STUDY GUIDE

FEMINISM AND ISLAM

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Is there a Concept of Feminism in Islam?

Dr. Riffat Haque
Rabbia Aslam
Introduction

Islamic feminists are looking into the basic texts of Islam in context of real life situations for concrete ideas. Islamic feminists are using Islamic categories like the notion of ijtihad. The tools can be different like linguistic methodology or historiosizing. But the frame should be within Islam, not foreign. You don’t have to be confused with the term. The project is not alien, it’s Islamic. You’ve to work within the premises of Islam, only the descriptive term seems weird.

In this unit, we will try to learn what is basic ideology of Islamic feminism? What is the relationship between Islam and feminism? As a result of Islamic feminism, million of women got consciousness about gender inequalities and male domination in the society. According to Islamic feminism, Muslim women’s challenge conventional histories and canonical texts that either omit mention of women or stigmatize their distinction as deviation.

Further, we will be able to know about different ideologies related to Islam and Islamism and what is the difference between Islam as a religion and political Islam. Many authors use the term “Islamism” to refer political Islam. There is need to be attentive and engage in public debates and read literature reflecting this engaged concerns which could be explored through refereed readings.

Objectives

- To understand the basic concept of Islamic feminism
- To highlight the status of women in Islamic context
1.1 Islamic Feminism

Islamic feminism, a phenomenon that became increasingly discernable in the 1990s, following the Iranian revolution continues to spread following the turn of the new century. At this early stage, it is useful to map the curve of emergent Islamic feminism.

It is a global phenomenon that is not restricted to any geographical region. Its bravest campaigns have been conducted in Asia and Africa, while some of the boldest discursive articulations of Islamic feminism have appeared in the diaspora.

Islam and feminism have an association dating back to the 1890s. At that time, Egypt was an important pioneering site of feminism in the Muslim world, where what would later be recognized as a "feminist consciousness" arose in the context of encounters with modernity. Muslim women and men used Islamic reformist arguments to break the linkage of Islam with repressive practices imposed in the name of religion. This paved the way for changes in women's lives and in the relations between sexes. Soon feminism became enmeshed in the rising discourse of secular nationalism which called for equal rights of all Egyptians, be they Muslim or Christian, in a free and independent nation. In short, feminism and Islam are allies.

Islamic feminist describes the speech, action, writing, or a way of life committed to gender justice and also an engagement with Islamic epistemology as an expansion of a faith position rather than a rejection of it. These women are struggling with and on behalf of all Muslim women and their right to enjoy full participation in both public and private life. More recently, Islamic feminism has been described as broadening the scope of Western feminism by addressing and deriving rhetorical strategies to construct a resistant identity in Muslim societies.

1.2 Whether the theory and practice of "Islamic feminism", as an ideology, is more close to Islam or feminists.

Islamic feminism is speaking for justice to women as Islam stands for. It's a tool to remind people what Islam is for women. It's not more Islam or more feminism. The term Islamic feminism is an idea of awareness preaching that men and women have equal rights based on re-reading the Quran, re-examining the religious texts and telling people to practice it. Some people, who do this for the sake of women, don't call themselves Islamic feminists. They won't say it Islamic feminism. Some have stereotypical notions about feminism, so they don't use. Some others believe that we need a term to develop a discourse and fight the
cause, so they use. It's a rethinking process anyway. I agree that there's difficulty in the term. At one point I also stopped using the term and started to use 'gender activism'. You don't have to term it Islamic feminism always, because people get scared. I use it now because Muslims themselves are using and people understand. What's important is the discourse, not the term. We've to tell them, religion is not a problem, but it is the solution. The problem is with the way it is misinterpreted.

**Readings:**


(1.5) Dr. Riffat Haque. 2004. "Feminism and Islam" in *Journal of Gender and Social Issues in Fatima Jinnah Women University: Rawalpindi*

**SAQs**

(1) What is your argument for Islamic feminism in Pakistani Context?

