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A Paradigm Shift in Women's Movement and Gender Reforms in Pakistan (A Historical Overview)

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Abstract - The current paper is a historical analysis of the women's movement and gender reforms in Pakistan. The study is based upon secondary information following an evolutionary perspective with regard to social change and development. Library method as source of data collection has been used in the study particularly, the data used in the paper has been taken from a PhD dissertation in Anthropology, conducted in the year 2008-12 in the Department of Anthropology Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad under the scholarship scheme of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. Most of the information in the current study provides detail about gender and women's reforms in Pakistan where the information have been describes in the form qualitative report. The paper concludes that women's movement and gender reforms are the outcome of long historic process and such process are mostly obstructed by multiple factors including the conservative forces. Besides, such challenges, there is always the possibility of change and development as clear from the gender reforms in Pakistan.

Keywords : *movement, gender, reforms, conservative, women, change, development.*

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I. Introduction

The origin and historical development of feminism and gender reforms in Pakistan in the current paper is focusing from a historical context starting from the colonial legacy of social transformation (Mumtaz, 1987), passing through the early years of women's movement and the struggle of women for democracy in pre-independent era (Basu, 2005). Slowly, this movement took more formal and liberal atmosphere which we can see in Pakistan today. However, the present analysis has been made from a historical perspective i.e. from pre-independence period, post independence position of Pakistan, martial laws, Islamization of laws, and the democracy in the later period of Pakistan's history. The overview has been framed with particular reference to gender analysis and gender situation in various regimes in a chronological order i.e. from the early towards modern.

II. Colonialism and Early Years of Women's Reforms in Pakistan

The history of gender reforms in pakistan has its roots in the colonial period, politics and economy of the 19th century (mumtaz, 1987). Colonialism led liberal nationalists to make reforms in old and conservative structure of the society while on the other hand, they were opposed islamic conservative forces who were of the opinion that islam and the colonial ideology is incompatible to one another (mumtaz, 1987) and to geertz (1968:69), colonialism created the conditions in which an oppositional, identity-preserving, view of islam could and did flourish.

Colonization did not necessarily improve the position and participation of women, however little has been done in this regard (Naz, 2011). The soul reason behind such conservative attitudes was the ownership of land towards with tribal heads and feudal landlords, which strengthen the feudal and tribal structures in the rural areas (as refers to Angle 1884) and sometimes the traditions where land is passed on from father to son while women never control any assets (Kelkar, 2009). The argument is best suited for the era under consideration where one can see feudalism and awards of land in the hand of those who were powerful and making their contribution to the British government. The literature study reveal that awards of land were given to those Indians generally loyal to British during the revolt of 1857, especially in the areas of Southern Punjab and Upper Sindh, leading to the creations of feudal who have ruled Pakistan since independence (Mumtaz, 1987).

Women remain persistent in subordination as they were ruled over by landlord or a patriarch since

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centuries (Naz, 2011). The British law, working with Hindu customary law stated that Hindu women could administer property only on behalf of their minor sons was supported Muslim women deprivation from property rights which was accorded to them under the Shariah Law (Mumtaz, 1987). In 1937, a protest by Muslim women led to the enforcement of Muslim Personal Law that gave some rights of inheritance of property but still deprived of agricultural land but other laws dealing with personal rights of Muslims were passed including Shariat Applications Act of 1937, Guardians and Wards Act of 1860 and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act of 1939 (Barrett, 1980).

The British also enacted selective imposition of British laws and by the end of the eighteenth century, the entire pattern of law was bend and made westernized and changes were made which were considered necessary for imperial power (Mumtaz, 1987). Matters related to revenue, land tenure, evidence, transfer of property, criminal cases and all procedural matters were replaced by British law to enhance imperial control while the status of women, inter-family relations, customary and religious laws subordinating women remained untouched. Although the British hesitated from introducing amendments in the domestic sphere, their legal innovations regarding issues such as land ownership deprived Muslim women of their right under Islamic Law to inherit property. Moreover, inflexible interpretations of inter-family relations under colonial rule froze the evolution of Muslim Family Law in the seventeenth century (Naz, 2011). The situation was realized by men rather than women who first raised the issue of 'women's rights who shared similar thoughts with their counter parts in Europe, Australia and the US (Naz, at al, 2012).

