effect of this law, the proportion of women in parliaments has increased over the years. However, women, who can still take part in important decision-making mechanisms at a much lower rate than men, have to go a long way (Forbes, 2000).

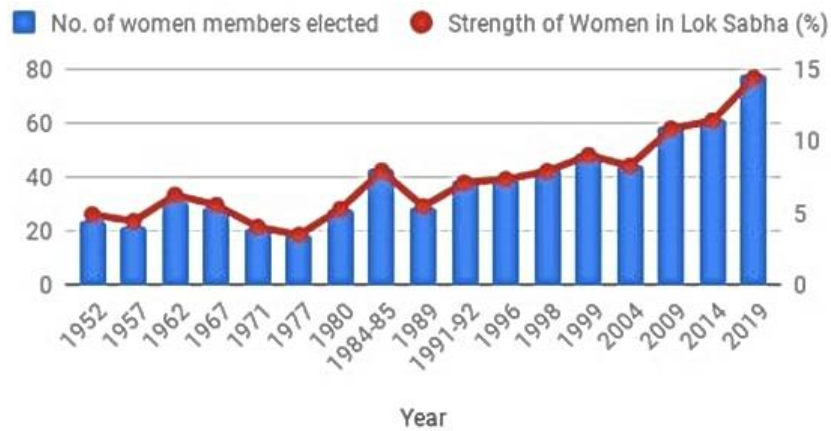


Figure 1: The Percentage of Women in Lok Sabha per Year (The Hindu News ,2020).

As can be understood, in spite of the assertive developments in favor of women, the number of women in decision-making positions at Lok Sabha and cabinet level is limited. This is because of the exclusionary political structure deeply embedded in Indian society. In national and state-level political parties, few women in the party are symbolic and they are rarely policy and strategy makers.

4.4 Women in local politics

India has three types of local government: municipal corporations for cities, councils for towns; and panchayats for villages. These local bodies are all elected. There is a reservation system for all these elections for women candidates. There is also a one third reservation for women for the position of chairperson on these local bodies. When compared with the cabinets, the representation of women at local level is better. To increase the number of women in local politics, the 73rd and 74th Amendments reserved one third of all seats for women in local government in urban areas in 1992. This legislative change was accepted as a very important progress in ensuring women's equal access and it really increased the participation of women in local politics. Today, there are about 1 million women representatives in panchayats and municipal bodies in India. To ensure the democracy in the country, these attempts were essential (ESCAP, 2021).

While these reforms have been introduced at local level there is a very active campaign which is currently available for women to have quotas at other levels of Indian politics as well. The quota system, however, is only a step in ensuring that a certain number of women are involved in local government. Furthermore, most local governments run training programs to develop women's management skills. Moreover, Urban Development Programs organize training programs on municipal administration, urban development and capacity building for women (ESCAP, 2021).

4.5 Crimes against women

The rights of women are preserved in the Constitution of India. The State has enacted various laws and taken measures intended to ensure equal rights, prevent social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities (National Crimes Records Bureau, 2021). Although women may be victims of any of the common crimes such as 'murder' or 'robbery', only the crimes which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crimes against Women'. A lot of new legislations have been brought and amendments have been made in existing laws with the aim of coping with these crimes effectively. Although there are many important amendments that have been actualized, unfortunately, women are exposed to some serious crimes in India.

According to the table 1, Indian women are exposed to many different crimes in the year 2020. The total number of these crimes is 23722 and this number is too high for a year only. One of the most common crimes which Indian women is exposed is that domestic violence and harassment.

