Bluhm, K . Pikhan ,G. Stypinkska, J., & Wierzcholska, A. (2021) ***Gender and Power in Eastern Europe : Changing Concepts of Femininity and Masculinity in Power Relations*****. Springer, 269pp. Rs. 11,196.**

Gender has become a astonishingly interesting topic in the last few years which has drawn strong lines in political and social scenarios of states and different regions. Gender relationships and female empowerment have changed power dynamics in Eastern Europe since the fall of communism and the growth of new conservatism. This book examines the evolution and path of gender roles in Central and Eastern Europe, including Russia. Western feminism in the 1990s has led to a conservative turn, with an emphasis on power systems/configurations and gender. The book is split into four parts: the first part "*Feminism in Eastern Europe Revisited*" The author examines the history and current waves in feminist movements in East Europe, while the second part *"New Conflicts and Empowerment Strategies*" identifies the dynamics and conflicts that developed in post-socialist countries after neoconservative parties gained power. In turn, the third part "*Work, Money, and Power"* explains new empowerment policies and changes in gender relationships. The final part *'Changing Concepts of Masculinity and Fatherhood*" provides insight into the identities, roles, and concepts of masculinity that are made within the socio cultural and political arena of Eastern Europe.

The authors have used a qualitative approach that involves semi-structured interviews, nonparticipant observation, document analysis, media reports and secondary data analysis. In the first two parts interviews and personal experiences have been taken as a major source of information. There has been a detailed analysis of the topics discussed with data and sources.

In the initial chapter the authors (Kristen R Ghodsee, Agnieszka Graff, Andrea Peto, Olga Sasunkevich) discuss about how populist leaders have started refuting western notions of feminism and gender equality and have asked women to move back to homes and focus on falling levels of birth rates throughout the region. Women would be preferred in administration if they have at least three children. This started in late 1880s when the western women started movement for the suffrage rights in USA and Britain and there was another movement in Russia

and east Europe where they believed that working men and women should struggle together for political, social and economic rights. After the end of cold war the falling down of socialist state, men went back to the traditional roles of patriarch and women to the roles of care givers. Women voluntarily left jobs thinking that the bright democratic future would help their families survive with the income of only one which would be patriarchs. But lowering women's paid work is fundamental to making post-communist societies a part of capitalist framework and economic quasi-privatization. As the economy failed work for everyone diminished. Women's NGOs and western fund giving agencies found place in this society to support women's right. There has been a constant tussle between the western model of feminism and the socialist feminism where women did not individually fight for their rights but got rights as a public entity through the state such as maternity leaves and equal pay. With time this tussle has grown and nationalist leaders have asserted that "feminism" and "gender" are part of a "Western plot" because liberal feminists demand reproductive freedoms for women, which will depopulate and weaken East European nations. So, an anti-feminist sentiment has emerged from an anti-capitalist emotion in Eastern Europe.

The authors have argued that feminism and capitalism needs to divorce for it to work in that region. Since a transitioning economy from welfare to liberal market economy completely left its welfare policies, the whole part of care taking came upon the shoulders of women at home and it increased unidentified labour. Women's movement also went downhill with the banning of gender studies and assault on academic freedom in Hungary.

Olga Sasunkevich suggests in the book that the post socialist phase needs a rethinking of feminism for it to accept by people. A grassroots ground-level feminist activism is stirring in the country. The new scenario of feminism in Russia, which is related to other post-socialist countries as well as beyond, allows the feminist agenda to be reframed in terms that make sense and sound desirable to women from a wide variety of social groups and seems more acceptable. The liberating project of feminism should encompass struggle and striving for the freedom of identities, ideas and bodies.But, This freedom just should

not be taken individually and as a personal choice but should be seen as a struggle for recognition of issues and redistribution in society.

In part two the authors (Rebecca Barth, Ioulia Shukan, Elena korowin, Jennifer Ramme and Claudia Snochowska-Gonzales) tell the readers that many women were drafted into the Ukrainian Army and unofficial volunteer battalions during the 2014 War in eastern Ukraine. So empowerment is a multifaceted concept and process that relates to individual and collective consciousness both and view and behaviours. Women went out of traditional roles in the open men dominated areas thus empowerment was not an individual asset but a collective action and breaking of stereotypes.

In the third part the authors (Julia Kubisa, Gergana Nenovs, Alya guseva and Dilyara Ibragimova) are trying to examine polish trade unions active in care sector and focussing on different ways of organising women in the care giving profession. There are various ways of understanding care work and calculating its worth and social worth known as the politicization of caring. Increasing participation of women in polish trade unions is the politicization of care. Three C's are managed by women which are cleaning, cooking and child care. Care work in a public sphere is a standardised service which is subject to regulation by specific institutions. Care is seen as emotionally charged vocation in the public sector as well. It is also seen as an unskilled work because it's related to emotional work in private sphere. Care while transitioning from private to public sphere becomes underestimated in terms of wages and working conditions. There is also exploitation in this sphere in spite of the fact that care is a needed industry now. Productive labour of public sphere is totally dependent on reproductive labour of household.

