

## FEMINISM AND SOCIETY: SOLIDARITY AMONGST PAKISTANI WOMEN STILL A DISTANT DREAM

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper envisages feminism in a south Asian gender development particularly in Pakistan. Law is the manifestation of principles of justice, equity and good conscience. As 'Gender' has been taken up in development policy and practices, have been created that have emphasized some aspects of feminist agendas, and pushed others out of the frame. Research paper gives an overview of women in Pakistan are victimized of gender biases begin from the very first institution home. They are facing challenges in claiming their rights of inheritance owing to customary practices, lacunae in the prevailing legal framework and procedure.*

*Patriarchal structure of society, socio-customary practices and discrimination against women are very serious concerns/issues which need to be understood as multidimensional problem. This paper examines the role of feminism on gender development in south Asian perspective especially in Pakistan. Pakistani women seem to have been circumscribed in bounds of religious, cultural and national ideologies as envisioned by the patriarchy of Pakistan. Due to certain cultural, male domination state of affairs the solidarity amongst Pakistani women still distant dream. Current research paper would draw attention to issue mentioned above.*

**Key words:** Gender & Feminism, women & development, solidarity & women.

### 1.1 Introduction

Women's assertion of emancipation has taken many forms historically, Ideas of self-determination, visions of mutuality, the conviction of the legitimacy of claims of livelihood and the assertion of rights can be found jostling against one another and interacting in popular movements in many countries from the late eighteenth century. Taking this broad vista enables us to situate "feminism" or indeed feminism because there have been many versions, within a wider spectrum. A historical perspective provides a useful and frequently neglected dimension not only in considering contemporary discussions of feminisms, but in thinking how women's specific experiences of subordination might illuminate the recreation of a vision of human emancipation.

The basic idea behind the feminism is that women's position in society is unequal to that of men, and that society is structured in such a way as to benefit men. These political, social, and economic structures are detrimental to women. However, feminists have used different theories to explain these inequalities and have advocated different ways of redressing inequalities, and there are marked geographic and historical variations in the nature of feminism. Present study is aimed at underlining that woman solidarity is a serious issue in Pakistan. A woman needs solidarity from every aspects of life, societal understanding regarding "equality" and "equity" constantly effect.

### 1.2 Objectives

The paper was pursued with the following objectives:

- To formulate public policies to meet specific needs of women.
- To remove inequities and imbalances in all sectors of development and to ensure women's equal access to all development benefits and social services.

- To ensure the implementation of feminist theory relating to make a solidarity of women in Pakistan.

### **1.3 Solidarity amongst Pakistani women still distant dream**

The women liberation movement sought to transform cultural beliefs about women, and to transform personal relationship and social structures to reflect feminist values. The women who identified with women's liberation movement envisioned an egalitarian society based on cooperation, mutual respect and the equitable distribution of resources, power and responsibility between the sexes. Many of them were left-wing activist had been involved in the civil rights, antiwar, and students movements of the 1960's they identified themselves as radical feminists. Compared with women's right activists, they tended to be younger women with less professional and work place experience. Judith, Worley (2001)

The women liberation movement consisted of small local non hierarchical groups. Much of their work was conducted in consciousness raising groups, which discussed and analyze the everyday experiences of women. Judith (2001) explored that They identified patterns of male control our women in working setting, in personal relationships, and in family life and the privileging of male perspectives and needs throughout society, through the consciousness raising process, Women came to understand how their personal issues and problems were inextricably connected to larger, social and political structure thus arose the enduring slogan of second wave of "feminism" the personal is political. Nancy F. Cott, (1987)

In society, power is commonly equated with domination and control over people or things. Women active in feminist movement had ambivalent response to the issue of power. On the other hand, they stressed women's powerlessness, condemning male exercise of power as domination and on the other hand, they raised the banner of women power demanding equal rights equal protection in political arenas, equal access to economic wealth. Women do not need to eradicate to feel solidarity. Solidarity was a word seldom used in contemporary feminist movement. Hooks Bell (2000) When women actively struggle in a truly supportive way to understand our difference, to change misguided, distorted perspectives, solidarity is not the supportive, to experience we must have a community of interest, shared beliefs, and goals around the society.