Table 1: Crimes against Women in India (National Commission for Women, 2021)

No	Nature	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	Acid Attack	1	2	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	3	1	11
2	Bigamy / Polygamy	10	7	6	6	18	14	23	8	10	11	10	18	141
3	Cyber Crimes	32	21	37	55	73	103	110	68	59	48	42	56	704

4	Denial of Maternity Benefits to women	9	10	13	2	6	13	5	9	9	6	8	6	96
5	Dowry death	32	17	18	9	27	27	49	32	29	26	37	27	330
6	Free legal aid for women	5	7	4	0	6	4	5	3	6	5	4	7	56
7	Gender Discrimination	1	0	0	1	1	0	5	0	1	0	2	0	11
8	Harassment of married women	267	221	203	62	159	273	493	352	372	429	509	448	3788
9	Indecent Representation of Women	2	1	1	1	8	3	1	3	4	2	3	0	29
10	Molestation	112	103	103	29	140	203	330	173	131	112	124	119	1679
11	Police Apathy against women	81	89	83	24	85	118	146	118	131	136	133	132	1276
12	Protection of Women against Domestic Violence	271	302	298	315	393	461	660	539	492	495	485	586	5297
13	Rape	142	112	90	12	54	82	149	108	88	111	151	137	1236
14	Honour Crimes	41	28	34	6	26	45	60	24	30	52	48	66	460
15	Right to live with dignity	374	436	388	239	474	611	778	613	889	873	1210	830	7715
16	Sex selective abortion	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	2	8
17	Sexual Assault	12	10	19	4	1	8	14	9	5	4	11	13	110
18	Sexual Harassment	22	20	19	11	8	42	50	32	29	33	56	54	376
19	Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace	21	18	19	8	5	13	16	27	19	14	23	18	201
20	Voyeurism	18	16	9	15	12	19	13	7	11	9	10	5	144
21	Traditional crimes against women rights i.e., sati pratha	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	4
22	Trafficking	6	4	3	1	2	1	4	2	2	4	8	3	40
23	Women's right of custody of children in the event of divorce	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	10
24	Total	1462	1424	1347	800	1500	2043	2914	2128	2318	2373	2884	2529	23722

Violence against women can be domestic as well as public, physical, emotional or mental. Women are afraid of violence in their mind which causes the lack of participation in various areas of life. When women don't feel safe where they live, it is not easy to participate social life.

Rape is another common crime that women are subjected to in India. According to the report published by the government, thirty four thousand women were raped in 2021. While India is one of the countries where it is most difficult to be a woman, the annual crime report of the Ministry of Family has revealed this fact in numbers. According to the report, rape cases detected in 2021 changed very little compared to the previous year. An indictment was prepared for 85 percent of these reports and a lawsuit was filed. However, only 27 percent of the cases opened were convicted and the perpetrators were punished (Euronews, 2021).

On the other hand, the penalty for rape in India is the death penalty. It was recorded as the first decision taken within the scope of the new law, which paves the way for the death penalty of child rapists in India and aims to speed up the judicial process in these cases. In India, the law passed in April provides for the death penalty for rape cases where the victims are eight years old or younger (Deutsche Welle, 2021). To protect themselves from the violence and other crimes, they should also be aware of their legal rights. They should be aware of the services which the state provides for women like counseling, free legal aid and financial help. Most all-important the authorities must take serious

precautions and the police officers need to be trained to develop sensitivity so that they can deal with the victim with sympathy and care.

CONCLUSION

The classical feminist theory, which links women's problems only to gender inequality, has not been established in third world countries. The cultural differences of women in third world countries and the different dimensions of the problems they experience have made it difficult for Western feminism to understand them. In this context, postcolonial feminism, which was born as a reaction to Western feminism, brought feminism to different dimensions by expressing the problems experienced by third world women. In short, postcolonial feminism, opposes racism and the other forms of oppression such as patriarchy and gender inequalities. The problems of women cannot be degraded into the gender inequalities which Western feminists have mentioned for years. The problems of women differ in various societies.

In this context, India is important as the birthplace of postcolonial theory. The position of women in India today is quite different from that of the West. The experiences of women in India, where rape and violence against women are quite common, cannot be exactly the same as those of Western women who can make decisions independently of men in the West and live-in better conditions in every sense. Despite all, it is quite meaningful for women's organizations in India to struggle for equality and justice. Despite all the pressures in the society, women struggle with patriarchy and inequalities and seek solutions, both in the operational and intellectual dimensions. When women, regardless of religion, race or identity, come together, it will be easier for them to gain empowerment and fight against patriarchy. India, as a birthplace of postcolonial feminism, maintains its importance in the postcolonial world and their women.

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