

Gender and Nationalism: Political Awakening of Muslim Women of the Subcontinent in the 20th Century

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Abstract

This paper explores the conflicting relationship between feminism and nationalism by probing into the perception which views women as merely symbols of biological repository of a nation. This formulation is temporarily suspended during nationalist struggles, where women's support was needed to show unity of identity driven by common objectives. Once independence was achieved, women were expected to stop being comrades in the nationalist struggle and return to being biological and ideological repositories of the nation itself. The political struggles of the Muslim women in the pre and post-independence Pakistan have been used as a case in point. The 20th century social reform movement, the Pakistan Movement and post-independence political struggles, till the end of the century, reflect how a masculine nation-state attempts to limit women's political and legal rights: the same nation-state that was born as a result of the struggles of women alongside their men.

Keywords: Nationalism, Gender, Nation-state, Women's Social and Political Struggles.

Introduction

Political struggles for achieving nationhood have been based on their claim to unity of purpose. This unity of purpose is reflected in the inclusiveness of the struggles across various strata of the society — ethnicity and gender. Mumtaz and Shaheed question this inclusiveness in their seminal book *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* by reminding us that:

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“history tells us that women are called upon in times of crises, when social norms are forgotten and women take up arms, join the Red Cross (Crescent), man factories and communications, and participate wholeheartedly in the national struggle at hand. But history also tells us that the moment the crises is over, and the men return home, women are once again asked to take a back seat, to return to their kitchens and children. Motherhood is praised and women are told to revert to their earlier constricted roles. The real test of whether women have gained any rights or not is after the crises and not during it.”¹

What does the history of Pakistan tell us? Did the women, who came out in the public sphere to fight shoulder to shoulder with their men for independence, withdraw to their kitchens after the creation of a free and independent country? A glance at the history of Pakistan will reveal whether the women accepted the limitations of a purely domestic role or they held their ground and continued the struggle to achieve their rightful place as valuable citizens of the state.

Islamic Republic of Pakistan came into existence on August 14, 1947 due to the political struggle of the Muslims of the subcontinent² for a separate homeland for themselves. Pakistan was surely as much the dream of Muslim men as the Muslim women³ since they actively participated in the ‘Pakistan Movement.’⁴ But the creation of Pakistan did not guarantee the extension of principles of autonomy and liberation to them, which they exercised during the Pakistan Movement. Almost half of Pakistan’s population i.e. women are legally, economically and socially the second-class citizens in one way or the other. Pakistan is not a unique case, where women assisted men in the freedom movement and were relegated to their traditional roles after the objectives of the movement achieved. Similar tendencies have been observed in the

¹ Khawar Mumtaz and Fareeda Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1987), 48.

² The term South Asian subcontinent or simply the subcontinent refers to the present day Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. It can be used synonymously with the term British India.

³ Rashida Patel, *Women and Law in Pakistan* (Karachi, Pakistan: Faiza Publishers, 1979).

⁴ Pakistan Movement is the name used for the political struggle of the Muslims of the South Asian subcontinent for Pakistan under the flag of the All India Muslim League, the political party representing them.

nationalist movements in Algeria, Bangladesh, Iran, Palestine and Afghanistan.⁵ Discussing primarily the Palestinian situation, Abdo remarks, “In almost all liberation movements, where women were actively involved, a general reversal of their roles became the fact of life after national liberation and the establishment of the nation-state.”⁶ Explanations as to why it happens are not found in the literature on nationalism. While exploring the woman question in nationalist struggles, feminists agree that nationalism is gendered, but they differ in their responses as to how they view this relationship of nationalism and gender as set out in the subsequent debate.

The important question then is: are nationalism and feminism necessarily antithetical to each other? If so why do women so wholeheartedly take part in nationalist projects just as Muslim women of the subcontinent struggled for Pakistan? Also important is the almost universal concern of women, who have taken part in these projects, but their liberated role in the national struggles discarded as soon as the objective is achieved. To explore the questions raised above, this study has been presented as a case study of woman’s role in the political awakening of Muslim women in the subcontinent, the Pakistan Movement and other post-independence struggles for social, legal and political rights in Pakistan.

Relationship between Nationalism and Feminism: Theoretical Debate

Literature on nationalism is almost silent on the woman question.⁷ For example, Smith defines nations as, “populations possessing an historic territory, shared myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a single economy, and common rights and duties for all members, which are legitimised by principles of nationalism. Nationalism itself can be

⁵ Valentine M. Moghadam, “Introduction and Overview: Gender Dynamics of Nationalism, Revolution and Islamisation,” in *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies*, ed. Valentine M. Moghadam (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1994), 1-11.

⁶ Nahla Abdo, “Nationalism and Feminism: Palestinian Women and Intifada – No Going Back,” in *Gender and National Identity*: ed. Moghadam, 150.