(2) Could religious argument and content should be used for attaining female rights in Islam?
References:


(5) Al-Kotob (1975) *Perception of Female Students from the Countries of the Arab Gulf*
Origin of Feminism
in the Muslim World

Dr. Riffat Haque
Rabbia Aslam


Introduction

Historical research focusing on the lives, experiences and roles of early feminists from Muslim countries and communities has not yet been carried out on a large scale. There are obvious political reasons for such a lack of recognition. The poor documentation also testifies to the fact that women are purposefully erased from mainstream history. While several well-known researchers — such as Margot Badran in Egypt and Fatima Mernissi in Morocco have documented a few individual cases. The compilation of feminist history from various Muslim countries and communities, especially if conceived as a bridge towards contemporary feminisms, can have a far-reaching impact on how young women perceive feminism.

In this unit, we will be able to learn how feminism emerged from the Muslim countries, it is not only western impressed ideology, but it has roots in Islam and the history of women’s movement in the Muslim countries.

Objectives

- To see the historical roots of women’s movement in the Muslim countries
- To highlight the contributions of Muslim feminists in raising the status of women
2.1 Origin of Feminism in the Muslim World

The investigation into the histories of Muslim world and more so in to the lives of women one finds that there always have been women’s rights agenda in the social context. Whether it represented the need of all Muslim women or elite or a certain class that is a different matter.

Feminism belongs to both East and West, transcends both, and is produced in particular places ‘and’ articulated in local terms. So in Muslim societies we have ‘Islamic feminism’ - a ‘feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm’.

Muslim women’s activism in countries often is not associated with Islam. But, the women’s activism against the colonialist, state power and any imperialist or capitalist agenda was fought against by women of different Muslim countries. In some countries one finds activism in both public and private sector.

In Bosnia, young Muslims, not exposed to religion during their upbringing, found in Islamic feminism 'a path back to their lost religion and to cultural reconstruction'. So Amra Pandzo-Djuric, an activist in her 30s, interprets Islamic feminism to mean 'practicing Islam in an enlightened way'.

In Tajikistan, women who found themselves caught between local male religious leaders who wanted to re-impose a reactionary form of Islam and ex-Communists with a lingering antipathy to any new kind of religion, were trying to find a 'new Tajikistan' - interpreted as the 'recovery of a deeper indigenous cultural past evoking... dynamic, humanitarian Islam'.

Turkey and Morocco give us a comprehensive overview of how family and personal laws have been revised, again because of women's activism, so that the new Turkish Civil Code of 2002 and the new Moroccan Mudawwana (Family Law) of 2004 'legalized the equal headship of the family by the two spouses'. While Turkey is a strictly secular country, Morocco's laws are Shariah-backed, and therein both countries can serve as examples of 'a synergy between the precepts of Islam and universal values' to corresponding states with Muslim communities.

So in Nigeria, for example, we find Shariah-based statutory law. Badran narrates how two poor women convicted of the crime of 'zina' (adultery) are acquitted 'within the framework of Islamic argumentation' due to the activism of Nigerian women. Islamism, therefore, catalyzed Islamic feminism. Many Islamic feminists today insist not only on greater territorial space (as in the mosque movement), or equality in the private sphere, but also, on governance by simply state laws rather than religious codes (like in Canada).
Readings:


SAQs

(1) Do you think, feminism in the Muslim World has link with Western concept of Feminism?

(2) What is your viewpoint how much Islam and Feminism are compatible with each other?

(3) In Your viewpoint, we are in Pakistan at what stage of our Struggle for women's rights?
Colonialism, Orientalism and Muslim Women

Dr. Riffat Haque
Rabbia Aslam
Introduction

Generally, religions have a patriarchal view of the relationship between the genders. The question about Third World women’s situation has two popular versions: some feminist researchers hold that Islam could be defined as one of the worst sorts of patriarchal religion, oppressing women and legitimizing gender inequality. Other scholars Said and Mohanty argue that this picture results from Western ethnocentrism.

In this unit, after readings we will be able to learn that the image of women in the “Third World” generally, and of Muslim women in particular, in the West, is very schematic and discriminatory. Marred by racism and ethnocentrism, attitudes towards Muslims have become harsher in recent years. The Muslim woman has been portrayed as submissive, oppressed, and backward. It is this discourse which Edward Said (1993) calls “Orientalism.” In Orientalism, the Orient is created. The Orient is thus a linguistic, discursive creation, rather than a place to which one can travel or in which one can live. The Orient of Orientalism serves a dual function. It affirms the concept of the superiority of the West, and defines West’s normality by regulating the abnormal, forbidden, and dangerous to the Orient.

