Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies
Vol. 17, 2018, pp. 253-277, ISSN: 2072-0394
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# Revisiting Gender And Feminism: Global And Pakistani Perspectives

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## Abstract

This study elaborates a discussion of my previous studies; 'Feminism in Education'[1] and 'Synthesising Feminists' Theories[2]. Here, I analyse the three waves of feminism through my feminist lens of liberal, socialist/Marxist, radical and Islamic feminism. I argue that the waves of feminism enhance our understanding about gender struggle for equality around the global. However the differences of processes and parameters of discrimination are varies from society to society and culture to culture. Unknowably, feminism in Pakistan has been alive since the freedom struggle from the British imperialism for their national cause. However lack of education and patriarchy increase the gender gap in the country and make men more powerful. I concluded that only higher education can transform women own beliefs to defend and fight for themselves by productive positive arguments with their family men. It does not mean they are violating their religion or ethical values.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Pakistan, Higher Education, Gender, Inequality.

## تلخیص

موجودہ تحقیق میرے سابقہ مطالعات کا احاطہ کرتی ہے جس میں "تعلیم میں نسائی نظریات" اور "نسائی نظریات کا امتزاج" شامل ہے۔ اس کے علاوہ نسائی تحریک کے تینوں ادوار لبرل، سوشلسٹ، مارکسسٹ، ریڈیکل اور اسلامی حامی نسائی نظریئے کی بنیاد پر جانچ کی گئی ہے کیونکہ عالمگیری سطح پر یہ ہماری صنفی جدوجہد اور مساوات کو فروغ دیتی ہیں لیکن علاقے اور ثقافت کی بنیاد پر مختلف اور متفرق ہوتی ہیں۔ پاکستان میں تحریک نسواں غیر محسوس طور پر برطانوی سامراج سے آزادی کی جدوجہد کے ساتھ شروع ہوئی تاہم تعلیم کی کمی اور پدر شاہی نظام کی وجہ سے ملک میں صنفی تفریق بڑھتی جارہی ہے اور مرد اور بھی زیادہ طاقتور ہوتے جا رہے ہیں۔ محقق کے مطابق اعلیٰ تعلیم ہی عورتوں کو شعور عطا کرتی ہے۔ جس کے ذریعے وہ اپنے خاندان کے مردوں کے ساتھ مثبت دلائل سے اپنا دفاع کر سکتی ہیں۔ لیکن اس کا مطلب ہر گز یہ نہیں کہ وہ مذہب یا اخلاقی اقدار کی خلاف ورزی کر رہی ہیں۔

**کلیدی الفاظ:** نسائیت، پاکستان، اعلیٰ تعلیم، صنف، غیر مساوی

## Introduction

I would recommend to my readers to understand feminists theories in context of gender and education with special reference to Pakistan this article should be read with my previous studies. Because here I am taking my discussion further from thesis to anti-thesis and synthesis of feminists' theories in higher education to their categorization in different waves of feminism. With regard to feminist approaches I focus only liberal, socialist/Marxist, radical and Islamic feminisms. First to understand gender, there are two contrasting ideas regarding the definition of gender and the intersection between them as follows: gender is the result of socially constructed ideas about the behaviour, actions, and roles of a particular sex. The beliefs, values and attitude adopted and exhibited by them are in line with the agreeable norms of the society (Mead, 1980:77). The personal opinion of the person is not taken as the primary consideration for assignment of gender and imposition of gender roles as per the assigned gender.

Increasingly scholars have recognised that men and women do not passively adopt the gender characteristics that are associated with their sex. Men and women are socialised due to social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1997). Inclusion of the term 'gender' in feminist scholarship and the women's studies in the past several years signifies a shift away from the notion that biology is destiny, that is, sex differences determine what men and women are. Instead, sex differences modify and shape gender norms in accordance with other considerations, including race, ethnic and cultural background, geographical location, educational attainment, socio-economic privilege, and sexual orientation, as well as individual personality and temperament. In this non-essentialist view, gender is culturally constructed rather than biological or innate (Peach, 2000).

## What is Gender?

Gender comes from the French; the word is 'genre'. This, in turn, came from Latin: `genus`. Both words mean 'kind', 'type' or 'sort'.[3] Sometimes the word 'sex' alternative of gender social role in the society but the feminist theory use 'sex' to refer to our biological characteristics and 'gender' refers to our social roles. For example the British Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919ended the discrimination of women in all levels of education and employment. Thomas (1990: 17) argues that by the 1970s, radical feminists had begun using the word 'gender' to describe their theory of human nature, 'because the term sex no longer sufficiently described the sociological aspect of gender and power relationships'.

Conversely, by the end of the decade there was an agreement among the radical feminists regarding their theory that;

> human nature is essentially epicene and social distinctions based on sex are arbitrarily constructed and matters pertaining to this theoretical process of social construction were labelled matters of gender (Thomas, 1990:17).

Furthermore, gender is the result of socially constructed ideas about the behaviour, actions, and roles of a particular sex. The beliefs, values and attitude adopted and exhibited by them are in line with the agreeable norms of the society. Increasingly scholars (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1997) have recognised that the men and women do not need to submissively adopt their sex associated gender characteristics because men and women are socialised due to social reproduction. In other words, under this non-essentialist view, gender is culturally constructed rather than being a biological or innate quality (Peach, 2000).