The Pakistan Movement provided opportunities to Indian Muslim women to work collectively towards achieving independence and further paves the way for their social, economic, and political empowerment (Naz, at al, 2012). Quaide-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the first supporter in this regard who once said in 1944 "It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable conditions in which our women have to live. You should take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of your life". The initiative was taken by men and work for amendment of the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, the Child Marriages Restraint Act and the Guardians and Wards Act. After the creation of Pakistan as a separate homeland, however, orthodox Muslim groups felt it their prerogative to act as guardians of Shariah Law and hindered attempts to develop progressive interpretation of Islam with respect to women's rights (Mumtaz, 1987).

III. The Early Women's Organizations after Independence

In the early history of Pakistan, two women's organizations the Pakistan Women's National Guard (PNWG founded in 1949) organized by Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan and the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS founded in 1948) were founded. There were millions of refugees' especially young girls and married women facing numerous problems and the Women's Voluntary Service played a major role in their rehabilitation. The PWNG was under the administration of the army and the PWNR under the navy and Begum Raana Liaqat Ali was the chief controller (Begum. H. I Ahmad, 1975). Women were given different training i.e. use guns, learn marksmanship and signaling as will as first aid, typing, social welfare work and further in a very short time and trained National Guard corps of three battalions with 2,400 women had been formed for the whole country including Karachi. According the political and administrative survey in NWFP (2004) this organization later became the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA, on 22nd of February, 1949 in Karachi,) and raised issues of health, education, and family laws largely within the framework of welfare and social reforms.

The personal interest and devotion of Begum Raana Liaquat Ali Khan along with her official status helped APWA in forming a well-coordinated network of women welfare that further become internationally recognized with category B consultative status with UN Economic and Social council (ECOSOC). APWA operated with an impressive number of social welfare outlets which registered steady and consistent growth. In the following years, APWA's struggle for the rights of women inspired other women's groups to come forward (Mumtaz, 1987).

a) Achievements of Apwa

The first achievement of APWA was to reserved seats for women in the national and provincial assembly and then pushing the family law commission which finally prepared a draft of the family laws through an ordinance it was imposed by the then president Ayoub Khan in 1961 (Mumtaz, 1987 and Naz et al, 2012). On the other hand the activities and nature of the APWA was strongly criticized and objected by the Maulivis and they usually called them as 'prostitutes' and considered it a lobby which is just working for women freedom (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987).

b) Other women's organizations of the early period

Few other organizations came in existence along-with APWA in which Federation of University Women (1956) aimed to provide chances of employment to those who have their bachelor or master degrees under the supervision and guidance of Raana Liaqat Ali Khan (Naz, at al, 2012). The fight of the

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Federation of University Women was initially to build a degree college for women in Karachi and finally they succeed. Further, the network spread to other major cities of the country and it was also associated with International Federation of University Women as argued by Mumtaz and Shaheed (1987). Similarly, the Karachi Business and Professional Women's Club (BPW) was established in 1954 guided and supervised by Raana Liaqat Ali Khan providing a platform for professional women of Pakistan. Later on their branches were opened in Lahore, Peshawar and Rawalpindi with the aim to identify problems and areas which professional women face during their profession or in search of it (Abbasi, 1980). Besides, Family Planning Association of Pakistan, the Pakistan Child Welfare Council, the Pakistan Red Cross, the Pakistan Nurse's Federation, the House Wives Association, Girl's Guide Association, Domestic Women Association (DWA) and the International Women's Club were established during the same period (Mumtaz, 1987 and Naz, 2011). However, the focus of these organizations was mainly on women and children and their health issues but DAWA focus on women political participation. Another organization was the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) which established in 1899, also provide hostel for working women and facilitate women for training in secretarial and office administration (Mumtaz, and Shaheed, 1987).