Chandra Mohanty (1988, p. 81) makes a similar argument when she proposes that the universal image of the “Third World woman” is constructed by adding Third World’s differences to gender relations. This image is predicted by the assumption of Western woman as secular, liberated, and in control of her life, in contrast to the makeup of the Third World women. Yet not all women in the West are in fact secular and liberated, just as not all women in Islamic societies match the pre-made image of “Muslim woman.” Also, not all Muslim women have the same idea about Islam. Their ideas are influenced by their class status, cultural background, education, and position in society.

Mohanty points out that many feminists write about Muslim women being powerless and oppressed, about their needs and problems. But there are few feminists who write about their choices, freedom, or power of action. Western feminists merely use images of Third World women as objects in defining themselves who are the real object of their studies. She means that in feminist theory, Asian, and particularly Muslim, women, are depicted as powerless individuals who need to be guided by Western feminism in order to become politically mature. It is unrealistic view all women or all Muslims as a homogenous group, ignoring the historical differences between them. A question rises here: can Islamic feminism be an alternative view of feminism, a view that can facilitate women’s emancipation in Islamic counties.
Objectives

- To understand the orientalism, colonialism and its impact on lives of women
- To highlight the situation of third world women under universal image

3.1 Colonialism

Literally meaning of Colonialism is the building and maintaining of colonies in one territory by people from another territory. The distinction between western feminist representation of women in the Third World and western feminist self-representation is a distinction of the same order as that made by some marxists between the "maintenance" function of the housewife and the real productive role of the wage labor, or the characterization by developmentalists of the third world as being engaged in the in the lesser production of "raw material" in contrast to the "real" productive activity of the first world.

SAQs

(1) How colonial discourse exploited the third world Women?
(2) What is literally meaning of the colonialism?

3.2 Orientalism

Orientalism is a multi-dimensional analysis of Western systems of creating and producing knowledge of and for both the East and the West. Said's analysis of Orientalist epistemologies is foundational to the field of post-colonial studies, and provides a substantive framework for understanding the impact of colonialism on how the Other is understood in the West. Conversely, it also provides a framework for understanding how the colonized Other understands their identity in relation to their colonized home and the Western colonizing force. Said's work provides a clear, comprehensive examination of the structural and systemic oppression of Arabs and Muslims by Orientalist systems, and is quite foundational to extrapolating and contextualizing the experiences of Arab and Muslim women in East/West feminist dialectics.
Readings:


SAQs

(1) What is meaning of orientalism?

(2) How colonialism effect the lives of third world women?
Unit IV

Women Question in political Movement in the Muslim world

Dr. Riffat Haque
Rabbia Aslam
Introduction

Much of western feminist state theory has largely ignored the experience of third world women under the post-colonial state. This further leads to assumptions about the nature of struggle and the strategies that can be included or are to be excluded from the ambit of struggle. There is now a growing literature on women and the state in the Muslim countries, which seek to challenge the universalizing language of the western feminist and developmental state discourse about, women, the state and struggle. Third world women come to experiences not only national but also international economic and political power in the era of restricting and democratization.

Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World is a welcome corrective. It is an account of women's political struggles in Asia and the Middle East from the late nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century. By culling a wide array of source materials, and systematize disparate works by feminists and other scholars who have sought to document women's political struggles and reveal the existence of a home-grown feminism. After reading the supplementary material you will be able to analyze the struggle of women in order to safeguard their political interests.

It is important to recognize the extent and intensity of women's political activities in Asia and the Middle East. It is particularly important to document the growth of feminism, the movement for women's emancipation, and women's participation in national and revolutionary struggles.

Objectives

- To highlight the situation of women political movement in late nineteenth century
- To see the women’s political struggle in Muslim countries context

SAQs

1. How Muslim women in Pakistan Struggle for their political rights?
2. In your opinion, how we can highlight the Pakistani women’s career achievement in politics?
Readings:


(4.4) Rhini Hensman. The role of women in the Resistance to political Authoritarianism in Latin America and South Asia. Routledge: London. Pp 49-70
Unit V

Islamic, law and Feminist Theology interpretations

Dr. Riffat Haque
Rabbia Aslam
Introduction

In this unit we will able to learn about the theologies of the religion from feminist perspective. It is an alarming fact that history, research books, articles and religious interpretations which is used as foundational material with reference to status of women in Islam, mostly covered the masculine perspective. The voices of women’s are muted and under representations.