Bornstein (1994: 51-2) suggests that 'gender can have ambiguity and fluidity'. She also suggests that the society plays a vital role in assigning gender specific roles and characteristics. 'Gender indistinctness' means that an individual has the freedom of choice to construct their own personality without being obligated to take up the characteristics traditionally assigned to their birth gender. while 'gender fluidity' is used to describe someone who does not accept the rigidly defined genders 'male' and 'female' and believes in the freedom to choose any kind of gender with no rules, no defined boundaries and no requirement to fulfil any expectations associated with any particular gender (Bornstein (1994: 51-2). This idea is very foreign to the traditional society of Pukhtunkhwah, where both male and female have rigidly defined gender roles that limit their opportunities and expectations in social life. Furthermore different gender studies are generally based on the theoretical framework of western and westernised women. Although there are some commonalities regarding gender roles and expectations across countries and cultures, there are, too, huge differences.

**Why Gender has a Problem?**

Acker (1981:78) was one of the first to argue that sociologists have often failed to recognise that sex differences are the result of cultural and social influences:

> writing of men, sociologists show an acute awareness of the social constraints upon their actions. Writing of women, of the sex differences, they frequently switch to psychological or biological levels of explanation.

Nevertheless, the argument is that the people's actions are socially constrained, although not socially determined; people make decisions, which are based on an awareness of the potentialities and limitations of certain courses of action (Francis, 2000a). Men and women make limited choices in different areas, because they passively accept their

socially allocated roles of masculine and feminine behaviour (Francis and Skelton, 2001; Francis and Skelton, 2005).

This study adopts the view of Francis (2000a:7) that gender is, like the study of inequality and also class or race. This study explores gender perceptions and experiences and to ask questions about the deprived and silent women of Pukhtunkhwah, and also with the intention to give them voice, empower them and value them. It examines the factors contributing to the present state of affairs and how it has evolved. Men have a desire to dominate women, which results from historical prejudices of patriarchal cultural of Pukhtun society. This is undoubtedly the case that there is a constant procedure of producing and reproducing gender discrimination in societies around the world (Thomas, 1990; Francis, 2000b).

The word 'gender' signifies the social characteristics of men and women, but also acknowledges the relationship between masculinity and femininity (Acker and Piper, 1984). Thomas (1990:11) quoted Acker's 1989 study, which reviewed various sociology of education articles published between 1960and 1980. She found a significance marginalised women sample. She further highlights that it is interesting that before the seventies, researchers were not interested in women's studies and valued their gender related problems. Subsequent analysis by some feminists (Sharpe, 1976; Delamont, 1980; cited in Thomas, 1990:11) have attempted to reduce this imbalance by using all female, rather than mixed, samples, and by treating the quality of education received by girls as a serious issue, in a way that was rare before the late seventies (Thomas, 1990:11). Francis and Skelton (2005) explored the fact that although there is an increased number of a women sample in the empirical research, with women's poor presentation or their issues are not fully addressed. Belotti puts it:

> The superiority of one sex is based exclusively on the inferiority and weakness of the other (cited in Thomas, 1990:11).

Cultural traditions, patriarchy and male domination are important aspects of gender in a particular society that requires comprehensive study to be understood, because these are the common causes of women subordination. Very few academic studies (Khan, 2007; Qureshi and Rarieya, 2007; Malik and Courtney, 2011, Naz et al., 2011; Hussain, 1995) scrutinised about gender and the related issues in higher education in Pakistan; their main focus is on higher education as a tool of women's empowerment. One of their main weaknesses however, is that they did not theorise about how to get into, or secure access to, higher education. These studies lack feminist analyses.

There are a number of institutions which play a role in the production and reproduction of gender inequality, both on an ideological and level (Thomas, 1990). The people around us, our family and the media, promote the stereotypical gender roles on an ideological

level, while employers who pay lower wages to female workers perpetuate inequality on a material level (Arnot and Grubb, 2001; Archer, 2003, cited in Thomas, 1990). However, the institutions, which 'many sociologists have regarded as central in perpetuating inequality are also, crucially, central in potentially eliminating inequality is that of education' (Thomas, 1990:12). Education is considered one of the key battlegrounds in the struggle for gender equality. Since nineteenth century, educational reformers have struggled to reduce the gender gap in schools as well as dispel stereotypes about appropriate subject choices for girls and boys. However, for the rural and some urban areas of Pakistan, where the key issues are food, clothing and shelter, education is the fourth priority. Poverty is one of the major features of Pakistan in general and a main variable in educational access and attainment.

## Literature Review

Various types of feminism have advanced different explanations for inequality in higher education: liberal, radical, and Marxist or socialist. All these feminist approaches concerned about unequal opportunities in higher education that challenged the propagation of male-experience and knowledge. Marxists or socialist struggle for equal power relation for both the genders in society that takes further by the liberal feminists to remove inequality by political, social and economic movement under state law. However the radical feminism criticises both the theories (Marxists/socialist and liberal) considering patriarchy is the main rival of women in society that gives supreme position to men and subordinate place to women. I have examined a fourth approach in this study, is the Islamic feminist paradigm. Islamic feminists claimed that Muslim societies are diverse and male dominated where culture and traditions have stronger roots than Islam. Because cultural values are older than Islamic values so under strong social and societal pressures people follow their patriarchal culture rather than Islam. Islam valued women's rights and made education obligatory for women and men both. Therefore the Islamic feminists want to improve women's social, political, legal, and educational situation around the Muslim world. Therefore they challenged the patriarchal culture of Muslim societies. Islamic feminism encourages the Quran and *Sunnah*'s teachings of justice and fundamental rights distribution in-between the two genders (Contractor, 2010).

