

Date: _____

write a note on feminist movements in Pakistan.

Introduction:

Feminist movements in Pakistan have played a pivotal role in challenging gender norms, advocating for policy reforms, and championing women's rights. Emerging in response to entrenched patriarchal structures and discriminatory policies, these movements have shaped the discourse on gender equality and empowered women to assert their rights.

"The days had gone when women were fit only for cooking food and minding children; and the time had come for them to take an equal share of responsibility with their menfolk in politics"

~ Lady Maratab Ali

Strands of Women Activism in Pakistan:

As "Fozia Saeed" writes in her "Tapestry: Strands of Women's Struggles Woven into the History of Pakistan", women activism in Pakistan are divided into seven major strands across history



1- Political Awakening (pre-1947)

During this period, women's activism primarily revolved around political awareness and participation in the context of the struggle for independence from colonial rule. Women joined various political and social movements to contribute to the anti-colonial struggle.

2- Social Welfare (1947-1950)

With the establishment of Pakistan, the emphasis shifted towards social welfare and community development. Women activists, most importantly Fatimah Jinnah, Begum Raana Liaquat Ali Khan, and Begum Shaista Ikramullah, focused on providing basic services like healthcare, education, and relief work in the aftermath of Partition.

3- Political Collaboration (1950-1977)

During this period, women actively participated in mainstream politics and collaborated with political parties. They advanced ~~for~~ women's rights within the existing political framework. Major laws were passed, which includes "Basic Democracies" in 1960,

Date: _____

that allowed some women to participate in local politics, and similarly reforms were introduced in family laws, affecting issues like marriage, divorce, and inheritance through Family Laws Ordinance (1961)

4- Reactive Confrontation (1977-1988)

The Zia-ul-Haq regime brought about regressive laws like Hudood Ordinances in 1979 and Qanun-e-Shahadat in 1984. Women's activism during this time became more ~~reactive~~ confrontational and reactive, Women Action Forum (WAF) was established in response to repressive policies, and initially focused on protesting against discriminatory laws and advocating for women's rights. Similarly, in 1986, Aurat Foundation, an NGO, was found to advocate for gender equality.

5- Development Orientation (1989-2000)

In 1988, Pakistan has its first female Prime Minister, this government took steps to improve women's rights and representation. Like, the reserved seats system was introduced in 1988. Also, initiatives were launched in same era to provide skills training, microcredit, and vocational education to women, particularly in rural areas.

Date: _____

Most importantly, Butto's government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to women rights.

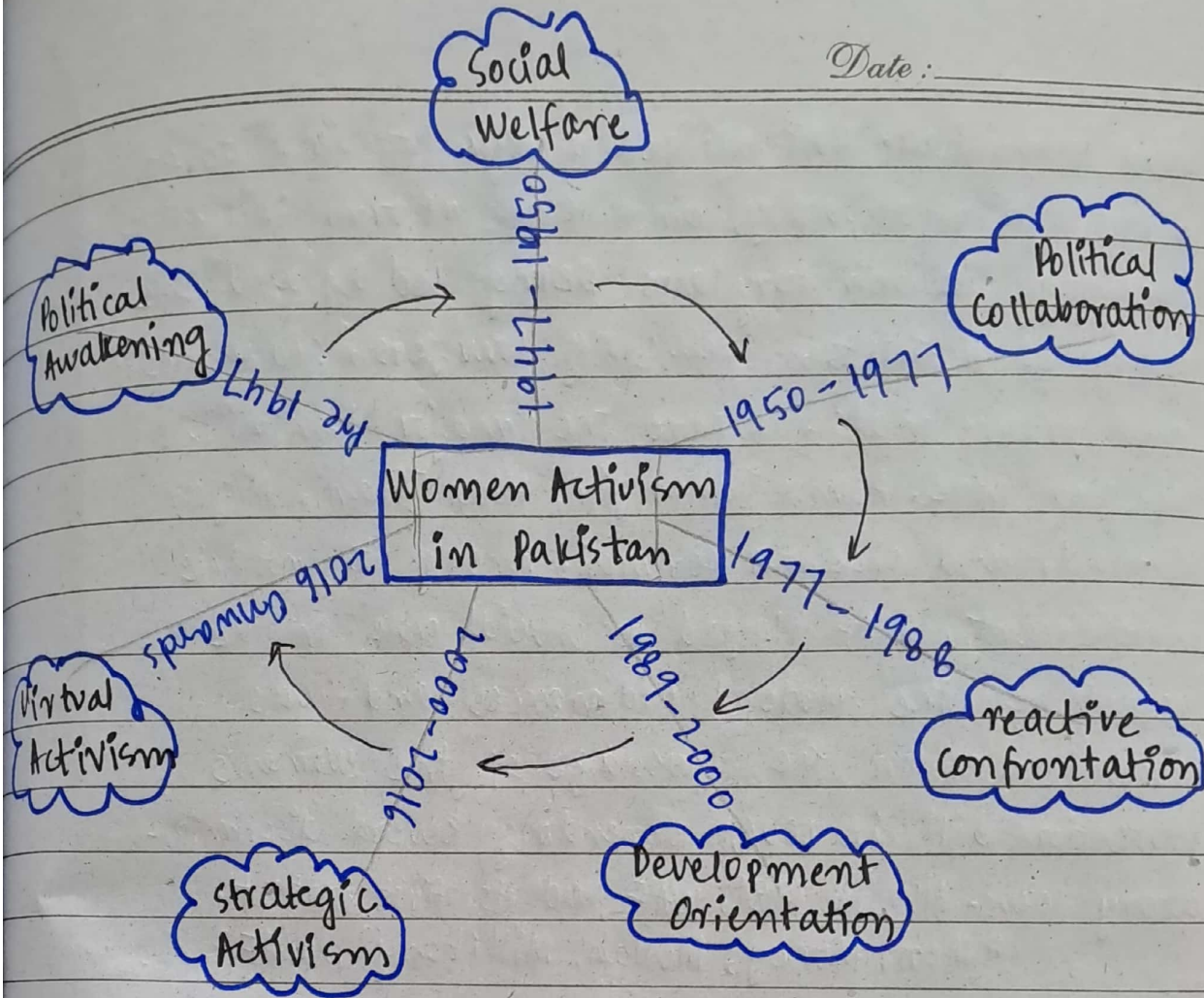
6- Strategic Activism (2000-2016)