In addition to that, after reading the supplementary material you will be able to learn that the feminists have attempted to counter perceptions of that as morally or spiritually women are inferior to men.

Objectives

- To understand the theology of Islam from feminist perspective
- To know about muslim women’s interpretations in the context of different Islamic countries
5.1 Feminist Theology Interpretation

Many feminist theologians, too, do not view the Quran as problematic, but feel that interpretations are the issue. Prominent Islamic theologian, Riffat Hassan, is widely quoted for her feminist theological position challenging the claims that human rights can only be discussed in secular terms, and "not within the framework of religion." Hassan (2004) lists the 'general rights' the Quran ascribes to women to underscore the concept of equality and rights in the holy book. She lists these rights as right to life, right to freedom, right to justice, right to respect, etc. What Hassan concludes is that these equal rights are not realized in Muslim societies because of infiltration of local customs, Christianity, Jewish, Hellenistic and Bedouin biases. Hassan recognizes the atrocities perpetrated against Muslim women like honor killings, discrimination against the girl child etc. in Pakistan, but is quick to point out that such institutions are not part of the Quran. Hassan quotes a Quranic verse referring to equality between men and women through equality in marriage to prove her thesis, "They are your garments/And you are their garments" (Dawood 1974, Sura 2, verse 187).

Hassan concludes that there may be hope in the future because Islamic states are becoming, "disenchanted with capitalism, communism and western democracy." This should, according to her, lead to a serious understanding of the Quran and ultimately to peace and to a more just society.

Readings:


SAQs

(1) What do you think, how the religious interpretations affect the lives of women in Pakistan?

(2) What are actual gaps between religious rights of women and in practice?
Islamic, law and Feminist Theology interpretations

Dr. Riffat Haque
Rabbia Aslam
Introduction

Different techniques are being used for interpretation. Towheed is the central principle of Islam; it says none should be equaled to the God. But some men say you should obey me and should not obey this and that. This is against towheed. Islamic feminism wants to go back to Quran, not to the jurisprudence created by different people. According to Islam, only the Quran is divine, Shariah is not divine. Here, you go back to history, understand it and come back to the present. There are linguistic analysis and contextual analysis. For doing ijtihad, you have to understand Quranic Arabic, modern Arabic and the context of revelation.

What is the space of Sunnah or prophetic traditions in the methodology? Islamic feminism understands many hadiths are taken out of context; some hadiths are weak and shaky. So people and scholars are re-reading and re-analyzing them. They are called women-hating hadiths by Islamic feminists.

In this unit we will be able to learn, how different techniques of interpretation in the Muslim countries influence the lives of the women.

Objectives

- To see the Islamic law, feminist theology and interpretation in Arab Countries
- To highlight how different techniques of interpretations influence the lives of Muslim women
In Saudi society "women need to learn to relate to one another and treat each other as sources of knowledge" (Smith, 1987, p.35). Since Saudi women, as all women in any given society, differ in their class, race, and cultural background for them to challenge gender inequalities there is an urgent need to cross borders and ignore their cultural and class differences. These women unite and collaborate with each other to overcome male dominance in their society. The use and the acceptance of only a sole religious interpretation of Quran (extremism5 or fundamentalism), to promote the authority of men is a pressing issue. In the conservative religious scholars views women are often considered to be irrational and incomplete beings. As Smith (1987) suggests, men were provided with a license to exclude women's voices in Western society. In some cases Islamic and religious texts are being interpreted literally, which provide some conservative religious scholars to silence women's voices in the name of Islam. However, recently religious ideology has become a tool for Saudi Muslim women who are learning how to study Islamic ideology in depth and to apply it to women's issues. Women are learning to use the so-called, 'legitimate language', religious language, a language that cannot be challenged by their male peers to attain their goals. Saudi women are also directed towards studying Islamic law and Shar'ia so they can speak in the name of Islam. This is a powerful way to confront the status quo.