Thomas (1990) noted that very few feminist researchers in the sociology of education choose higher education for their research venture, while so much work has been done on the primary and secondary levels. This is similar to the academic literature on Pakistan. However, this may be the outcome of a deficiency in the feminist theory of education. Of course, other educational theorists also have difficulty theorising the role of higher education in the reproduction of inequality (Thomas, 1990; Francis, 2000b). In the UK and USA, in comparison to Pakistan, there are substantial sources available on gender and gender inequality in higher education. In Pakistan there are only a couple of

academic studies on gender in higher education; in contrast, a substantial number of studies have been published on the secondary level of education, and a notable number on the primary level. Most of these studies are contract studies carried out by donor agencies. This lack of research into gender and higher education in Pakistanis largely due to what international organisations chose to study, as national studies and academic research on gender issues in higher education are rare in Pakistan. Another reason for the lack of studies and theories concerning higher education could be that gender inequality issues in education are already entrenched at primary levels and are further reinforced at secondary levels, and by the time women in Pakistan reach the age of possibly entering higher education, a series of patriarchal, social, cultural and economic factors compel women to accept the prevailing system of male dominated education in Pakistan. As a result, very few gain access to higher education (Informal discussion with the Provincial Director of Education, 2008).

## Methodology

The historical research method has been used to analyse the scattered data of feminism. My methodology is based on content and theme analysis with special reference to descriptive analytical approach, which identifies emerging themes from the data rather than predicts what themes would occur before the analysis**.**

## Data Analysis and Discussion

My analysis and discussion of the various feminist theories I will examine the differences and similarities between feminist approaches to education in the contemporary world. Then, once informed by these studies, I will look at various analyses of the Pakistani education system. Thirdly, I will scrutinise the application of these theories in higher education of Pukhtunkhwah specifically.

## Liberal Feminism

According to this philosophy, society should impose laws to bring in changes to the stereotype gender mind set of the social order and give equal opportunities to women as equal citizens with equal rights. sLiberal feminists' belief in a just society, where women and men should secure equally powerful positions. In the early seventies, liberal feminists were more concerned about the working-class children to have better educational opportunities. They struggled for a universal education compulsory for all, especially for girls who were highly underrepresented in mainstream schooling (Thomas, 1990).

Liberal feminists (Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797); Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-October 1902); John Stuart Mill (1806-1873); Betty Friedan (1921-2006) and Rebecca Walker (1969-present)[4]

> believe that female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that blocks women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world and they work hard to emphasize the equality of men and women through political and legal reform (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006: 21).

Liberal feminists raised their voices against sex discrimination during the civil rights movement because they passionately believed that racism and sexism should be abolished. The National Organization for Women, the National Women's Political Caucus, and the Women's Equity Action League were all established to support women's rights.

These groups also started their struggle for the sanction of 'the Equal Rights Amendment' or 'Constitutional Equity Amendment', and demanded equal rights for both men and women under democracy. Furthermore, they sought democratic laws to secure additional rights for women, such as reproductive rights, and equal pay for equal work issues. They also campaigned for a number of other vital issues, such as suffragette. Women education for liberal feminists is reasonable health and child care, and protections against sexual and domestic violence against women.

Liberal feminism is also known as 'first wave' feminism, because it was the first feminist movement. It matured in the context of the industrial revolution and liberal politics in the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States and Europe (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006). First wave feminism influenced the struggle for women's equal rights during the 20th century. Their struggle was in eastern and western societies i.e. the South Asian feminists struggle for the liberation of Indian sub-continent is noteworthy in this regards. Both Hindu and Muslim women movements found common cause in not only their struggle for national liberation, but also for recognition of their legal and political rights.

Written in reaction to the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is still an impressive and decisive piece of writing which people still love to read today. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) are the early works that paved the way for radical second wave feminism (cited in Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006). Simone De Beauvoir captivates the argument of men supremacy, who considered women as invaluable secondary sex in their self-controlled world.

> Woolf introduced the notion of female bisexuality and a unique woman's voice and writing, Beauvoir the notion of women's radical otherness or, rather, the cognitive and social process of 'othering' women as the second sex in patriarchal societies. We would say that Beauvoir thereby produced an authoritative definition of patriarchy (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006:7).

Actually, the fundamental concept of the second wave radical feminists' was 'patriarchy', which they defined as a system of male-domination and oppression for the exploitation of women (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006). Patriarchy was so predominant in existing society, and the feminists developed their ideas and views to criticise, and discredit patriarchy, with the ultimate aim of abolishing it completely.

However, patriarchy has a different form of authority in Pakistan that has an impact upon women's authentic voices. Pakistani women made substantial contributions to the Pukhtu language, and, because under rigid Pukhtu perspectives, subjects like mathematics, statistics, and the natural sciences traditionally taught to men, such as art, literature, and biological sciences traditionally taught to women. This seems to be underpinned by the prevailing cultural and religious view, because these professional subjects will take longer to study. Women are encouraged to study for only short periods for their first degree so that they can get married at an early age. Pakistani parents' first priority is to find a suitable marriage proposal rather than a suitable subject choice for daughters' higher education. Similar concerns were noted in works of twentieth century feminist writers, who commented on parents' apparent lack of interest in careers for girls, as they assumed that they would simply marry, have children and stay at home (Blackstone and Fulton, 1975, Hussain, 1995).