Activists adopted more strategic approaches to address women's rights issues in Pakistan. National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) was established in 2000 to monitor and evaluate the status of women in Pakistan.

7- Virtual Activism (2016 onwards)

With the advent of digital communication and social media, virtual activism gained prominence. Activists and organizations utilize online platform to raise awareness, mobilize supports and advocate for women's rights issues.

Date: _____



Major Feminist Movements in Pakistan

Lets delve deeper into the feminist movements in Pakistan, considering their emergence, motivations, strategies and other aspects.

1- Women Action Forum (WAF):

WAF emerged in 1981, in response to repressive policies of General Zia-ul-Haq's regime, which introduced discriminatory laws against women. It was active in major urban centers like Karachi, Lahore,

and Islamabad. WAF utilized a diverse combination of direct action, advocacy, and legal reform initiatives to challenge discriminatory laws. Being led by a diverse group of activists, including lawyers, academics, and professionals, where the major feminists involved were Asma Jahangir, Hira Jilani, Nigar Ahmad, and Sheema Kermani. Among its notable achievements, WAF played a crucial role in the repeal of the Hudood Ordinances and was instrumental in the passage of the Women's Protection Bill in 2006, amending several discriminatory laws. Also in 1981, WAF had its first protest.

2- "Men, Money, Mullah, Military" ~ WAF's Slogan
Aurat March:

The Aurat March, first held in 2013 and annually commemorated on International Women's Day (March 8), is a vibrant movement that seeks to raise awareness about women's rights and advocate for gender equality. The march employs creative expression, placards, performances, and speeches to amplify women's issues and demands for change. Key figures like Leena Ghani, Ismat Shahjahan, and Fooba Syed have been pivotal in driving the movement. Embracing intersectional feminism, the march recognizes the interconnectedness of gender with other social identities.

Date: _____

"My body, My choice"

~ A famous slogan from Aurat March.

3- Aurat Foundation

Established in 1986, the Aurat Foundation focuses on research, advocacy and policy work to promote gender equality. Operating from its base in Islamabad with regional offices across the country, organization engages in capacity building, and advocacy efforts. Prominent feminists including Nigar Ahmad, Maliha Husain, and Mehnaz Kerman are instrumental figures. The foundation aligns with a combination of liberal and radical feminism, advocating for reforms alongside grassroots mobilization.

"There are far too many silent sufferers. Not because they don't yearn to reach out, but because they've tried and found no one who cares"

~ Richelle E. Goodrich.

4- Shirkat Gah:

Established in 1975, Shirkat Gah addresses a wide range of women's issues, including violence against women, economic ~~development~~ empowerment, and

Date: _____

legal reforms. Operating primarily from Lahore, key feminists such as Khawar Mumtaz, Farida Shaheed, and Afiya Zia have played instrumental roles.

Shirkat Gah incorporates elements of radical feminism, challenging structural inequalities and advocating for systemic changes.

“Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength.”

~ G. D. Anderson

5- Rozan:

Established in 1998, Rozan provides counselling services, conducts awareness campaigns, and engages in advocacy efforts to combat gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence and child sexual abuse. Led by psychologists, counsellors, prominent feminists including Khadija Khan and Maliha Lari have been central figures.

“The best protection any woman can have is courage.”

~ Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Date: _____

6- Tahafuz Movement:

Emerging in 2018, Tahafuz movement focusses on raising awareness about sexual harassment, particularly in educational institutions. Actively, the movement has conducted seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns, impacting thousands of students and institutions.

7- #MeToo Movement

The #MeToo movement gained momentum in Pakistan in 2018, echoing the global movement of 2017. It aimed to raise awareness about sexual harassment and assault, primarily utilizing social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The movement empowered survivors to share their experiences, fostering a sense of solidarity. Notable figures like Meesha Shafi and Eman Suleman expressed support.

"The #MeToo movement is not just a moment, it's a movement. It's a shift in our culture and a redefining of power dynamics."

~ Tarana Burke, Founder of the #MeToo.



Impact of Western Feminist Movements in Pakistan:

First wave:

In first wave, the main focus was achieving legal and political rights, particularly suffrage. In Pakistan women got suffrage from very start. Also the emphasis gained traction in Pakistan, on women's education and economic independence.

Second wave:

Second wave focussed on addressing social and cultural inequalities, reproductive rights, and workplace discrimination. Similarly elements of reproductive rights, and challenging patriarchy have been observed in many Pakistani movements such as in Aurat March.

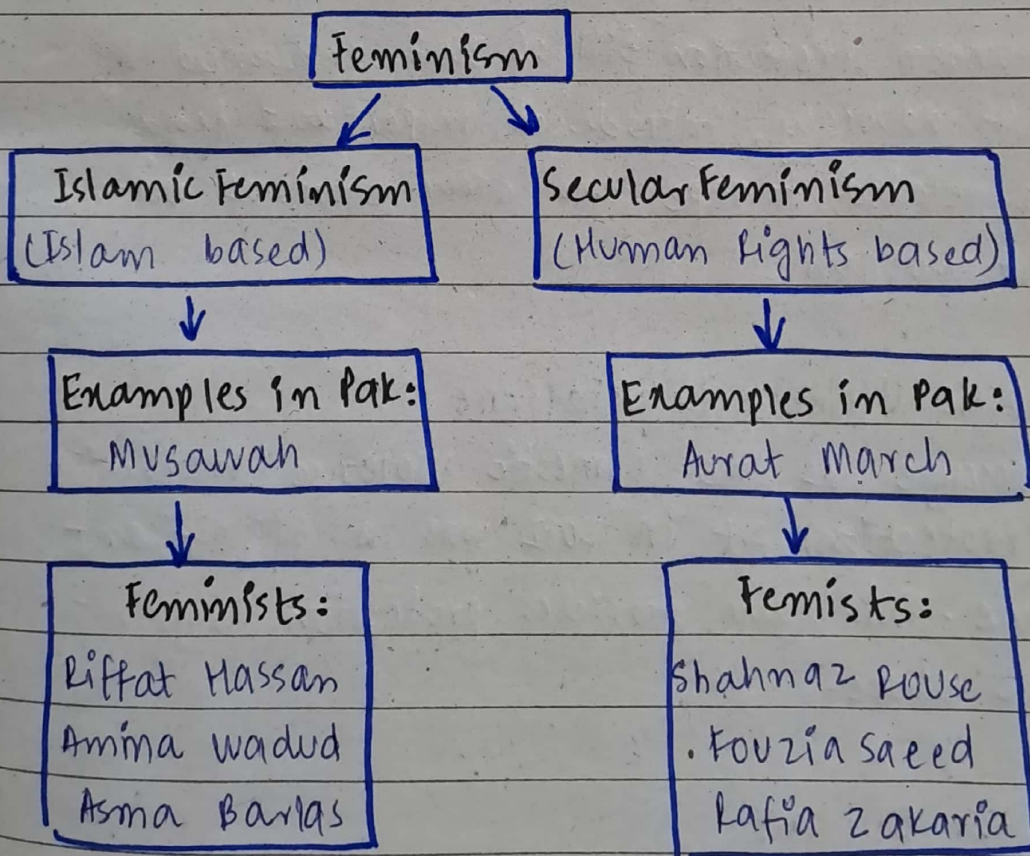
Third wave:

Third wave focussed on online activism, sexual harassment and intersectionality. The elements of same focus can be seen in the #MeToo movement in Pakistan.

Threads of Feminist discourse in Pakistan:

Madhah Akhtar in writes in her article on "Feminists in Pakistan":

"Feminists of both the secular and Islamic flavors, have to be content with voicing their opinions through non-governmental organizations and in academia, both in Pakistan and abroad"



Impact of feminist movements in Pakistan:

1- Legal Framework:

Advocacy by feminist groups led to amendments in several discriminatory laws, such as the repeal of the Hudood Ordinances in 2006, which had placed burdensome legal requirements on victims of sexual assault.

2- Women's Protection Bill:

The Women Protection Bill of 2006, influenced by feminists advocacy, introduced important legal reforms related to rape and other forms of violence against women.

3- Domestic Violence Legislation:

The passage of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act in 2012 was a significant milestone. This law provides protection against domestic abuse.

4- Gender Quota:

It was due to feminist movements that defined 17% of women quota at National / Provincial level and 33% at local level.

Date: _____

5- Election Act:

In election act of 2017, it was decided that on having less than 10% women turnout at a particular electoral constituency, the results will be considered null and void.

Similarly, many other legislative achievements have been made to ensure women rights protection legally.

Conclusion:

Feminist movements in Pakistan have been instrumental in shaping the narrative around women's rights. Their tireless efforts continue to drive positive change, making strides towards a more equitable and inclusive society. The legacy of these movements serves as a beacon of hope for future generations of women in Pakistan.