The issue of women's rights has been a major point of contention between Islamic scholars and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights because a passage in the Quran states that men are superior to women. But according to different religious scholars in Iran, that passage has been subject to a large number of interpretations, resulting in changes in Muslim women's rights over the years.

In Iran, for example, women received the right to vote in 1963 and since then have won the right to serve in parliament. Evolving interpretations of the Quran have also lowered the restrictions on women's clothing and prompted Iran to adopt new laws limiting a man's right to file for divorce or to marry a second woman without the consent of his wife. According to interpretation these changes indicate that historical conditions can affect Islamic scholars' interpretations of the Quran, producing gains in women's rights that emerge from within the Islamic tradition, not against it.

SAQs

(1) How religious interpretations affect the lives of women's in the Muslim countries?

(2) How Muslim women's can play their role in interpretation of Islamic text?
Readings:


References:


Women, Modernity and Social Change:
Iran, Turkey and Egypt

Dr. Riffat Haque
Rabbin Aslam
Introduction

It is the Islamic perspective that gender, as it is constructed in contemporary scholarship cannot be separated from the concept of modernity. Furthermore, the Islamic perspective sees the growing prominence of the gender question and its various formulations in the academy as reflecting a real and serious crisis in social relations and social organization which finds its echoes in the political and social expressions of our age.

In this unit, we will try to learn about the enlightenment period of social change in women’s lives from the origin of the industrial growth and capitalism. The conditions allowed capitalist development, and hence the enlightenment, did not exist to the same extent in the Muslim world.

The feminist voices of revival never combine in to coherent philosophy or movement. This happen only with the enlightenment, when women began to demand that new reformist expression about liberty, equality and natural rights to be applied for both sexes.

After the readings we will be able to learn different concepts and ideologies regarding the modernity and social changes in the lives of women’s.

Objectives

- To understand the concept of women, modernity and social change
- To highlight the impact of enlightenment on the lives of women in Iran, Turkey and Egypt.
7.1 Concept of Modernity and Enlightenment

Modernity started with the Enlightenment; it symbolizes separation from the past and requires a process that usually goes from traditional to modern. The word *modern* originates from the Latin word *modernus*, which defined the separation from pagan Rome with the acceptance of Christianity. Today the term *modern* is used to highlight the meaning of “new; being different from the past.” The word gained its meaning through the Enlightenment, during which rationality and ideas of liberty challenged the influence of different myths and beliefs over society.

With the effects of globalization, Third World countries now face the consequences of modernity. Their degree of interaction with modernity affects different cultures and influence many aspects of life. The consequences of this encounter raises, since different cultural and religious backgrounds have different norms and values that form the social structure. Especially in the Middle East, the interaction between religion and modernity has given rise to debates in many different areas. One of the most important and complex fields of study related to religion and modernity in the Middle East is that of women’s rights.

Readings:


7.2 Women’s rights in Turkey

Turkey, being a Muslim country between the Middle East and Europe, was obviously affected by ideas of modernization. In the nineteenth century, with ideas of modernization current among elites, projects of modernity began to develop. These ideas first started with the suggestion of using new techniques in the military, and then spread to socio-economic and cultural areas. Women’s status in society also drew attention from supporters of modernity, and women themselves protested against their unequal treatment (Sirman 1989).

The transformation that carried in Turkish society to new opportunities was generated only after the 1920s. This transformation became the key moment for women’s rights and their liberation in Turkey. When we look at the
modernization struggles and women’s liberation in the Middle East, Turkey holds a very critical place. Being a Muslim country, it has managed to become a secular, democratic supporter of women’s rights.

In Turkey it was a common belief that with modernization, traditions would be lost and cultural norms would erode. According to Gole (2004), this perception no longer persists in Turkey. From Mardin’s (1983) perspective, Islam is not an alternative to modernity; rather it is a method to overcome the difficulties within modernity. It is a comfort zone that allows people to appear in the public sphere and provides solidarity. The gap between the modernized urbano citizens and rural Islamists is filled by Islam, and it provides them a new identity.

