Feminist Movements in South Asia

Our understanding of social, economic, cultural, ecological and political conflicts on the one hand and the possibility of change and transformation on the other hand are impacted by our vantage point. The nation-state more often than not has been a favored vantage point to understand feminist movements. What would feminist movements look like if these boundaries were to be disregarded? Is there a possibility of doing so? These along with many related questions would be discussed in this course.

This course would firmly advocate that a perspective that moves beyond the boundaries of the cartographic certainties imposed by the nation-state would yield a different and probably a more textured understanding of our times. This course would argue that such boundaries are more likely to be accompanied by power, surveillance, control, regulation and violence. How does the idea of the nation-state impact feminist politics, and how does feminist politics destabilize and sidestep the idea of the nation-state, while being mindful of the differences that abound?

South Asia is an interesting ground for the study of feminist movements because of its complexities, similarities and differences. Studying this region from a gendered perspective would yield very fascinating insights. It is a region that has on the one hand produced important women politicians and heads of states, while also being witness to some very brutal and harsh attacks on women based on caste, ethnicity, language and religion. The course seeks to demonstrate patterns of feminist struggles and triumphs both at the local as well as the national and regional levels and in doing so it seeks to study the patterns of feminist politics and mobilization in this region.

Unpacking the idea of South Asia

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• Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin. Abducted Women, the State and Questions of Honor: Three Perspectives on the Recovery Operations in Post-Partition India. Pp 119-133. PMSA
• Naila Kabeer. The Quest for National Identity: women, Islam and the State in Bangladesh. Pp 139-153. PMSA

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• Mariz Tadros. From Secular Reductionism to Religious Essentialism: Implications for the Gender Agenda. The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements. Edited by Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt. 2015
• Shail Mayaram. Being Hindu and Muslim in South Asia. PMSA. Pp 16-22.
• Farida Shaheed. Women’s Experiences of Identity, Religion and Activism in Pakistan from Resisting the Sacred and the Secular by Patricia Jeffrey and Amrita Basu Eds, Kali for Women, New Delhi. 2001


• Samten Ngedon Gatsel Ling. Voices of Freedom in Bhutan: Reclaiming Lost Feminity in Vajrayana Buddhism, sisteracorsstraditions (Blog)

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• Seira Tamang, The Politics of ‘Developing Nepali Women’. PMSA
• Sandya Hewamanne, City of Whores, PMSA
• Sundari Anitha. Striking Women- The Life Stories of two South Asian Women in the UK. University of Lincoln.

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Southasian Feminisms- Challenges and Possibilities

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• Rubina Saigol. Feminism and the Women’s Movement in Pakistan. Published by FES.
• Shobha Gautam, Amrita Banskota and Rita Manchanda. Where There Are No Men: Women in the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal. MPSA.
• WISCOMP- Introductory Note on Bhutan for the workshop ‘Engendering Research: Perspectives and Possibilities.
• Aung San Suu Kyi speaks to feminists – video on the occasion of Suu Kyi being awarded Global Women’s Rights Awards. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PqI4zDcOJk

Militarism, Conflict, Peacebuilding and Gender in South Asia

• Seema Kazi. South Asia’s gendered ‘war on peace’. The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements. Edited by Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt. 2015


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