In the liberal model, education tends to be seen, to some extent, in isolation from the social structure (Thomas 1990: 13). Because education is considered one of the main causes of creating inequality in our society, also through education a society can reduce gender marginalisation. For example, Friedan in her famous book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963:67 cited in Thomas, 1990), argued that 'the education system was partly to blame for the ideology of the feminine mystique, but equally the solution for women who were trapped in their roles as wives and mothers was to return to college to obtain an education'. However, women's own problem is their attitude, their own representation in media and their education system; so there should be a change in their own attitude to stop thinking about stereotype roles in society.

Liberal feminists were inspired by Betty Friedan's landmark book. Similarly Rowbotham and Davis (1965) but from quite a different point of view—they argued that middle-class women were unsuccessful in western societies because they were lacking political leadership and social power (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006).

Their demand was payment for housewives- a kind of citizen's income and positions of power in politics. Zillah Eisenstein's work *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* (1981) was a hopeful contribution liberal feminist (first wave and second wave) thought; its influence is even felt in today's neoliberal feminism. 'Typical liberal feminist concerns during the second wave, however, were documenting sexism in private as well as public life and delivering a criticism of gendered patterns of socialisation' (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006:43).

However, the women of Pakistan do not have control over their own lives, because the family, culture and society push them towards taking on roles of wives and mothers. In this traditional society, a degree is a piece of paper that does not guarantee a successful marital life. A highly-educated woman has difficulty in finding an educated suitable match for marriage. Males prefer to marry young uneducated women because of their flexible and non-argumentative attitude and their ability to bear more children, all of which are characteristics that will enable a man to easily dominate them (Shehzad, et al., 2010). Most liberals, like other feminists, believe that school's hidden curriculum is encouraging sexiest attitudes in children (Delamont, 1980:3 cited in Thomas, 1990):

> Schools develop and reinforce sex segregation, stereotypes and even discriminations which segregate the negative aspects of sex roles in the outside world, when they could be trying to alleviate them.

In Pakistan, not only schools but also parents, culture and society instil these attitudes in children. Teachers convey these messages through the hidden curriculum. Hill (2001: 298) summarises Bourdieu (1999), suggesting that cultural reproduction works through the hidden curriculum that categorises some cultures, life styles, ways of being and behaving (for Bourdieu the habitus), attitudes and values. Malik and Courtney (2011) and Qureshi, et al., (2007) came up with the same conclusion: that Pakistani educational institutions promoting their traditional and culture values that helping towards women's subordination position in the society rather empowering leadership status. They further argue about considerable evidences that the school culture in Pakistan shapes boys and girls differently. These statements demonstrate a central emphasis of the liberal feminists' analysis, that education has the ability to promote positive or negative attitudes, and that changing educational systems will change hence, eventually society. As mentioned earlier, boys in England have recently performed poorly relative to girls (in modern foreign languages, and literature for example), yet the liberal feminists of the seventies tend to be concerned only with the areas where girls were less successful, such as science and mathematics, seeing them as long routes to career success.

Ultimately, liberal feminism is not a suitable model or theory to be applied on Pakistani society because law cannot bring equality in the society and education. These feminists

theorise about western societies, not the traditionalist conservative Muslim societies of South Asia where legal reform fails in face of money, power and socio-cultural pressures. The constitution of Pakistan clearly mentions free primary education and equal access to primary and secondary education, but 60% of school going girls are not attending any education (UNESCO, 2010). State law has failed to bring equality in education due to the current lack of girls' schools, colleges and universities (particularly women's universities, as segregation is demanded by Pakistani traditional society) and other educational infrastructure.

## Marxist/Socialist Feminism

Marxist/socialist feminism was developed in the US workers' unions, in some parts of Europe as social-democratic parties for reformation, and in the former Soviet Union during communism. So we can say that it was a parallel movement to liberal or first wave feminism. The German Rosa Luxemburg (1870–1919), the Russian Alexandra Kollontai (1873–1952), and the American Emma Goldman (1869–1940)[5] were the famous pioneer feminists of this movement. Like liberal feminism, it demanded equal opportunities for both genders, but Marxist/socialist feminism differed in that it was a movement particularly for working-class women and their struggle against society's class system for socialist revolution.

Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandra Kollontai and Emma Goldman put the foundation of second wave feminism to struggle for women rights politically and privately; as Krolokke and Sorensen (2006:7) highlighted, 'divorce, abortion, and non-legislative partnership—and against sexism both in bourgeois society and within the socialist movements.'

> Both liberal and socialist/Marxist feminism continued to develop and maintain strong voices in 20th-century feminism, though they were soon challenged by other types of feminism, such as black and third-world feminisms. The concept of equal opportunity framed a particular type of equity research, which arose outside the academy in the first half of the 20th century, and gradually provided the basis for a growing field of research in 'the women issue'. Following the scientific paradigm of structuralism as a set of ways and means of knowing, equity research initially took the basic format of muted group theory (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006:7).

The focal point of Marxist/socialist feminist explanations of women empowerment is the unequal power structure and education system in society. They are less worried about people's attitudes, because a society of fair distribution of power would naturally reinforce its inhabitants' positive attitude towards female equality. Marxist/socialist feminism is against capitalism and patriarchy and favours their distribution of power and

capital; because this would enable a society to raise the status of its women members. Marxist/socialist feminism perceives that the class system inherent in most societies is the main cause of women's oppression. As Macdonald (1980: 30) put it:

> Both class relations and gender relations, while they exist within their own histories, can nevertheless be so closely interwoven that it is theoretically very difficult to draw them apart within a specific historic conjuncture (cited in Williams, 1995).

