



How Feminism Fractured the Family

PART 1

Feminism: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

Fifty years ago, the American feminist Betty Friedan, credited as one of the founders of modern-day Feminism, claimed in her well-known book, *"The Feminine Mystique"*, that if American housewives embarked on lifelong careers, they would be happier and healthier, have better marriages, and their children would thrive. The underlying message, echoed by the voices of many feminists over the years, was that it was employment rather than motherhood that could offer women true self-fulfilment, value and success in life. However, such predictions could not have been further from the truth.

Over the past few decades, it has become ever more evident that the concepts of 'Feminism', in particular '*Gender Equality*' which seeks to equalise the rights, roles and responsibilities of men and women in family life and society, have served as one of the most destructive forces upon marriage, motherhood and the family unit. Its propagation was misleadingly intertwined with the call for women's political, economic, educational and judicial rights within states which women were wrongly deprived of. Consequently, those who opposed this re-definition of gender roles within family life were falsely presented as backwards, outdated and supporting injustice and oppression towards women. Gender Equality and other feminist ideas were also spread under the guise of sugar-coated terms such as 'women's empowerment', 'women's rights' and 'gender justice' to entice women and the general public to support their call. However, this was a deception, because this dangerous experiment in social engineering resulted in disastrous consequences and untold misery for women, their children, and the family structure in general as well as society overall.

This is because, this socially corrosive philosophy of feminism pushed women to selfishly define their own entitlements and duties according to individualistic desires rather than what was best for women, men, children and society alike. Its women-centred approach to organising family life and its myopic gender-based outlook to solving problems in society caused confusion and discord in marital life and parental responsibilities, caused the rights and wellbeing of children to be neglected, devalued motherhood and disempowered women to fulfil their vital role as homemakers and mothers. It also eroded men's responsibility over their families, and burdened women with the duties of men in family life including being wage-earners placing untold stress upon them. All this created a situation which was far from the golden fields of happier lives, better marriages and liberation from oppression for women that Betty Friedan and many other feminists like her promised would accompany the enshrining of gender equality in the family unit. Dale O'Leary, a US journalist and lecturer, and one of the opponents of the feminist philosophy, wrote in her book, '*The Gender Agenda: Re-defining Equality*', "*Feminists claimed to promote the progress of women, but the*

feminists appeared to me to have a very warped idea of what it meant to be a woman, and an even weirder idea of what constitutes progress.”

Many feminists came to view motherhood and the traditional family unit comprised of the man as the head of the family and breadwinner, and the woman as the home-maker and primary care taker of the children as a transgression against gender equality and major source of women's oppression. Hence, they sought to dismantle this traditional family structure such that childcare, domestic chores and wage-earning were equally shared between the husband and wife. It reached the extent that some feminists advocated a totally genderless family. The 20th century liberal feminist and author, Susan Moller Okin for example, commented, *“A just future would be one without gender.”* Indeed, today in some Western states, ideas or images that present the traditional roles of men and women in family life are prohibited in adverts or educational material.

The harmful and seriously flawed feminist ideas and philosophy not only spread across the Western nations, sowing havoc on family life and the social fabric of their societies, but also affected the rest of the world, including the Muslim lands as a result of colonial policies and projects as well as rule by secular systems and governments who ruled the Muslim world after the destruction of the Khilafah in 1924. These secular systems and leaderships imposed and promoted the Western viewpoint and ideals, including that of feminism, upon their people through their constitutions, laws, media, education systems and initiatives, as seen for example in Tunisia's Personal Status Code as well as its new constitution that establishes full gender equality between men and women in society. They also permitted feminist-based women's movements to operate freely and flourish within their societies, spreading their corrupt ideas to the Muslim Ummah, including changing the face of the 'Muslim Family.'

Alongside this, these secular regimes embraced international treaties and conventions which forcefully propagated gender equality in the laws and policies of nations. For example, the Beijing Platform for Action, part of an influential declaration of a global commitment to gender equality, adopted at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, which was accepted by many governments of the Muslim world. This Platform, that formed the basis of many subsequent international conventions and many national acts regarding women's rights, had a clear aim of reforming the structure of the family unit along gender equality lines. For example, Beijing Platform 245(a) stated, *“Promote the equal sharing of family responsibilities through media campaigns that emphasize gender equality and non-stereotyped gender roles of women and men within the family.”* Paragraph 181(d) specifically called on governments to, *“change attitudes that reinforce the division of labour based on gender in order to promote the concept of shared family responsibility for work in the home, particularly in relation to children and elder care.”* And Beijing Platform 276(d) stated, *“Take steps so that tradition and religion and their expressions are not a basis for discrimination against girls”* – keeping in mind that according to gender equality, 'discrimination' is any belief or practice which is at odds with equalizing of the roles and rights of men and women, including in family life.

As a consequence of all this, many within the Muslim Ummah adopted gender equality and other ideas of feminism, believing that it would lead to respect and progress for women as well as elevation of the Muslim lands – politically, economically and socially. However, they failed to understand that the concepts of feminism, including gender equality, that advocate the idea that women should define their own rights and roles in life, fundamentally contradicts the Islamic belief. This is because in Islam, men and women do not define their rights, roles and duties based upon equality or their own desires but upon the laws of Allah (swt) alone. Furthermore, the Muslim woman does not evaluate her success by measuring herself against the man and his rights and responsibilities but based upon how her Creator (swt) views her and according to her fulfillment of the duties. He (swt) has prescribed for her. Allah (swt) says, ﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَىٰ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُّبِينًا﴾ ***“It is not (fitting) for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed in a plain error.”*** [Al-Ahzab: 36]

Those Muslims who embraced the ideas of feminism also failed to realise that these concepts were born from the historical experiences of injustice, oppression and absence of basic political, economic, educational, and legal rights that women within Western states experienced due to living under the flawed man-made secular system – a history and experience that Islam does NOT share. They also failed to recognize that feminism’s disdain of marriage, motherhood and the traditional roles of men and women within family life arose due to an erroneous view of feminists regarding what these roles represented for the woman and what would free her from oppression and elevate her status in society. And finally, they failed to truly understand the scale of devastation that gender equality and other feminist ideals cause for the family structure, for women, children and for society overall.

Part 2 and 3 of this article will explain how the feminist attack on marriage, motherhood and the traditional family unit arose.

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