

Write a Comprehensive note on autonomy versus integration debate in gender studies?

Introduction:-

While deciding how to deal with women's problems and the question of subordinate position of women in society, two streams of thought emerged; autonomy and integration. The thought has conflicting ideas about how to study and deal with women's issues.

Historical Background of Autonomy versus integration Debate/ prevalence of Androcentric ideals:-

It's a debate was born out of alarm on the part of some women's studies scholars about the increase of curriculum integration projects for their subject. In 1982 discussion surfaced at the annual National women's suffrage association (NWSA)

and in the women studies Quarterly about strategies about women's studies in higher education.

The question raised that should Gender studies or women studies, be offered and studied as a separate field or should it be merged in other subject??

For example in political science a chapter about contribution and behaviour of women in politics.

The debate concerned whether or not the limited time and funding available to feminist academics should be devoted to revision of the mainstream curriculum or the development of autonomous women's studies programmes.

Autonomy Point of view:

It means creating separate women studies programme, with autonomous enterprise and separate location for women studies.

Those who supported autonomy believed that feminists should work in isolation and try to focus on problems of women particularly instead of focusing on their issues as part of a "bigger picture." They believed integration within the academic field (and within the society as well) would lead to feminists being steered away from their main goals.

Integration point of view:

They believe that integration would help reach the people who can influence the society and change things for women. They also believed that change is a slow process and it requires actors working within the system to change it. They would not be just theorizing about change like the autonomists, they would be attempting to actually do so. They were afraid

of "ghettoizing" women studies as trying to transform the academia would lead to a bigger and wider change.

Autonomy's Critique of Integration:

The Autonomy perspective believes that if the integration's method is implemented then the discussion would move away from women and their subordinate position in society.

Integration's Critique of Autonomy:

The Integrationists believe that the Autonomy perspective is too radical and narrow in scope. A wider understanding of gender stereotypes is required to elevate women's position in society.

Conclusion

Eventually, the debate is about different views on how feminist change could take place more effectively. But, once feminist diversity was acknowledged in terms of dissimilarities between women of different ethnicity and sexual orientation, the discussion became also about the ways in which white, black, lesbian, third world etc. feminisms should be integrated into each other.