However there are some differences between various Marxist/socialist feminists on the topic of women oppression's in society because of unequal power relations within the family and then society (Williams, 1995). In both situations they witness education is the major source of capitalism that instilling class system, by exploitation of men and women workers and strengthening patriarchy.

Marxist/socialist feminists are quick to point out the essentialism of much of radical feminism (Thomas, 1990:17), and argue that there are different kinds of women's oppression in every society of the world. However the labour market is maintaining capitalism such as low wages, harsh working conditions, and little job security (Thomas, 1990). However, women's oppression and exploitation are common within the family and home as well. The situation in Pukhtunkhwah and in Pakistan more widely is that the labour market is male-dominated to be sure, but in Pukhtunkhwah the common cultural and social practice is to seek to decrease women's participation in the labour market, to discourage them from working outside home, and to increase their dependency on men. (I will discuss this further in Section II: Disparity in Socio-economic Status).

Women's liberation activists joined Marxist/socialist feminism to condemn women's dual workload at home and outside, as well as raised their voices for equal pay and work. Simultaneously they, demanded single-sex educational institutes and work places too. Sheila Rowbotham, in *Women, Resistance, and Revolution* (1972), and Angela Y. Davis, in *Women, Race, and Class* (1981) expanded on the intersections of gender, race, and class (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006).

> In addressing what they saw as 'the woman question,' they concluded that the emancipation of women would occur only with the destruction of capitalism and the rise of socialism, when women would be freed from dependency on men and the family and be involved in 'productive' labour. In areas such as the criticism of 'sex roles' and 'the beauty myth', however, women's liberation was closer to liberal feminism, which still had a strong hold (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006: 9).

In the words of Thomas that the role of education under this model is more difficult than in the other feminists' models because education is neither simply about the transmission of certain attitudes nor about the perpetuation of patriarchy (Thomas, 1990:37).

Traditional Marxist/socialist explanations such as that of Althusser (1971), Bowles and Gintis (1976) and, more recently, Hill (2004, 2006) have seen education's role as reproducing the relations of dominance and subordination necessary to the maintenance of the capitalist state. Neo-Marxist explanations (Willis, 1981; Apple, 1982; Giroux, 1983a,b) have moved away from a deterministic model towards a looser one which emphasises hegemony and cultural resistance. Wolpe (1978) took it further in her article, 'Education and the sexual division of labour', she argue that changes in the labour process have resulted in a disjunction between the skills taught by the education system and the skills (or in a sense, lack of skills) demanded in the labour market (cited in Thomas, 1990:39). As a result schools and colleges feel the pressure of conflicting demands: for example, girls are free to choose to study the natural or physical sciences, but forcibly push towards Home Economics to prepare them to become good wives and mothers. Similarly, hidden curriculums in educational settings and teachers' attitudes in the classroom also reinforce stereotypical female roles in society.

However, Williams (1995:57) criticises state policy in this regard as representing the contradictory interests of patriarchy and capitalism which respectively reinforce women's roles as carers within the family and low-paid workers outside it. She further argues that there is a need to challenge this by demanding socialisation of caring and reorganisation of sexual division of labour and division between paid and unpaid work. However, with reference to the specific society under consideration, the state policy is failed in both aspect of demand (by providing infrastructure of education and job market) and supply (increasing women's participation in education and work forces).

Barrett (1984) analysed that education is a clear entity of state policy, and endorses class and the class system among people. I agree with Barrett's analysis that education is the entity of the state policy because in Pakistan, the dual education system (state schools, Urdu medium and private schools, English medium) are producing a de facto class system. This class system can be seen in the Pakistani society where the students of state schools make up a low-income working class who do low-income jobs—this, in turn, provides them with only limited access to their fundamental needs and entry in to higher education. On the other hand, the private schools produce a high-income capitalist/elite class which has all the necessary means to live a luxury life and has easy access to higher education that prepares them for high-income jobs. This duality of the education system and its reinforcing of the class system in society is one of the research questions explored by this study.

Barrett's (1984, cited in Thomas, 1990) thesis described four levels of how gender relations are reproduced in the school environment: the first is that of ideology, where girls and boys are socialised into appropriate feminine and masculine behaviours; the second is that of structure and organisation, where the majority of head teachers and heads of departments are men while women are employed at the lower grades of the teaching profession.

While this was very true in past times that school structure and organisation was unequal, in recent years there has been a rise in the number of women who have taken of leadership roles in schools, especially in primary schools, where most of the head teachers are women (TDA, 2012). According to TDA (2012) there was a 35% increase in women secondary school heads during the past decade. 70% of the teaching workforce is women while 67% of head and deputy head posts occupied by women. It is evidence from the existing figures that despite comprising 60% of the British workforce, women occupied only one in eight (12.5 %) senior management positions in the top 100 British companies (TDA, 2012).However, in Pakistan where all the government schools are single-gender, the percentage of female teachers is 37.4% in primary, 33.7% secondary and 17% in higher education (Khattak, 2012).The ratio of women is less than half of the ratio of men, despite the fact that the teaching profession is highly encouraged for women in Pakistan due to the segregated educational environment.

The third level at which gender relations are reproduced consists of those mechanisms which channel pupils into a sexual division of labour: as said earlier, boys are encouraged to study science and technology, while girls are encouraged to study the arts. As mentioned earlier Pakistani parents want their daughters to marry, not to study long professional courses that would delay their marriage.