Feminists have also created service organization as alternatives to traditional health, mental health, and social services. These organizations include women centers, services for women and children who have been raped or sexually abused, shelter for battered women, feminists therapy centers, and women health clinics. The organization takes feminists perspectives on women problems, linking them to the social context of female subordination. They are committed to respecting and promoting their clients, autonomy and competence. Often they are staffed by nonprofessional volunteers and former clients, partly in the effort to counteract the mystique of the expert professional and to foster women self reliance and self confidence. Typically services are offered to women at low cost or free of charge, so that women who cannot afford to pay are not denied services.

In the addition to providing direct service to individual women, these organizations have worked to transformed public understanding of women problem, to change laws and policies, and to reform the practice of police and district attorneys, physician and nurses, mental health practitioners, and social workers. Feminist's consciousness is awareness that the individual women are part of a larger social groups and that her personal problem, as a women are problem that affect all women. And hence are political problem that the personal is political. Feminist consciousness is an awareness that women experiences understood, as a necessary precondition for social change. Now the social attitudes towards women, including cultural and literary representations and social prescriptions for women's behavior were questioned. The "new woman" was challenging patriarchy not only by demanding equal civil rights, but also by defying conventions and choosing her own lifestyle and clothes. By the second decade of twentieth century feminists began to readjust their focus from questions of gender equality to issues that mainly concerned women. These factors would become stronger in the second wave of feminism.

Second-wave feminism emphasized the physical and psychological differences between women and men. Some feminist theorists took female biology as the origin of women's oppression. Most of these feminists focused on the ways in which gender and sexuality have been used to subordinate women to men. This strand of feminism, which became known as cultural or radical feminism, focused on differences between women and men that they believed make women superior to men, and advocated female forms of culture. A powerful strand of feminism is

concerned with the ways in which men have controlled and subordinated women's bodies. It argued that patriarchy coerced women into heterosexuality, using violence to suppress women's powers and sexuality. Joan Wallach Scott (1988)

Gender and second-wave feminism were born together, at the close of the 1960s. At least, gender has been used as an analytical category, rather than just a grammatical one, only since that time. Joan Wallach Scott (1988) Feminists have argued that sexual and domestic violence are not isolated incidents, but are central to the subordination of women by patriarchy. Feminists described pornography as a means by which patriarchy exploits women's bodies and incites violence against women. Andrea Dworkin,(1981)

Nearly all feminists agree that women have historically been denied the opportunity to construct their own separate identity their own sense of selfhood and purpose apart from the definitions imposed on them by men. Ferguson, Kathy.E(1980) Radical groups of women continue our commitment to building sisterhood of making feminist political solidarity between women an ongoing reality. Bell Hooks(2000)

So far as Islamic feminism is concerned, it is difficult to make it understandable to Western feminism. The latter is steeped in the values, ideology and culture of the west. These values are widely different from that of Islam and Arab tradition. In Islam marriage is obligatory for every adult man and woman. Marital contract cannot be signed without the free consent of the parties concerned. The parents may, however, help and counsel them in choosing the right partner of life but they cannot impose their will. Both man and woman have complete freedom to choose their own life partner without the interference of anyone. There may be illegal practices here and there, but Islam law is very clear in this regard.

Notions of society's ideals about its nationalism, cultural and religious etiquette are inexorably linked to the position of women and more precisely to their bodies in south Asian region especially in Pakistan. Their lives are expected to follow the tenets laid out, not in accordance with their own aspirations. As a result, the country has seen a steady increase in the restrictions imposed on women and a disturbing sense of general acceptance of these unjust impediments to their 'normal' existence. In Pakistan women are the double victims of situations. On the one hand, they are kept apart in their own community. Many discriminatory socio-customary practices are prevalent in Pakistan. People who usually practice such kind of customs are not ready to recognize it as an unlawful practice or inhuman tradition. In many communities and tribes of Pakistan women are considered inferior to men.