However, the only organization that was claiming for women's rights was the United Front for Women's Rights, created in 1955 by some women political activists. The front focus on women political position and give emphasis on political parties to initiate for women's issues in political spheres. The front remains inactive during Ayub regime and again start to work during Bhutto's period and remain disappeared forever after the framing of the constitution (Mumtaz, 1987, Naz, 2011).

c) Democracy and military governments and women's position

Pakistan experience is not very smooth in running the political affairs and many political upheavals came in the first decade of its existence. In 1955, the United Front for Women's Rights was formed as the first organization worked for the reforms in laws and raised the issue of women's rights (Naz, 2011, Mumtaz, 1987). In 1958, General Ayub Khan imposed martial law and the front was banned with all other political parties, however, Ayub Khan was more liberal in women education, employments, teachings, medicines, and journalism etc. There was no restriction on women social environment as the behavior of the army and that of the bureaucrats was liberal and showing the western ideologies (Shaheed and Hussain, 2007). In 1964, when Ms Fatima Jinnah contested elections against Ayub Khan, the question of women's right to stand for public office were raised. She became the symbol for women's political struggle and helped establish the notion that women can and should seek political office (A Gender Review in NWFP.2004)

d) Ayub period and reforms about women's rights

Ayub Khan introduced family laws ordinance in 1961 which was to enforced and discourage polygamy and to regulate the divorce procedure for both male and female (Naz, 2011 and Naz et al, 2012). The ordnance employ that if a man wants to have more than one wife is obliged to obtain the consent of his first wife and that shall have solid reasons for the second marriage. In case of divorce, instead of saying talaq thrice, a written must be sent to the chairman of the local council and a copy to his wife. The ordinance also make compulsory the registration of the marriage and standard marriage contract nikah nama, which will possibility to women to seek enforcement through courts. The nikah nama include in writing the right of divorce to women if given then she has the right of divorce. (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). The ordinance was welcomed by women organization as it has secured the position of women to a grater extent. Also there were some weak points in the ordinance, but still this was called as a ray of hope by these women activists while it was also attacked and resist by the ulema and criticizes it and its various clauses (Naz, 2011).

e) Women In Politics In Ayub Era

Women politics was not much appreciated in Ayub khan regime as set for men. Women have few reserved seat and even six women representatives remain symbolic with having no role at all (Naz at al, 2012). The most important event for women was the presidential election in which Fatima Jinnah the sister of the Quaide-e-Azam was chosen as a candidate by the COP (combined opposition parties) and was the candidate of all the secular and religious parties but her status of being president of an Islamic state was strongly opposed by Ayub through several FATWAS (religious edicts) against a woman as a president and a head of an Islamic state (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987).

f) Women's organizations in Ayub Era

The military hold did not provide a liberal and rich environment for women's organization and the organization which came into existence during the period was the Behbood Association (founded in 1967), the Soroptomist Club (established in January 1967), and the extension of Anjuman Jamhooryat Pasand Khawateen (democratic women association) to Karachi. The Behbood organization was basically a social welfare organization which worked in various sectors. The Soroptomist Club was working on various problems related to women and was organizing seminars and papers about such problems ((Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987, and Naz, at al 2012).

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The Anjuman Jamhooryat Pasand Khawateen (DWA) established in 1948 in Karachi, and its branch was established in 1969 in Karachi was perhaps the important women political organization at that time. Its work was directed towards women labor class and especially towards women factory workers (Naz, 2011). Their demands include equal pay for equal work, educational opportunities for girls and women, hostels and transports facilities for working women and to expand employment opportunities for women. However, the works of DWA did not have popularity as it did not publicized in a proper way but it was the first left wing's organization for women in the country. (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987).

IV. Women's Movement in Democracy (1970-77)

a) The PPP's Manifesto

Bhutto regime started with anti-Ayub slogans as it was the starting of new era of democracy in Pakistan. This period is famous for new and dynamic approach towards the uplift of women folk. During this period there was a marked increase in feminist awareness ((Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). The PPP manifesto had promised women of equal opportunities for accelling as that of men. Begum Naseem Jehan, one of the founder members of PPP, mobilized women to visit door to door and convey the message of the party regarding women program to them (Naz, 2011).

b) The Constitutional Changes

The most significant and historical development in Bhutto's regime was the designing and framing of the Pakistan constitution, which was promulgated in 1973. Articles 25, 27, 32, 34, and 35 deal with issues pertaining to women's life, which were absent previously. Fundamental rights are enumerate in article 25, in article 27, it is clearly mentioned that there would be no discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, cast for appointments in services in Pakistan. The amended 228 article accept the principle of at least one women member on the proposed council of Islamic ideology. (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987).