The dictates of Islam, its contributions to and effects on women’s lives, and the dichotomies of East/West, Islamist/secular, veiled/unveiled, and traditional/modern make it convenient to understand the struggles women face in Turkey.


**SAQs**

1. How Turkish women were affected by idea of modernity?

7.3 **Women in Egypt**

It is well known that the most powerful feminist movements in Arab World sprouted in Egypt at the hands of Feminist foremothers Aisha El-Taimuriya, hoda Shaaarawi, Nabawiya Moussa, Safiya Zaghloul, Duriya Shafiq, Malak Hifni Nasif and Asha Ratib.

The basic difference between the current movement and the one preceding it lies in capabilities and interests. It is the difference between liberal Egypt, which experienced cultural and political emancipation during the first half of the 20th century, and totalitarian Egypt which has been suffering from political repression and cultural dogma since 1952 revolution.

Women today merely are combating sexual harassment on the streets, which has increased despite the fact that more women don the veil.
Debates over feminism in Egypt in the 1990s began with consideration of the most basic semantic, theoretical and political questions. Clearly, during the 1990s, there was a great increase in public debate on feminist issues. For many years, Egypt has witnessed a growing number of women professionals and the appearance of serious literature dealing with gender issues.

Qasim Amin was an Egyptian Jurist and one of the founders of the Egyptian national movement. He was an early advocate of women's rights in Egyptian Society.

Ahmed's (1992) work, *Women and Gender in Islam*, in referring to Egypt, presents the effects of colonial structures on the process of forming the "new woman." Ahmed remarks upon the importance of Western colonization and its effect on the "woman question". According to Ahmed, the most important discourse on Muslim women and their oppression in the Middle East made its advance after colonization of the East by the West. She criticizes Western discourse, which she calls "the discourse on Islam blending a colonialism committed male dominance with feminism", as being oppressive itself.

The situation regarding women's rights and demands is thus extremely complicated in Egypt. The state has supported certain legal reforms for women but these have been limited. It permits NGOs, including those with a feminist agenda, but sometimes pressures or suspends them. Micro-credit for women-led businesses is encouraged but, the government moves against certain Islamist-favored restrictions on women, but also, as if seeking society's approval--expresses its own version of Islamic conservatism. It advocates a moderate, elitist form of feminism which it perceives to be helpful to the development process but does not necessarily want to introduce any disruptive social change regarding gender roles or women's status. Thus, intellectuals and writers who choose to deal with gender issues are constrained both by two potential adversaries--Islamist attacks and the government's paternalistic efforts to contain them, or failure to support their freedom of expression (Zuhur; 2001).

Readings:


SAQs

(1) What has been the stance of feminists for women’s rights in Egypt?

(2) What was the situation of Women’s rights in Egypt?

7.4 Women in Iran

Iran’s modernization has not been all-encompassing, affecting every dimension of the society. Industrialization, economic transformation, politics, development, and cultural and ideological changes have not followed each other persistently and coherently.

In order to understand the changing situation of women in the twentieth century in Iran, we need to investigate the nature of the ideas that went into making of each of the two paradigms on the one hand, and of the transition period, to concentrate on what kind of state and society was being built under the rule of each Pahlavi shah.

In case of Iran, pro-Pahlavi sources invoke the legislation drawn under both Pahlavi shahs that expand women’s participation in the social, economic and educational life of the country.

Iran went through two important phases of social change: Reza Shah’s state-building years (1926-41) and Mohammad Reza Shah’s transformative Year (1963-78). Women in Iran are not homogenous category, so it is necessary to analyze the experience with different levels of adherence to religious ideology. This makes it possible to assess the nature of women’s struggle for change and the impact this had on state ideology on the gender relations in both public and private spheres.

SAQs

(1) Do you think Iranian’s Women right struggle is linked with Pakistani Women’s right struggle?

(2) What are the two important phases for Iranian’s Social Change?
Readings:


(7.7) Nayereh Tohidi. Modernity, Islamization, and Women in Iran. Pp 111-142

Reading References


Challenges for Muslim Women in Post Modern World

Dr. Riffat Haque
Rabbia Aslam
Introduction

The engendering of Muslim civil society is raising profound questions regarding women's social roles and rights, resulting in conflicting images particularly concerning what constitutes women's rights, who is to define what these rights are, where responsibility lies for ensuring these rights, and the role states are playing in articulating and clarifying the unprecedented internal and external challenges faced by Muslim women.