Major element in reorganization the discriminatory customary Practices in Pakistan as for instance harsh attitude towards girls, lack of decision making power, forced marriage. Women folk being groomed to be submissive to their elders regard themselves sub-human creature, and hence they do not speak for their right of inheritance. Even if they endeavor to do so, the lacunae in the legal and judicial framework handicap them, with the result that they remain weak socially and economically.

In the wake of civil rights revolution feminist movements in the 70s and 80s changed the face of nation, from the onset of the movement women from the privileged classes were able to make their concerns the issues that should be focused on in part because they were the group of women who received public attention. As for concern Pakistan it does not have any specific policy with the reference to women's right. Its guiding principles, *inter alia*, include the recognition of women as equal partners' in development and agents of change in economic, social and political processes and its key policy measures include the elimination of all negative social practice.

Discrimination against women is a global issue which is not confined to the limits or boundaries of a particular Pakistan. Women rights are not considered as human rights completely, even 19<sup>th</sup> century laws also led to women's oppression by her husband. Here male dominated society and feudal and tribal structures exist. Though Pakistan has a constitution which guarantees equality, however there is significant disparity between these statements of principle and day to day reality.

Realizing the fact that Pakistan and gender dynamics its looks at poverty reduction strategies, from the perspective of human development biased in favour of socio-economic & socio-cultural development. The overarching framework in the context of economic and social equality is provided by Article 25 which guarantees the equality of all citizens before the law and entitles all citizens to the equal protection of the law. Thus constitutionally speaking there is no discrimination between men and women in the economic and social sphere. But the ground situation is different women encounter discrimination and human rights abuses, sexual violation and exploitation including violence, and are the disadvantaged by laws, and policies and programme that do not take their concerns into considerations. Feminists work on the frontlines of conflicts throughout the world. They mobilize individually and collectively, to address the urgent needs of conflicts affected populations before, during and after the war.

Women's right of inheritance plays a vital role in the overall solidarity but unfortunately women are often denied right to inheritance due to deep-rooted patriarchal system. Different customary practices are impediment in acquired the solidarity amongst Pakistani society. Due to lack of awareness and feminist theory implementation women do not get their share in inheritance. There is no direct provision in the constitution on women's right to inheritance, but it provides *inter alia*, the some guarantees and principles of policy to ensure justice without any discrimination e: g The state shall ensure the elimination of all forms of exploitation. In Article 152 Although Pakistan does not have any specific policy with the reference to women's right to inheritance but since these rights of vital importance in the solidarity of Pakistani women?

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

Women have not entire empowerment on their resources/earnings. In some cases, though women are given a share in inheritance, the possession and control thereon is denied. They, however, get a share in the produce of their commonly owned land. Women's cooperative land ownership should be promoted and cooperatives facilitated to function as production unit. However women who have own property only receive its income. The fact that often women are among the weakest and most disadvantaged groups within a community has also been taken into account and several constitutional provisions undertake a positive obligation on the part of the government for affirmative action to alleviate the status of women.

Addressing the concluding section that the formulation of proper policies and laws, the most tasks are their implementation in true spirit, in the absence whereof violation of fundamental human rights becomes certain. Though all fundamental rights concerning women are the key factors causing direct impact on the solidarity set-up of the women, there is no exclusive policy to that effect. Solidarity of women and the implication of feminist theory is not just a cliché. It is sorely needed in Pakistan's context where gender inequalities and discrimination in all fields. Targeted action is needed for all areas of development. Many discriminatory are socio-practices prevalent in Pakistan. Feminist work confronts the power of naming and challenges both the use of male measures and the assumption that women fail by them if at times feminist appear contradictory arguing both for the right of women to be included and treated like men and for the right to have special treatment.

#### **1.5 Recommendations**

In Pakistan effective policy intervention requires a wide ranging strategy. Women lag in Pakistan in almost every area of national endeavor. Some suggestions for Feminists and researchers and policy makers:

Ensure that in future, gender disaggregated data is generated in all sectors of the economy, the gender dimension is integrated in all chapters of the national plans,

Ensure in all communities of Pakistan women's right to inheritance without the broader traditional context.

Welfare and rights of women should be used in a right base approach and various schemes should be prepared according to it.

To ensure the legal access for every women in the case of demolishing women's right.

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