c) The position of women in bhutto's periods

During the first democracy period (1970s), women gained opportunities to push for more progressive measures. During this period, Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan was made the Governor of Sindh and Begum Kaneez Yousaf was made the Vice-Chancellor of the Quaid-e- Azam University. At the same time Foreign and District Management posts were opened to women through the civil services (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987).

d) Bhutto period women organizations

A cell was established in the Man power to raise the status of women in Pakistan. Women were appointed to key position in the institutions of the state. International women year (IWY) was launched in 1975 and semi autonomous Pakistan women institute was set-up in Lahore on the same year (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). All Pakistan women association played a remarkable role in integrating the depressed and downtrodden women folk in the larger social system. The changing paradigm fully consisted on women's participation in the development processes. The women front was created by a group of left wing women students with aim at inculcating awareness in women folk, non recognition of their services, about women's equal rights and also the rights to work (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). It also launched a large scale campaign including seminars, lectures, and discussion to propagate there points of views. Its main failure cause however was that it was started by university students. It could not take deep roots in the working class (Naz, 2011).

During this period, the Women's Front, and Shirkat Gah were formed in 1975 with the primary objective of encouraging women who were eager to play their roles in national development. Women's Front was formed by a group of women students of Punjab University. This front started its struggles for giving to women equal rights in society and at their work place. During 1976-77 another women's organization called Aurat Foundation was established by university teachers, students, and employed women. (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987).

e) Zia-ul-Haq Regime (1977-88)

After Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto imprisonment on July 5th 1977, martial law was imposed and it brings Zia-ul-Haq to the power. Zia initiate the Islamization process and especially in Pakistan penal code and included the Muslim League and the Jamate-e-Islami in cabinet (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). The government propagated on media to the people to become more Islamic in their lives and take care of their neighbors. The attitude and social atmosphere towards women also change both in public and private sectors as few of the incidents occurs with women in which women were beaten and even stopped to enter any shop or a market without a veil. Sometime couples were asked by the police for proof of marriages and even walk in public parks, on beach etc become dangerous for young men and women (Naz, at al 2012).

f) Women in Zia's Period

Zia period (1977-1988) is considered the most critical period for Pakistani women. Under the government of General Zia-ul-Haq the so-called Shariah Laws marked a period of reversal in the legal rights of women. In this period, there were attempts to make women secondary citizens under the Islamic law. By this time there were increasing numbers of women joining the movement from the middle classes and they were analyzing the effects of the religious campaign

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being used to close the doors of economic and other opportunities to women.

g) Women and the Hudood Ordinance

The Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence were promulgated to block women's attempts for progressive rights. Under the Hudood Ordinances, 1979 (concerning adultery, rape, and theft), a woman's testimony is disregarded completely, leaving male testimony the only acceptable and valid one. The Qanoon-e- Shahadat, or the Law of Evidence, 1984, clearly violates women's constitutional rights as equal citizens before the law, by diminishing a woman's evidence to half that of a man's and by excluding it completely in the absence of a male witness (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987).

h) Women's Social Condition and Organizations at Zia's Period

Women's Action Forum (WAF) was established during Zia period and the exclusive feature of WAF was to raise a voice not only for women's rights but also against military dictatorship and the demand for the restoration of democracy (Mumtaz, 1987). WAF demanded that the Constitution of 1973 should be reinstated and emphasized that only elected representatives had the right to make laws. In 1983, WAF opposed strict censorship on media and restrictions on the freedom of association and public demonstrations. The politics of the women's movement received a strong impetus from these actions (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). Some of the unique aspects of WAF were that it never raised funds as an organization (except for a minimal membership fee) and has never opened permanent offices but has met regularly at different locations for over twelve years.

i) Zia's Opposition Towards Waf

The importance of the WAF movement threatened the authorities and Zia-ul-Haq announced that the leaders of the movement were mostly western-educated women representing alien values and should not be heeded. WAF, however, continued to raise its voice against different government measures including the formation of a separate women's university (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). Despite all these efforts according to Haroon, A (1995): WAF was not able to achieve much in concrete terms of the repeal of unjust laws or the reversal of other discriminatory measures. Nevertheless, WAF, was successful in creating and raising a voice against martial law, raising political consciousness among women, increasing the membership of the women's movement and gave impetus to the formation of many new women's groups and organizations in the following years.

