



Book Review

Seeing Like a Feminist by Nivedita Menon

*Prof. Dinesh Baishya**

The Book

Book Title: ***Seeing Like a Feminist***
Author: ***Nivedita Menon***
Publisher: Zubaan & Penguin India
ISBN: 9780143067429
Year: 2012
Length: 120 Pages

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The Review

Nivedita Menon writes in her book, "Seeing Like a Feminist", about the love of a family. What is a family?

A group of people who love and support one another over good times and bad? But just any group of people who do this are not recognized as a 'family'-for example, a group of friends, a homosexual couples with adopted children, unmarried mothers, women living with their siblings, and so on. 'Family' is an institution with a legal identity, and the State recognizes it as a family, only a specific set of people related in a specific way. It is not only the law that defines 'family'-extra-legally too; you are forced into being part of a family which is strictly defined in this narrow way. Many housing societies, for instance, have an informal understanding that they will allow only married heterosexual couples as tenants. A 'family' can only be a patriarchal, heterosexual family: a man, his wife, 'his' children.

Nivedita Menon teaches Political Thought at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Her previous books include *Recovering Subversion: Feminist Politics Beyond the Law* (2004); an edited volume, *Sexualities* (2007); and *Power and Contestation*. An active commentator on

the blog kafila.org, she has also translated fiction and non-fiction from Hindi and Malayalam into English. She has been active with citizens' forums in Delhi on secularism, workers' and women's rights, sexuality, and in opposition to the nuclear bomb.

Nivedita Menon combines a highly complex conceptualization of feminist theories and practices with a wonderfully engaging and perfectly lucid style of writing. She frames the debates within a rich understanding of larger socio-political processes, and reveals the interfaces between the two. For Nivedita Menon, feminism is not about a moment of final triumph over patriarchy but about the gradual transformation of the social field so decisively that old markers shift forever.

From sexual harassment charges against international figures to the challenge that caste politics poses to feminism, from the ban on the veil in France to the attempt to impose skirts on international women badminton players, from queer politics to domestic servants' unions to the Pink Chaddi campaign, Menon deftly illustrates how feminism complicates the field irrevocably.

Nivedita Menon through this book eloquently writes about the rising trend of feministic perspective with a noble objective to challenge the institution, social norms and ideologies but with the vivid portrayal of intricate concept of feminism. This book, hence, offers the readers an informative and thought-provoking reading experience.