The fourth level at which gender relations are reproduced is that of the definition of legitimate knowledge: what is often taught as neutral and objective is in fact are Eurocentric and sexist (however, Barrett rejects the relativism of many feminists and argues that an objective, neutral knowledge is possible) (Thomas, 1990:24).

Thomas (1990: 27) further strengthens my argument and wrote that 'in a sense, 'Barrett's analysis is remarkable because it is so unremarkable' and further commented;

> while her theoretical analysis of the interrelationships of gender and class at the general level may be controversial, few feminists would disagree with her comments about education. Her comments about subject specialisation may even have more in common with traditional liberal approaches (i.e. girls are 'channelled' into the arts) than with the approach of radical feminists who see science as inherently masculine.

Arnot (1981: 13, cited in Thomas, 1990) critiques the differing views of women argued by diverse feminist approaches, for example Marxist-feminists and the cultural (liberal or radical) groups. She believes that they both present an 'overly determined view of women'. The former view she believes, sees women being doubly affected by capitalism and the patriarchal nature of the society in which they live, whilst the liberal and radical groups cultural approach see women as 'over-socialised'. The Marxist-feminists see schools as producing gender as well as class inequality, whereas the liberal and radical groups regard schools as the cause of the problem but also a possible solution. Arnot (1981) further suggests that a combination of the two perspectives would be better, as it could explore the whole picture of girls' experiences in education and how children confront and tackle the dual powers of class and gender. This synthesis, the bringing back of agency and resistance into Marxist analysis was a feature of the Gramscian neo-Marxism, the capacity for resistance against capitalist (and patriarchal and racist) ideological hegemony, the 'naturalisation' of capitalist exploitation and racist and sexist oppression. This 'resistance theory' Marxism, termed 'neo-Marxism', developed in the 1980s, and was exemplified by the work of Paul Willis (1977), Michael Apple (1982) and Henry Giroux (1983a, b).

Marxist/socialist feminist analysis is useful in analysing the class system in Pukhtunkhwah society and its effect on the education system. It focuses on differences of social class and the social class related impacts in Pukhtunkhwah society of patriarchal oppression. Marxist/socialist feminism emphasises that patriarchy impacts more severely, more oppressively, on the poor rather than the rich. The rich have enough money to provide food and education for their children while the poor are struggling to meet their basic needs. Marxist/socialist feminism within an Islamic framework needs to recognise the importance of charity within Islam. Islam does not believe in or recommend equality of power or equality in the distribution of wealth. Allah clearly said in the Quran that I have created you in different groups and sects to be recognised and tested. It is worth noting, however, that if the rich people in Pakistan society were to pay their *Zakah* (an Arabic word for charity) every year at the prescribed amount of 2.5% of their saving income, there would not be such a big gap between the rich and the poor. However, Islam's denial of the distribution of equal power and wealth in society poses some problems in synthesising Marxist/socialist feminist analysis and Islamic feminist analysis, which are addressed below. My aim is to use Marxist/socialist feminist analysis: the distribution of economic class in the sample used will further provide a basis to theorise about the effect of economic class and poverty on the higher education system of Pukhtunkhwah. Regarding the *Zakah*, this act of charity, it needs pointing out, does not contradict Marxist/socialist feminism, because the acts of charity, equivalent in some ways to Western philanthropy, for Marxists, would be seen as only slightly ameliorating class exploitation and oppression, rather than addressing (and seeking to replace) capitalism. Muslim acts of charity do not seek to replace capitalism.

**Radical Feminism**

In early 1960s and early 1970s saw the women's liberation movement of radical feminism. Second-wave feminism is exclusively dominated by radical feminists. Their argument was against patriarchy and male domination (Williams, 1995). This popular movement was for women empowerment and emancipation, so we heard strong radical voices in the second-wave of feminism.The 1980s and 1990s saw another vital differentiation of second-wave feminism, the debate about their skin colour and third-world women.

> The 1960s to 1970s produced many of the expressions that have become household words in the United States: 'Sisterhood is powerful', 'consciousness raising', 'the personal is political', 'the politics of housework', the 'pro-woman line', and so on. Key to this branch of feminism was a strong belief that women could collectively empower one other (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006:9).

Radical second-wave feminism was divided into two groups of thinkers: neo-Marxists and psychoanalysts, as summarized by Juliet Mitchell (1970) in *The Subjection of Women* and Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*(1970) (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006:9). Their main argument was patriarchy and differences of race and class society are responsible measures of women unequal power position. However biological disparity is more middle-class phenomena.

> The Freudian theory of women's 'natural' dependency and sexual frigidity was at first denounced, then later rearticulated as a mimicry of the unholy alliance between capitalism and patriarchy that designates sexism as the particular character of women's oppression (Mitchell, 1970; cited in (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006).

The radical feminist paradigm further claims that education is a diffusion of men's knowledge and experiences that we learn in our schools. Thus, this unfair knowledge has no value and should not be taught in educational settings (Thomas, 1990). Spender (1982) strongly supported this point and argued:

> Men have provided us with a false picture of the world, not just because their view is so limited, but because they have insisted that their limited view is the total view (Spender, 1982:16; cited in Thomas, 1990).

