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Q. Write a note on the status of gender studies in Pakistan. Give your views on the autonomy versus integration debate in gender studies.

1. Introduction:

Gender Studies is an important discipline in analyzing the role of genders in political, economic and social spheres. However, the subject is not mainstreamed in the educational arena like the other subjects. This is due to less public motivation ~~and~~ in this domain. But gradually, the universities in Pakistan are introducing this subject and offering courses in their degree programs to enhance public engagement on the crucial issues associated with gender. Moreover, autonomy versus integrate debate accounts for the inclusion of ^{or} and separation of women and gender studies respectively.

2- Status of Gender Studies in Pakistan:

Gender studies and women studies have strengthened their roots in the education system to a greater extent. In Pakistan, women's issues got much attention in the 1970's due to the sincere efforts of some committed feminists of that time. To introduce the discipline in the country, the Centre of Excellence for Gender Studies was established as a project in 1988 by the Ministry of Women's Development. The ministry is committed to the overall development of women, including their education.

i. Efforts for Pakistani Association for Women Studies:

The Pakistan Women's Association has been ~~in~~ working actively since 1991. Currently at university and doctoral

level, women's and gender studies are flourishing swiftly. Some of the universities that offer gender studies as a subject include:

- A compulsory course on women's studies is taught in all departments of the Fatima Jinnah University.

- A course in gender studies is taught in all departments. M. Phil program of the department of anthropology has been introduced at Quaid-e-Azam University.

- Other universities include:

- Allama Iqbal Open University
- University of Punjab
- University of Sindh, Jamshoro

ii. Private sector efforts - Led by NGOs:

In private sectors, NGOs are mainly involved in providing gender related training pertaining to concepts of gender, patriarchy and social construction of gender.

iii. The institute of women studies, Lahore established by an NGO "Applied Social Research"

The institute offers a six month long certificate program in women's studies. The faculty and students of the institute come from South Asian region to teach and learn women studies in Pakistan.

"We realized the importance of our voice when we are silenced"
— Malala Yousaf Zai.

3. Autonomy Versus Integration debate in Gender Studies

The autonomy versus integration debate has occupied a central stage in gender and women studies. Proponents of autonomy side of argument assert that women studies must be separated from men studies, LGBT studies.

1. Autonomy - Assertion:

Autonomy assertion calls for separating women studies from men studies, LGBT studies and sexism etc.

According to them, integration strategies undermine ~~str~~ women studies and feminist goals.

It calls for treating women studies as a women specific discipline. According to them, women studies programs offer the best means of generating new knowledge through the interaction of like minded scholars while maintaining a critical perspective.

→ The only way to progress

It's proponents argue that it fosters separatism. They are of the stance that "we can progress / only if the we keep the field autonomous and free of other disciplines."

→ The way toward radical tendencies

The proponents also apply radical

tendencies in their arguments. It calls for complete isolation of women's problems and a complete end to patriarchal norms.

→ Development of professional identity:

The autonomy of gender studies will create a professional identity for the students. They will be able to make independent decisions.

2- Integration Assertion:

The integrationists argue that women studies should be integrated with other disciplines of study in order to have a holistic analysis.

They ~~argue~~ assert that giving autonomy to women studies will promote additional forms of sexism.

→ Greater Outreach of the gender studies:

The proponents believe that by integrating the subject, the subject will have greater outreach. A wide

range of students will read it, and students from various academic fields will be exposed to gender issues.



→ Best way to compel policy-makers:

Interactionists argue that the incorporation of gender studies in any other major discipline is the only way to compel policymakers to keep in mind ~~greater~~ gender while formulating a policy.

4. Critical Analysis:

At present, most opine that autonomy and integration can coexist. Some others opine that integration approach is better way for holistic understanding and appraisal of issues related to women.

5. Conclusion:

To sum it up, the discipline of gender studies is introduced

as an optional subject to enhance the gender roles and issues concerning it. Moreover, autonomy and integration debates also hold importance in studying gender studies and women studies in isolation ^{or} and cooperation with other discipline; both having their proponents and opponents.

