



## **Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World**

*Kumari Jayawardena*

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# Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World

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## **Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World** Kumari Jayawardena

For twenty-five years, Kumari Jayawardena's text has been an essential primer on the history of women's movements in Asia and the middle East—from Egypt, Turkey and Iran, to India, Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, Korea and the Philip-pines—in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jayawardena presents a feminism that didn't originate as an ideology of the West to be adopted by women in the Third World, but that instead erupted from the specific needs and struggles of women fighting against colonial power, for education or the vote, for safety, and against poverty and inequality. This readable and well-researched survey highlights the role of women in the national liberation and revolutionary movements of these countries.

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

## **Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World Details**

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Author : Kumari Jayawardena

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## **From Reader Review Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World for online ebook**

### **Sarah says**

Wow. I never knew much about feminism, let alone feminism in Asia, so this book was definitely well worth the read. Jayawardena is from India and received an education in London, and from her research and time teaching, it is evident that she knows her stuff. Jayawardena writes clearly and explains the history of each of the 11 or so countries mentioned in her book. While it does get a bit repetitive by the end of the book when you've read the histories of so many countries and they all have a similar story, that is actually one of the main points you can gather from her book. Quite simply, feminism and nationalism were closely tied and helped bring countries to where they are today. While each country had their own histories, the overall path they took to get to today is roughly the same.

If you don't know much about Asia, feminism, or nationalism, pick up this book and get reading. Even though it is an older book, you'll learn a lot and will think about the history of your own country. Stop accepting the patriarchy and educate yourself on women's struggles!

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### **Fatemah says**

This book provides a brief historical account on feminist and nationalism struggles in the Third World including in countries such as China, Egypt, Iran and Korea. While I realize that the purpose the book is simply to introduce the reader to those struggles, I did expect a bit more out of the book. That said, it is well worth a read for those who are just beginning to look at feminist struggles in the Third World.

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### **Anil says**

In the process of reading it. A fascinating reconstruction of feminist struggles through out much of Asia in the late 19th and 20th centuries, debunking the theory that feminism was an idea that came from the West.

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### **Sander Philipse says**

Solid reference book for late nineteenth/early twentieth century women's movements within the context of anti-colonial struggles in twelve different countries. Jayawardena collates a lot of information, but provides little in terms of analytical depth, and her sourcing is often very limited. Mostly useful as an introductory text or a reference book.

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### **Erik Wirfs-Brock says**

Country by country case studies of national movements, women involved in national movements, women

involved in feminist movements, women involved with socialist movements, and how they intersected. Pretty dry, almost like a an extended wikipedia binge rather than a book with a strong thesis or great writing.

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### **Madeline says**

This is a really great book with case studies about the development of (wait for it) nationalism and feminism in several countries. Jayawardena writes very clearly, and the book is able to combine several themes with a careful examination of the specific case of each country. I liked that she stressed the interconnectedness of these movements, whether because of their relationship to other philosophies or to other countries and events.

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### **Zanna says**

Kumari Jayawardena has done a very impressive job of sketching outlines and pointing out protagonists in feminist and nationalist struggle (up to around WWII) in countries exploited by "western" imperialism. These lines can be taken up individually for more extensive study elsewhere, while as a whole they form a very diverse picture with very different circumstances, cultures and activists in each of the countries discussed.

The orientation here is radical. A successful movement is one that revolutionises society and family life, moving towards liberation, equity and justice for all. From this perspective, every country's feminist and nationalist struggle was limited. The connection between imperialism and oppression of women, or at least the involvement of women in the struggle against imperialism, meant that the nationalist struggle everywhere had feminist potential and/or the feminist struggle had decolonising potential, but in practice the two strands often remained quite separate. For example, from the section on India, my overall impression, which may well be erroneous, was that changes in the social position of women during this period (seemingly mainly brought about by male political reformers), though beneficial, were reformist, making women's lives more bearable without disturbing the patriarchal structure. Meanwhile, women seemed to be involved on a large scale, and respected and welcomed by men, in the fight for independence.

The section on Vietnam, where it seemed that imported sexist attitudes failed to take root and liberation struggle was, so I thought, by and for the mass of the people, was for me the most heartening. The most surprising was that on Japan, where Jayawardena argues convincingly that access to education and work beginning during the Meiji era actually worsened women's position since they were newly taught that women were inferior, and put to work in appalling exploitative conditions that did not increase their social or economic power. The section that most invited me to further exploration (though they all did) was the one on Sri Lanka, where complex histories were hinted at.

One useful companion to this book might be Vron Ware's *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History*, which examines, in far less breadth but more depth than Jayawardena's study, some themes and stories on feminism and imperialism focussing explicitly on whiteness and white women. "Western" influence was somehow important to women's issues in all the countries discussed, at a minimum because of imperialist exploitation and interference, but also in other respects. In some cases this was more overt because (male) state leaders had decided to imitate "Western" dress or customs relating to family life, or because a "Western" capitalist economic model was being imposed or arising, creating pressure for women

to enter the workforce. There were also more minor aspects, for example immigrants from the "West" were involved in early or important feminist and/or nationalist movements, or events from "Western" literature or activism served as inspiration for thinkers and activists. Another related read is Pankaj Mishra's *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia*, which discusses how nationalism and other ideas from the "West" were taken up, debated, transformed, and put to work by Asian thinkers and movements.

Satisfyingly, while "Western" oppression and influences form interesting and often important currents in these stories, the perspective is always national, native, never suggesting a "Western" "us" and an oppressed "them". Interactions between native cultural strands, outside influences (often from one colonially oppressed country to another) and the interests and circumstances of individuals and groups create the ferment that produces feminist and anti-imperialist work and movements. Both the specificity and the interconnectedness of oppressions are understood here as a matter of course. This book outlines genealogies for such struggles and inspires their continuation and renewal.

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### **Kaushik Thanugonda says**

I have so many feelings about this book. On one hand, it made me appreciate so much about how feminist struggles and the rise of women's emancipation movements were linked to anti-imperialism, and how "western" concepts found a fresh breath of air in colonial countries. Besides, it provides SO much information about historical figures who are otherwise ignored in modern "his"tory. Especially valuable is the elaboration of capitalism, imperialism and how they shaped women's responses to patriarchy.

While that stands, the book could have been so much more. It falls victim to the great women narrative - telling the struggle through the eyes of a few personalities while ignoring the background that put them at the forefront of struggle. There are constraints of information the author admits, but then again. A lot of history is outright missing - most of the essays stop at around 1945 (WWII), ignoring the sheer proliferation of women's movements in the post-war independent colonies and powers.

But I would recommend any readers to take the book at its own pace and read it to understand and question their preexisting notions of women's liberation in the third world. However, do be warned that it is a dry read in places, and that it is strictly limited in its perspective due to constraints of space and information, among others.

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### **Eurethius Pélittièr says**

This book is an excellent piece of research.

There seems to be however some holes in history which is covered in the conclusion and the lack of depth is understandable from the quantity discussed

However that means some understanding of material realities and their understanding is lost on the reader - this is particularly potent when trying to understand the conditions of lower classes

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### **Dalal says**

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### **Grace says**

interesting book but im puzzled by her failure to discuss women's liberation and socialism in china, vietnam, and korea at length, especially china where she stops her history in like the 30s.

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