A specific example is provided by the Textbook Board of Pakistan which has branches throughout the country and aims to produce quality textbooks up to BA/BSc levels. One can observe the same themes of male-domination and supremacy as well as the subordination of women as the hidden messages across all subjects in their curriculum (Isani and Virk, 2007). Curriculum design and the content of textbooks are strong

contributors to the perpetuation of gender discrimination in the education system. This has been noted in previous studies (Malik and Courtney, 2011; Mattu and Hussain, 2004). Dean (2007) states that the existing textbooks are full of gender marginalisation and discrimination, active strong masculine roles for men and weak inferior roles for women, to show them as more passive. Gender bias, of course, is not limited to schools; it is also evident at college and university levels (Thomas, 1990).

> The impression gained is one of the women's inferiority, her domesticity, her lack of intelligence, ability, sense of adventure of creativity (OECD (2006: 14).

It is evident from the above report that the appearance of women in the textbooks is very minimal or else they are portrayed as doing invaluable activities. In other words, Pakistan's patriarchal society is conveying the message that men are superior and should dominate and rule society while women should serve them. Radical feminists (Acker, 1989; Francis and Skelton, 2005) have found in studies that men (teachers or students) in educational institutes tend to trivialise women's ideas and experiences.

> Radical feminists see the put-downs and discrimination experienced by girls as the means by which men control women, and by which boys control girls. From this point of view, women are oppressed and victimised; they are not simply the unlucky recipients of prejudice (Thomas, 1990:14).

As schooling is a part of gender discrimination, radical feminists do not accept the idea of increased women ratio into higher education. Spender remarks:

> Such superficial analyses and solutions are not only insulting to women, they also ignore the distribution of power in society and the academic world, and the way in which males have appropriated and defended that power (Spender, 1982: 110, cited in Thomas, 1990).

However I argue that unless a woman knows her rights, strengths and weaknesses, how she would be able to compete in this superficial world of men? Higher education is a tool of empowerment and emancipation for women (Malik and Courtney, 2011). It is not a solution to leave the ground to men; the best way is to persistently struggle and do not give up. However Spender and Thomas's solution is to separate women and men in all fields of life, because when men see successful women in the education system, they try to trap her in a vicious circle and try different strategies to impede her. They suggest that women must make their own education, their own rules, and their own society. Nevertheless, this is problematic in the male dominated society of Pukhtunkhwah: women are impelled to support this male domination because without male support and agreement, a woman cannot move on in her society. The male is the head of the family unit, so all the family members are bound to obey and respect him. Similarly Hussain

(1995) found that permission of the male head for women to enter higher education means a guarantee of his financial support for the women.

This study emphasises that we not only need dramatic social change in our society but also to change women's own thinking. Challenging culture and patriarchy will not happen unless women break their own silence and ask for their rights. Higher education has that strength that could empower women. Malik and Courtney (2011), for example, recognised higher education as an instrument for social change and women's empowerment. They further argued that engagement in higher education equips women with the knowledge that will form the basis of their economic independence. Attainment of these achievements brings with it an increased status and recognition from their family and the wider community (Malik and Courtney, 2011: 41).However a question arises here: how do we prepare the ground for women's smooth entry in to higher education? My study will give the answer of this and similar questions.

**Islamic Feminism**

Third-wave feminists (1990s onwards) demanded more opportunities for women without sexism. They motivated feminist theorists to develop their own theory of honour and politics and uncompromising thinking. In this wave, we saw the rise of Islamic feminism. Margot Badran, a prominent Islamic feminist writes;

> first I came across the term 'Islamic feminist' in the works of Muslims such as in Teheran's journal '*Shanan*' founded in 1992 and the book 'Feminism and Islam' published in 1996 by Mai Yamani, a Saudi Arabian author. The term appeared in Turkey, South Africa, and other corners of the Muslim world (Badran, 2002:17).

Currently, the goal of Islamic feminists is to support and articulate gender equality is compulsory in the Quran. Islamic feminism mainly stresses the re-reading of the Quran with a female perspective—something that is sometimes called the scholarship of activism (Afshar, 2000).

In third-wave feminism, there are more debates about the effects of globalization and of previous feminist theory and the politics of unequal power relations in society. Women's oppression is evident in research into third world politics and discussed in postcolonial and third-wave feminism. The third-wave feminism is more concerned than previous feminisms with making coalitions with black, diasporic, subaltern and Islamic feminisms, in a general attempt to offer new critical global perspectives and platforms for women's emancipation and empowerment.

Islamic feminism describes the ways that Muslim women live in their patriarchal culture and how they balance their women-hood, self-effacement, with the challenges of modernisation, changing perceptions of femininity, and the power of women in wider pluralist settings of the Muslim world (Contractor, 2010).

> This feminism is usually grounded in the Islamic beliefs of these women and at the same time is underpinned by the Western socio-cultural milieux of many Muslim women (Contractor 2010: 23).

Islamic feminism challenges the patriarchy and patriarchal interpretations of the Quran and *Sunnah*; however, they are in favour of men supporting them to achieve their goal of equal rights. They challenge the stereotypical woman's role in society and give the example of Ayisha (RA), one of the wives of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who was a great scholar and teacher of Quran and *Hadiths* in the 7$^{th}$ century AD. Thus this feminism, like radical feminism, is a dual struggle against the existence—indeed, their salience—of patriarchy in Muslim communities and is also against widely held secular suspicions of visible religiosity (Contractor, 2010:76).Islamic feminists do not categorise the issues of women's subordination and oppression with socio-economic or class differences like Marxist feminists do. Islamic feminism encourages women's knowledge of Islam as well as contemporary knowledge or education. To empower Muslim women and challenge the existing patriarchal interpretation of Islam, both contemporary and Islamic education must enable them to convey their argument for or against patriarchy.