V. Progress During Zia's Period

During the years of development of WAF, women in rural Sindh were involved in the Movement of Restoration of Democracy (MRD). When the MRD movement ended, these women formed a rural based mass organization by the name of Sindhiyani Tehreek (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). The main objective of this Tehreek was to mobilize women by door to door campaign and try to solve their individual problems. It also raised issues of education, health, sale of female infants and karokari. Other women's groups and NGOs demanded the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, lobbying for women in the work place and against rape and other forms of sexual harassment and violence (Naz, 2011).

a) Restoration of Democracy (1988 and Onwards)

Pakistan returned to multi-party democracy in 1988 (Naz, 2011) and women in Pakistan were now eligible to stand for elections in the legislative assemblies and became entitled to run for the presidency and prime minister-ship ((Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). The development occurs in the following periods:

b) The Benazir Period

Benazir Bhutto's first tenure as the head of the government can also be viewed in a wider significant context. She became the first woman Prime Minister of a Muslim country. Turkey and Bangladesh were to follow later (Naz, at al, 2012). The people of Pakistan once again voted Ms Bhutto into power in 1992, her second tenure as Prime Minister, after her first government had been dismissed on charges of gross corruption. It is significant that Benazir Bhutto's government was not able to repeal even one of the anti-women laws of General Zia-ul-Haq (Gender Review NWFP, 2004).

c) The Nawaz Sharif Period

With the elected government of Nawaz Sharif in February 1997, and the changes in the controversial Eighth Amendment, it was hoped that the government with its two-thirds majority would be able to finally repeal the Hudood Ordinances. However, the two governments of Nawaz Sharif and the Muslim League were unable to make any progress in this area, while 'honor' crimes against women continued to mount (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987.)

d) The Martial Law of 1999 and Women's Reforms

The military government of General Pervaiz Musharraf (2002) though without popular mandate, appears to have taken some steps to encourage the participation of women in various sectors of life (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987).

e) Women in Politics during Musharraf Period

As compare to the previous governments, Musharraf policy towards women development was more liberal and bold. He took some serious steps for the active participation of women in all the socio-cultural and political sphere of life. Keeping the political up

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gradation of women, both at national and local level, various seats were reserved for them in the political bodies (Naz, 2011 and Naz, et al, 2012). In the local government plan introduced by Musharraf, 33 percent and the national and provincial assemblies 17 percent of the total seats were reserved for women, which is a bold and remarkable step. Presently there are now more than 40,000 women in local government across the country. There are also 213 women in parliament, of which 139 are Members of Provincial Assemblies (128 on reserved seats and 11 elected on general seats) and 74 Members of the National Assembly (Naz, 2011).

VI. Conclusion

The literature and content analysis with regard to women's movement and gender reforms thus conclude that a paradigm shift has been observed in the status and empowerment levels of Pakistani women. The empowerment and gender reforms in Pakistan are following an evolutionary pattern of social change and development with reference to change in practical and strategic gender needs. The changes have been found from the pre-independence era and the same has been affected by the British legacy and conservative forces in reaction.

Similarly, the study provides an analysis of the post independent focusing on the various governments since 1947 where we can see the development in Ayub Khan era, Bhutto Democracy, Zia Military government, Benizer and Nawaz Sharif era and finally a picture of the Musharraf military and democracy launched in later period of 2000.

The study also concludes that various changes have been found during the mentioned period in the form of women's organization, education, movement and even in election. In addition, lucrative change in women's empowerment occurred when rights were given to them in constitution. Such step empowered women and let other women be inspired of those who savor their lives by utilizing their rights. The regime of General Pervez Musharraf was the most fabulous stage for women's empowerment whose thoughts were more liberal as compared to others because mass media got liberty and means of communication were ensured to be instilled in far flung areas of rural settlements.

In short, it is observed that roots of gender movements and women's empowerment have same sources, yet there is variation in their occurrence because in some countries such movements had occurred centuries ago while in others they are supposed to commence presently or have commenced recently. It is proved from discussion regarding women's empowerment movements and gender reform that in intimation regarding women's rights has been emerged very early due to their advancement while in Pakistan the forces are facing obstruction in many form but with the passage of time, such forces will overcome by the liberal wing.

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