

Feminist Movements in Pakistan

Prologue

Feminism, as an ideology, seeks to radically address all layers of discrimination against women. Therefore a feminist is a person who believes that women are subjugated and makes conscious efforts to ameliorate the plight of women. The pre-independence feminist efforts sowed the seeds of feminism in Pakistan after independence. And till now, it is seen important to empower women to make prosperity. As rightly said by the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan, "Empowering women is not just an ideal; it is a necessity for Pakistan's progress."

An Outlook of the Women
Feminism Types in Pakistan

Islamic
Feminism

Secular/
Liberal
Feminism

Feminist Movements in
Pakistan

Colonial
Era
movements

Issues

Solutions

Post-Independence
Movements

Issues

Solutions

Overview of Feminism Types in Pakistan

① Islamic Feminism ; Nisarism

Focus:

Objectives: Brand of feminism that seeks to further women rights by focusing on women-centric laws in Islam.

Includes personalities like:

Piffat Hussain, Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas.

② Secular Feminism ; Leftism

Focus:

Objectives: Advocation for women's rights independent of religious interpretations.

Includes personalities like:

Fauzia Saeed and Rafia Zakaria.

Feminist Movements in Pakistan

Pre-Partition / Colonial Era

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Issues of Colonial Era that led to Feminist Movements

The issues of inheritance, educational discrimination, polygamy and divorce were, to some extent, solved by British colonizers that resulted to later feminist movements

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The resulting Feminist Movements/Events

- i- The 1886 Mohammedan Educational Conference was the first event where women rights were discussed.
- ii- Begum of Bhopal built an elementary school for women
- iii- Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam built 10 schools for subcontinent's women.

Post Independence Feminist Movements

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Soon After Independence - subjugated rights of women; Efforts of Begom Rana Liaquat Ali Khan

↳ Background Issues

Soon After independence, there were only 2 women in legislative Assembly of Pakistan. Ulama refused to sit with women and considered women liberation as a western construct.

↳ Measures taken to resolve women related issues

- i - All Pakistan's Women Association (APWA) formed in 1949 and spearheaded by Begom Rana Liaquat Ali Khan.
- ii - Family Ordinance of 1961, a feminist milestone, restricted polygamy, regulated divorce procedure and protected women's inheritance rights.

Zia's Islamization and Restrained freedom of women that led to Movements for Feminism

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Background of Zia's

Islamization; lethal for women rights

Several discriminatory laws were enforced that threatened the integrity and social security for women, such as, Hudood Ordinance (1979), Qazf Ordinance, and Zina Ordinance, which asked for 4 witnesses in order to establish rape cases.

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Important Events of Feminist movements;

"men, money, mullah, and military"

slogan

- i- Aural Foundation emerged in late 1980s to counter barbaric policies of Zia.
- ii- Women's March in 1985 - resistance against Zia's authoritarianism.
- iii- Women protested and devised the famous "men, money, mullah, and military" slogan.

The Women-favoured Era of Benazir and Feminist Movements of Her

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Benazir Bhutto ; Great Ameliorator of women.

The situation of women became relatively better after Zia's departure from political scene. Benazir Bhutto arrived as a saviour of women's right and supported NCOs for amelioration of women.

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Major Events that took place in the era of Benazir ^{and women Bank}

- i - First women's police station[↑] was built under the government of Benazir Bhutto.
- ii - Women colleges proliferated across the country
- iii - Bring an amendment, Criminal Law Act, 2004, to protect violence against women.

Enlightened Moderation and Feminism by Pervez Musharraf

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General Pervez Musharraf; A Moderate Feminist

The era of General Pervez Musharraf was marked by significant evidences about his moderate feminist inclination. He ~~used~~ ^{used} his ~~power~~ ^{power} for women's rights majosly.

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Key Steps of Musharraf to deal with the plight of women

- i- Under Legal Framework Order (2001), 33% seats were reserved for women in local governments, 17% seats were reserved in National Assembly, Provincial Assembly, and the Senate.
- ii- Pro-women legislation like Protection of Women Act (2006) and Anti-Sexual Harrasment Bill (2000) was enacted.

Individual Feminist Efforts and Feminist Movements

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Major Influential Feminists; Malala Yousafzai, Mukhtaran Mai, Muniba Mazari

Individual feminists have given a new direction to feminist movement in Pakistan. Malala Yousafzai, Mukhtaran Mai, and Muniba Mazari were emerged as leading figures of feminism in Pakistan working for improving women's stature.

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Key results of the Feminist Movements.

- i- ^{first} Women Speaker of National Assembly; Dr. Fehmida Mirza and First women speaker of Balochistan's Provincial Assembly; Rahela Durrani.
- ii- Anti-Honor Killing and Anti-Rape Bills (2016)
- iii- Marriage Restraint Act, 2017, which increased the minimum age of marriage from 16-18 years.

Epilogue

Concluding all the phases of feminist movements in Pakistan, it ~~can~~ is evidenced that feminism is not a complete myth in Pakistan.

Despite being lacking the gender equality, Pakistan is still working to strengthen the base of women rights. However, the feminist movements still need to go a long way, realizing an equitable order, which incorporates women fully and accords them their due rights, considered ^{as} human rights.

As the renowned human rights lawyer, Asma Jahangir, says, "Feminism is not a Western agenda. It is about basic human rights that every woman deserves."