Similarly, Yamani (2006) and Karmi (2006) argue that Islam in Muslim societies is a hard, patriarchal religion that dictates a conservative view of cultured-Islam and far away from the original Islam. That is one of the key arguments of this study too—that the culture and traditions of the Pukhtunkhwah society is over-dominated by patriarchal values and by centuries-old customs. Pukhtun culture is effectively training men and women to be commodities of patriarchal culture, and is structuring the pattern of women's lives to be subordinate. Within these cultural and social patterns, women have very few chances for social mobility. This not only creates hurdles impeding women's primary education but also their overall development (Naz, et al., 2011). This study examines the possibilities for redefining culture and religious discourses for Pukhtunkhwah women, where their rights should not by exploited in the name of religion or culture.

Therefore Islamic feminists (Yamani, 2006; Wadud, 2000; Afshar, 2000; Mernissi, 2001) condemn all forms of inequality against women in the name of Islam, because gender inequalities in Muslim societies are cultural reproductions that must be eliminated through higher education.

Mohanty (1998) argues that Muslim women are always portrayed in the west as powerless and oppressed in western academia. Therefore western feminists are using the images of third world women as objects in their studies; as victim that need their help.

> In western feminists' theories, 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 to view all women or all Muslims as a homogenous group, ignoring the historical and cultural differences between them (Darvishpour, 2003).

I am suggesting here that Islamic feminism should be considered and developed as an alternative feminism, a feminism that, together with Marxist feminism and its recognition of the importance of class location in women's oppression, can facilitate women's emancipation in Islamic countries. Western and Islamic feminists do not consider religion an impediment to gender equality in education. They do not consider how women's' own thinking should be changed and how women silence themselves. Islamic feminism as it currently stands is originally a product of those Muslim feminists who have accessed higher education and have attained high positions in western societies.

As advanced in the introduction to this thesis, some of the secular Islamic feminists (Wadud, 2000; Afshar, 2006; Mernissi, 2001, El-Saadawi, 2008) have challenged and criticised verses of the Quran and rejected the possibility of religion bringing about, or helping to bring about, gender equality. One possible explanation for this is they are not living in Muslim cultures and societies; they are living in the peaceful societies of the west where they enjoy freedom of speech and writing. It would be impossible to make such a bold argument within an Islamic society such as in Pukhtunkhwah. Therefore in my analysis and evaluation, I have divided Islamic feminism in to two groups: liberal Islamic feminism on the one hand, and secular Islamic feminism. As for my own position, I identify most strongly with the liberal Islamic feminists and follow an original re-interpretation—rather than a masculine or feminine re-interpretation—of the Quran and *Sunnah.*

The problem of gender issues in Islamic discourse is different across different Muslim societies due to the diversity of their geographical, cultural and political situations. Muslim societies interpret the Quran in a way that suits their individual culture. My study attempts to explore the religious and cultural understanding of a sample group of women, women who have attained higher education, to explore whether and to what extent the impediments to women's access to higher education in Pukhtunkhwah is cultural, and whether and to what extent it is the religion of Islam itself discourages or encouraging women to seek entry to higher education.

## Conclusions

This study concluded the ways in which women are excluded from education and from holding positions of power. Male-domination across the globe therefore women have limited access to public and private life. Furthermore each of the feminisms discussed here has played a crucial role in 20th- and 21st-century feminist theory and politics, and together they constitute a source of inspiration for future scenarios. I have described the basic exchange between feminism and western philosophy that runs through these feminisms and their relationship. Where feminism will go from here is unclear, but the point is that feminism, by whatever name, is alive and well both in academia and outside of it. Some older feminists feel discouraged by the younger generation's seeming ignorance of or disregard for the struggles and achievements of the early movement. They see little progress (the pay gap has not significantly narrowed in 60 years), and are fearful that the new high-heeled, red-lipped college grrls are letting us backslide. This, however, is not likely the case. There have always been feminisms in the movement, not just one ideology, and there have always been tensions, points and counterpoints. The political, social and intellectual feminist movements have always been chaotic, multivalenced, and disconcerting, and let's hope they continue to be so; it's a sign that they are thriving.

## End Notes

1 Khattak, S. (2011) Feminism in Education: historical and contemporary issues of gender inequality in higher education in *Occasional Papers in Education and Lifelong Learning*: *an international journal of Middlesex University* 5(2) Pp. 67-78 http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/Schools/arts_education/research/journals/index.

2 Khattak, S. (2012) 'Synthesising Feminists' Theories in Higher Education of Khyber Pukhtunkhwah (KP) Pakistan' *Nova Southeastern University Online Journal for Emerging Scholarly Research* 1 (1) Pp. 46-57. http://www.fischlerschool.nova.edu/resources/uploads/app/52/files/emerging-scholarly-research-journal-2012.pdf

3 These words are believed to have derived from a Proto-Indo-European root *gen-*, which is also the source of 'kin', 'kind', 'king', and many other English words. This is also the root of the modern French in the word `genre` (type, kind) and is related to the Greek root `gen-` (to produce), which is the root of 'gene', 'genesis', and 'oxygen'. As a verb, it means 'to breed'. Most uses of the root 'gen' in Indo-European languages refer either directly to biological characteristics at birth or to natural, innate qualities and social distinctions (such as 'gentry', 'generation', 'gentile', 'genocide')(Quoted from https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender#Feminism_theory_and_gender_studies [accessed 30/04/2009].

4 Cited in Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006: 21

5 (Cited in Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006:7)

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