The contemporary Muslim World is facing unprecedented internal and external challenges. Muslim societies are struggling in their confrontations with enormous cultural dilemmas as they are rethinking, renegotiating and in some instances re-inventing traditional society but with unique modern tones. Where women fit in to this process is critical, since Muslim social order revolves around the concepts and values associated with izzat (Respect) and honour in which women's action are crucial.

Kindoyti argues that the social construction of women is a communal system within Muslim society. Therefore, conflicting notion regarding the place of women in the new social order is resulting in profound social, economic, and political consequences. The restrictions within Muslim society has placed historically on women’s mobility and activities- the purdah or curtain separating the worlds of men and women- have been as practical as they have been symbolic. The curtain is slowly yet perceptibly opening through out the Muslim world: in some places among some classes women are rippling it down, in others it is a gradual process of survival and the easy intrusion of external cultural influences.

Objectives

- To examine the challenge faced by women in the post modern world
- To highlight how the issues become personal to political
SAQs

(1) How the veil is link with global issue of postmodern world?

(2) What problems faced by Pakistani women being a citizens' of third world country?

Readings:


UNIT - IX

Feminist Discourse in Pakistan

Dr. Rifat Haque
Rabbia Aslam
Introduction

The Constitution of the republic affirms complete equality of women. All was proceeding as planned, even as Pakistan got more consciously Islamic under Bhutto, till the women’s movement in Pakistan hit a brickwall called Zia-ul-Haq’s military regime. The Hudood Ordinance and the tampering with the evidence act halted the progress made from 1947-1977. Overt Islamisation via state patronage of the Jamat-e-Islami brand of Islam laid the foundations of progressive isolation of women in Pakistan. With this, the nationalist discourse in Pakistan took a completely opposite direction from the feminist discourse, which is why even today under the enlightened moderation of the women’s movement is in dissent of the nation state.

In this unit, we will be able to learn about the historical development of the feminist movement in Pakistan. Unlike the developing world, Pakistan also did a lot of achievements in the women’s rights (Women Protection Act, Sexual Harassment Bill, Domestic Violence Bill), but the struggle for raising the status of women in Pakistan is a continuous process.

Objectives

- To understand the Women’s rights Movement
- To examine the feminist discourse in Pakistani Context
9.1 Historical Roots of Feminist Discourse in Pakistan

Nationalism and Feminism in Asia have gone hand in hand historically. Populist Nationalism could not afford to ignore the women. It was the women who thus formed the vanguard of popular movements, struggles, electoral battles and even war. Annie Besant, the famous English theosophist, could be regarded as one of the pioneers of women’s participation in politics. So too were women like Srojini Naidu and Ruttie Jinnah, Jinnah’s wife, who rose to fame as quick-witted Indian Nationalists. Amongst the conservative Muslims we saw Ali Brothers’ mother Bi Amman jump into the fray at ripe old age in the non-cooperation and Khilafat movement. That first conference of barely 20 activists today has grown into a vibrant movement with network all over Asia. However by and large Muslim women remained oblivious to such developments, in sub-continent due to the socio-political situation.

"No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you; we are victims of evil customs. 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 condition in which our women have to live." (US Library of Congress report "Pakistan - A Country Study")

There was a strong feminist dimension in the Pakistan movement. Women like Fatima Jinnah, Shaista Ikramullah, Jahanara Shahnawaz, Mumtaz Shahnawaz and Salma Tassadaque were attracted to it because of the potential it held for women. They got an opportunity to organize and liberate Muslim women out of the four walls of their homes. Through out the Pakistan movement, the League leadership relied on the women in their ranks to take their message forward to the common people as well as the media.

The Women’s Action Forum was formed in 1981 to respond to the implementation of the penal code and to strengthen women's position in society generally. The women in the forum, most of whom came from elite families, perceived that many of the laws proposed by the Zia government were discriminatory and would compromise their civil status. In Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad the group agreed on collective leadership and formulated policy statements and engaged in political action to safeguard women's legal position.
Readings:

