

Day: Tuesday { GENDER STUDIES } Date: 28/1/25

Q.NO: 2 Discuss the Evolution of Feminist Thoughts in Pakistan by highlighting development of Gender studies as an academic discipline in the country.

INTRODUCTION:

Pakistan is a country that hosts over 49% of female population but the society, under strong religious and cultural influence largely remains a male-dominant or patriarchal one. Recent evolution of feminist sentiment mainly through "Aurat Marches" have been a subject to backlash and hatred from various sectors. Political evolution is associated with the development of Gender studies as a discipline. The academia in Pakistan is highly influenced from the west but lags behind in adaptation.

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(1) Evolution of Feminist Thought in Pakistan:

Pakistan, a society deeply engrained by the concept of patriarchy has very little margin for feminist uprising.

"The space for female feminist politics in Pakistan is non-existent"

~ Madiha Akhtar

(2) Creation of APWA 1949:

The early days of Pakistan witnessed issues like influx of large number of refugees, mainly women and children. It goes down in the pages of history that women were sexually assaulted and raped during migration.

To address such issues, Begum Rana Liaquat

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Ali Khan setup the "All Pakistan Women Association" in 1949. It has played a notable role in development of women rights in the country.

(3) Analogy from West - Phase of 1960s-1980s:

During the era of 1960's, Fatima Jinnah contested elections against Ayub Khan but lost to the military autocrat.

This was the time when Radical Feminism or the 2nd wave of feminism emerged in the west, while Pakistan was stuck in the formulation of constitutions.

(4) Repurcussions for Women during 1970-1990 Era:

The era from 1970's (late) is marked by Zia-ul-Haq's

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Islamization process. A Pakistani author Sara Zaidi, in her book "Meatless Days", criticizes how the policies of General Zia; whom she refers to as 'General Zulu' out of hatred were misogynistic.

(i) Hudood Ordinance

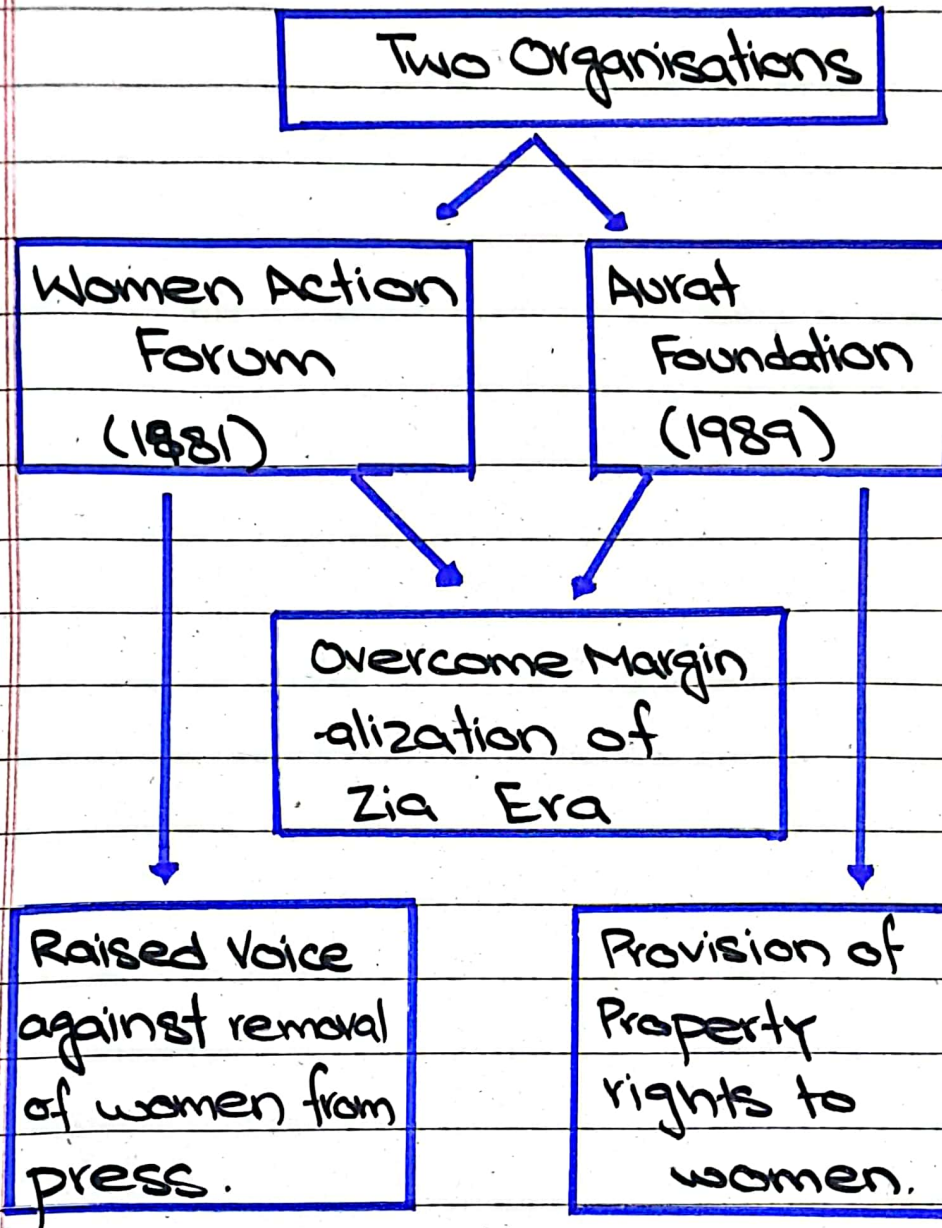
(ii) Ansari Commission

No women under 50 in Parliament.

(iii) Media Bans / PEMRA

(5) Uplifting Women through Institutions - 1980's :

The next phase sees a rise of women related notions and provision of breathing space to women in Pakistan.



(6) CURRICULUM ADVANCES IN EARLY 2000'S:

During the beginning of 21st century, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan formulated a

committee:

"Curriculum Revision Committee"

which was aimed at introduction of Women Studies as a separate discipline in universities of Pakistan.

(7) Legal Rights during 2010 Regime:

The Zardari Era and 18th Amendment played vital role in formulation of certain legislations that served feminist purpose. They include:

- 1) Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act.
- 2) Elimination of the Custom of Ghag (KP)
- 3) Anti-Women Practices Act.
- 4) Prohibition of Dowry and Bridal Gifts Act.

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(8) Development of Gender Studies:

In 2016, observing the trends of society, FPSC changed its curriculum and introduced "Gender Studies" in place of women studies to inculcate the demands and issues of all genders.

It is pertinent that the west had adopted the term 'Gender' in 1990's and Pakistan in 2016.

(9) Aurat Marches ~ rise of Radical Feminism:

2018 marked the year when Aurat Marches gained Media Attention due to slogans like "Mera Jism Meri Marzi", that were miscommunicated. Severe backlash was faced by right-wing elements.

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(10) Controversial Transgender Bill :

The very year 2018, witnessed the passing of a bill in the Pakistani Parliament named,

"Transgender Rights Protection Act 2018 "

It focused on inheritance rights.

The bill was subject to extensive criticism. Since the term "Transgender" is based on psychological orientation.

The Federal Shariah Court got it changed to "Intersex Rights Protection Act 2021 " in order to avoid promotion of anti-Islamic narrative and homogeneity in society.

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CONCLUSION:

Presently, annual marches are held on 8th March; on account of International Woman's Day. Each year sparks controversy with new and offensive (to rightist) slogans that demand rights over female bodies. Currently, 3rd wave of Feminism is on-going within Pakistan.
