

“Feminist Perspectives on Science and Science Policy”
On
International Day of Women and Girls in Science

**A panel discussion organised jointly with UNESCO New Delhi and Centre for Policy
Research, Indian Institute of Sciences, Bengaluru (India)**
February 11, 2022; 18.00 – 19.30 hrs. (IST)

Concept Note

The need to harness science, technology and innovation (STI) for societal good is a priority for policy makers, research scholars and practitioners, across the globe. Amidst discussion on globalisation of innovation and technology-led economic growth, it has also been realised that science and gender equality are both vital for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite various institutional and cultural shifts for bringing more women in STEM education and related careers, we are witnessing gender gap across all levels of STEM education, in science-related careers as well as at leadership positions. The COVID-19 Pandemic has further exacerbated gender gap and discrimination, in the development, administration and communication of COVID-19 solutions.

While it is indispensable to leverage the untapped potential of trained and educated women in STEM and STI, the ‘right to do science’ for marginalised groups (here, women) holds equal relevance. In order to unravel inequities and biases and renovate the practice of science, concepts like ‘Feminist Philosophy of Science’ and ‘Feminist Technosciences’, are of great value. Unfortunately, these ideas are not given much attention in science policy, as most of the feminist science philosophers have been ignored by the technocrats and scientific community, at large¹. Nonetheless, one cannot undervalue the contribution of feminist perspectives to science and science policy, particularly related to climate change, agriculture, healthcare as well as emerging technologies like biotechnology and artificial intelligence. A feminist approach² to science is important to understand intrinsically gender-blinded or gender-biased scientific practices like development of gendered technologies and innovations, selection of only male bodies or participants for biological understanding of health and illness or preference towards males for biomedical research.

Feminist perspectives on science are interlinked with the socio-cultural, temporal and spatial contexts. Scholars in different geographies have highlighted relevance of such viewpoints in understanding facets of diversity, equity and inclusion in science. It is needless to say that some of the best practices have been cited in their works. However, with rapid technological changes and growing socio-economic transformations, feminist science scholars, policy makers as well as practitioners are grappling with an array of challenges and opportunities. There is a growing need to include new vistas of ideas including intersectionality and multitude of gender. With recurring changes in science, policy and society, feminist perspectives are to evolve as well,

¹ Although a few scientists like Ruth Bleier (1984); Ruth Hubbard (1990) and Sue V Rosser (1990), have been involved in using feminist theories in the past to develop critiques of science, the available literature majorly comes from historians and philosophers. The ideological differences between the philosophical underpinnings of the feminist approach and the sciences create a research gap in itself in the literature, which can only be solved using interdisciplinary tools and a sensitive disposition.

² This lens becomes a transformative perspective that shapes the kind of questions asked, informs how data is collated and studied, and finally extends to what the future course of action will be. Research topics may include policy issues related to realizing social justice for women in specific contexts or knowledge about oppressive situations for women (Olesen, 2000).

and be adaptive to different frames of references, appropriate to multiplicity of feminist discourses.

On the occasion of *International Day of Women and Girls in Science*, on 11th February, The Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore in partnership with UNESCO New Delhi is organising a panel discussion on '***Feminist Perspectives on Science and Science Policy***' to reinvigorate the significance of feminist science, in theory and practice. It aims to bring diverse perspectives and different voices for deliberating on feminist approach to science and science policy, in order to understand and examine scientific pursuits and practices. Furthermore, the discussion will aim to:

- Highlight the relevance of Feminist Philosophy of Science and/or Feminist Technoscience perspectives in understanding linkages between STI and society.
- Examine how Feminist Perspectives can provide an alternative or counter narrative to the dominant thinking and accounts in Gender and STI.
- Explore the need for a dialogue among stakeholders espousing Feminist perspectives in STI.
- Suggest the way forward for a constructive engagement with Philosophies of Feminist science and science policy, particularly in the Indian context.

The discussion will be a learning opportunity for students, early career researchers and policy practitioners, involved in research and processes related to gender equity and inclusion in STI. The discussion will be recorded and posted on the YouTube Channel of CPR, IISc, for wider dissemination.