The authors have given examples to state that women workforce is more in polish care sector because it is considered their innate quality. According to the "National Chamber of Nurse in Midwife" 2,88,774 women and 6,707 men were working as certified nurses in 2018. They were paid such less wages that they had to seek involvement forms of income. Although Nurseries were introduced on a very large scale in 1950s but even after this the quality of care and working space situations has worsened. So trade unions were established to put forward their demands. All the trade unions were dominated by men

except for trade unions operating in health care and social assistance where participation of women was higher.

This book mentions Bulgaria's interesting case at the same time when dual-earner models co-occur with highly gendered divisions of unpaid work. The main motive is to understand pain and unpaid work in Bulgaria. Retraditionalism term was coined after the collapse of socialism in Bulgaria. This means returning back to traditional values. Although economic necessity made it impossible but there was visible decline in women's position in society. Author claims that Statistics do not agree with the fact that there was steep decline in employment for women after the fall of socialism but then it went upward. Bulgarian women have always worked even before the advent of socialism. Bulgaria has most maternal leaves etc. This part examines the gender divisions of paid and unpaid work in post socialist Bulgaria. It finds that all the contradictory theories and complexities they cite show that the retraditionalization thesis does not correctly represent the lives of men and women in Bulgaria after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Russia becomes an interesting playground for research of intra-household power because of its communist history where the women were given all the resources to stand at par with men and the post-communist capitalist era where the gap between genders widened. Various types of powers are explained in this overt, covert and latent power. The post-communist era has disrupted the course of male being the primary earner in the two - earner household. The huge gap between the male and female earning capacity has made the female wages nonessential to household needs which they use on their own needs and is called "separate purses". Over the course of their marriages, most couples have changed from an egalitarian to a hierarchal relationship of power.

In the fourth part of the book the authors (Boris Knorre, Peter Hallama, Sylka Scholz, Elena Rozhdestvenskaya) talk about Russian orthodoxy and fatherhood. Sociologists who work on Russian orthodoxy have this firm belief that Maximum number of church goers is of women. Due to this various kinds of development have taken place like 'dear mother matronushka' which is a cult started by a single woman. Russian sociologist Tarusin argued that men take part in worship service more in

2006 in the late soviet period which exhibit levelling of gender disproportion in the church attendance. In the consumer era which would be post-soviet Russian orthodoxy a new masculinity has emerged which is determined, prepared and nurtured by the globalization and democratic changes in the world. Masculinity has become liberal democratic type (focussing on own identities, career and economy) from primordial type of masculinity (which focussed on violence and dominance). New masculinity values education, intellectuality, consistency and indulgence towards others. It is also marked with financial and material benefits and career success. All these things coming together form the consumerist attitude. According to the ROC (Russian Orthodox Church) an ascetic lifestyle is much better and is a virtue compared to this new consumerist lifestyle. This is how masculinity has changed in Eastern Europe over time.

The book very illuminates us on how the elite class and state of Russia is promoting religion and asserting it to be as a luring idea and this can be called as 'consumerization of church'. This elite class is organising activities like global imperial project which glamorises Militarisation, violence and physical force. This phenomenon is called "orthodox theology of war" which reinforces old beliefs of masculinity and legitimising them. Due to this old patriarchal society is re-emerging in current time where manlihood is connected to military and eulogising violence.

The authors try to examine power structures in many countries including Poland. Hungary, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Russia but it only creates a complicated theorization and not a clear picture. There seems to be no coherence of phenomenon's in all the countries. It would rather confuse readers and their understanding of facts about Eastern Europe as a whole. In the second part the politics of care becomes repetitive and monotonous but there is less or no link in between the four parts. They discuss all different aspects of gender and power. There is no holistic idea driven by the book. The compilation of chapters does not lead to any single thought which do not give us any euphoric knowledge. It talks more about factual things and how policies and politics have affected gender and power over a time in Eastern Europe. This could be a new revelation but they do not add to the feminist

theory/ thought of an area. This books writing style is easy to understand and gives a enjoyable and knowledgeable read to even a reader who does entail any previous idea about gender issues in eastern Europe. There are positive and progressive aspects too like integrating homosexuality and discussing other aspects of gender. The book nevertheless helps in understanding gender and powers complex perspective in Eastern Europe and gives deeper insights on certain topics like care and how religion is shaping the new idea of masculinity.

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