⁷ Sylvia Walby, “Woman and Nation,” in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso, 1996), 235-253.

defined as an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation.”⁸

Gellner believes that “nationalism is a political principle that upholds similarity of culture as the basic social bond,”⁹ and “it invents nations where they do not exist.”¹⁰ Finally, Anderson puts forward the idea that nations are imagined political communities. They are viewed as communities because they are always seen as a profound, horizontal comradeships, irrespective of the actual disparity and exploitation in them. He also feels that nationalism is more analogous to kinship or religion than ideology.¹¹ Nationalism as an ideology, a political principle or related to kinship or religion tends to seem oblivious to the women question. Smith acknowledges that the theories of nationalism are not gender sensitive, that they ignore the role played by women in national projects. They also gloss over any impact gender differences have on our comprehension of nations and nationalisms.¹²

Literature on feminism, on the other hand, has been predominantly concerned with, a) causes of women’s oppression relating it to unequal power distribution, patriarchy, dichotomous social constructions of public/private domains or nature/civilisation divide; and b) the sex and gender debate. Liberal feminism attributed the cause of women’s oppression to law, socialist feminism to capitalism and radical feminism saw men as the main perpetrators of oppression. Added to it lately is the Postmodernist view that there are differences among women and men, which shape generalised notions of gender relations.¹³ One of the most important differences amongst women is their relation to national or

⁸ Anthony D. Smith, “Theories of Nationalism: Alternative Models of Nation Formation,” in *Asian Nationalism*, ed. Michael Leifer (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997), 1.

¹⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1964), 168.

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

¹² Smith, *Asian Nationalism*, 1-18.

¹³ See discussions by Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (Sage Publications, 1997) and Nighat Said Khan, “Theories of Feminism: A Review,” in *Finding our Way: Readings on Women in Pakistan*, ed. Fareeha Zafar (Lahore, Pakistan: ASR Publications, 1991).

ethnic collectivities. Feminists like Jayawardena, Enloe, Yuval-Davis and Anthias¹⁴ have brought to light the gendered aspects of nationalism, and how the relationship between nationalism and women is viewed differently by them, depending upon their historical and situational location.

Women have contributed significantly in defining, establishing and maintaining the structures of nations throughout the world. Yuval-Davis and Anthias have mapped the means through which women are implicated in ethnic and nationalist ventures in following words:

1. “as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups;
2. as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;
3. as signifiers of ethnic/national differences — as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories;
4. as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.”¹⁵

Women’s involvement in nationalist processes can temporarily create a platform for the expression and promotion of women’s issues especially if they are struggling against the same oppressor. Anti-imperialist struggles in Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan are examples of how nationalism at the turn of the 19th century was complementary, compatible and solidaristic to feminism.¹⁶ In writing about feminist activism in these countries at the turn of 19th century, Jayawardena details feminist movements as “embracing movements for equality within the current system and significant struggles that have attempted to change the system.”¹⁷ She goes on to assert that these struggles owe their genesis as well as momentum to the upsurge of the

¹⁴ Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books Ltd.); Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (University of California Press 2000); and Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, eds., *Woman-Nation-State* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

¹⁵ Yuval-Davis and Anthias, *Women-Nation-State*, 7.

¹⁶ Moghadam, *Gender and National Identity*, 3.

¹⁷ Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*, 2.

creation and solidification of national identities that fuelled independence movements against imperialist powers. These nationalist struggles not only sought political independence through assertion of national identity, but also made an effort to modernise society, hence, providing a backdrop for women's rights activism.¹⁸

Enloe sees it in an entirely different way. The term 'Nation' for Enloe means, "a collection of people who have come to believe that they have been shaped by a common past and are destined to share a common future. That belief is usually nurtured by a common language and a sense of otherness from groups around them. Nationalism is a commitment to fostering those beliefs and promoting policies, which permits the nation to control its destiny. Colonialism provides a fertile ground for nationalist ideas because it gives an otherwise divided people such a potent shared experience of foreign domination."¹⁹ But she sees women and nationalism as completely antithetical to each other. For her, nationalism has always sprung out of a "masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope."²⁰ According to her, "nationalist men see their women only as: a) the community's or the nation's most valuable possessions; b) the principal vehicles for transmitting the whole nation's values from one generation to the next; c) bearers of the community's future generations — crudely, nationalist wombs; d) the members of the community most vulnerable to defilement and exploitation by oppressive alien rulers; and e) most susceptible to assimilation and co-option by insidious outsiders."²¹

We can see there is a clear difference of opinion between first and the third-world feminists. The western feminists relate to their national collectivities from an oppositional point of view. On the other hand, third-world feminists acutely experience the subjugation of their entire collectivity and do not see any autonomous space for themselves.²² Even in Pakistan's case, the struggle for women's rights in the subcontinent coincided with the nationalist struggle against the colonial power, when the women of the industrialised countries were fighting the men of their

¹⁸ Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*, 3.

¹⁹ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, 45.

²⁰ Enloe, 4.

²¹ Enloe, 54.

²² Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*.

own class for their rights.²³ Mohanty also points out that “third world women’s writings on feminism have consistently focused on: a) the idea of simultaneity of social and political marginality and the grounding of feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism; b) the crucial role of a hegemonic state in circumscribing their/our daily lives and survival struggles; c) the significance of memory and writing in creation of oppositional agency; and d) the differences, conflicts, and contradictions internal to third world women’s organisations and communities. In addition, they have insisted on the complex interrelationships between, feminist, antiracist and nationalist struggles. In fact, the challenge of third world feminisms to white Western feminisms has been precisely this inescapable link between feminist and political liberation movements.”²⁴

Thus we see that feminist scholarship has very aptly demonstrated that women often are seen as mere symbols that signify or represent the purity of culture essential to the identification of a nation. This process is integral to the political struggles like freedom movements or revolutions leading to state building. It also provides an explanation to how certain images of women are perceived become the founding blocks of the definition and demarcation of political, cultural and ethnic communities.

Women may be placed within political struggles in oppositional frames. Some political projects call for modernising women as a route to salvation others see a return to orthodox cultural/religious tenets as central to self-preservation and self-determination.²⁵ The centrality of women, both to the modernisers and conservatives is two aspects of the same situation and what Kandiyoti calls “two sides of the same coin: a reaction to the onslaught of western imperialism.”²⁶ But whether they are brought into the public sphere by the modernists to participate in the nationalist struggle, and lend legitimacy to such struggles or relegated to the private sphere as guardians of culture and tradition as part of the

²³ Mumtaz and Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan*.

²⁴ Chandra T. Mohanty, “Introduction Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and Politics of Feminism,” in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra T. Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Indiana University Press, 1991), 10.

²⁵ Moghdam, *Gender and National Identity*.

²⁶ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Introduction,” in *Women, Islam and the State* ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (London: Macmillan, 1991), 1-21.

nationalist agenda, they are supposed to act as told. It, therefore, is no surprise that in contemporary times there is no love lost between feminists and nationalists. Nationalism per se is no longer an engine that drives change and that the same force that enabled colonial societies to throw away the yoke of slavery cannot enable them to get rid of poverty, marginalisation, inequality and injustice.²⁷

To sum up, women's participation in political processes that led to national independence has been historically proven. They have publically organised themselves and collectively struggled with men in the pre-independence era in various countries for a greater common cause. What needs to be appraised is that have they been able to transform this political consciousness and mobilisation into creating political platforms and movements for their gender specific demands.²⁸

Three Generational Struggles of Muslim Women in the Subcontinent: A Case Study of Pakistan

To understand the dynamics of the participation of Muslim women in the nationalist movement for an independent country and their role in Pakistan, thereafter, one has to dig a little further in history to trace the origins of political awakening of the Muslim women of British India and also to provide a historical framework to nationalism, and feminism for the Muslim women of the subcontinent. Three distinct movements can be associated with them:²⁹ a) the Social Reform Movement of the Indian Muslims towards educating their women or the Women's Reform Movement; b) the Pakistan Movement; c) the struggle of women after the creation of Pakistan for a political voice and legal rights. These three periods of struggle roughly span late 19th century to 1939, for the Women's Reform Movement, 1940 to 1947, for the Pakistan Movement and from the creation of Pakistan in August 1947, to the end of the 20th

²⁷ Moghadam, *Gender and National Identity*, 3.

²⁸ Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam and the State*.

²⁹ The main sources of details of the political awakening of Muslim women in the British India, their role in the Pakistan Movement and afterwards are Fareeda Shaheed and Khawar Mumtaz's *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?*, Gail Minault's *Secluded Scholars*, Fareeha Zafar's, *Finding our way: Readings on Women in Pakistan* and Ayesha Jalal's, "The Convenience of Subservience," in *Women, Islam and the State*, Denize Kandiyoti, ed.

century, where women have been active in raising their voice for their rights.

The first movement was distinct from the other two, as it was a social reform movement by the Indian Muslim males aimed at reforming their women, a ‘men for women’ movement. The second was a nationalist struggle, where, although we at times see signs of feminism sprouting from within the parameters of nationalism, it basically was a ‘men and women against colonialism’ movement. The third set of struggles is purely ‘women against men for women’ movements. All three phases of struggle are similar in the sense that religion is a recurring theme. Islam as a religion was used by men to propagate education for their women; it was the basis of nationalism for the Muslim men and women, when they were demanding a separate homeland for themselves — the *raison d'être* for Pakistan; it was also used as a reason to legitimatise the curtailing of political and legal right of women in Pakistan. In response, it was also the dominant strategy of the women, who rallied to fight for their rights as they chose to do so from within an Islamic framework i.e. by re-interpreting Islam. Although gender relations have been considered as irrelevant to nationalism by many, women are very important to nationalist projects as biological, cultural and symbolic reproducers of the nation.³⁰ We see this theme constantly echoing in all the three phases of struggle — from the educational reform to the fight for legal rights.

Social Reform Movement

The defeat of the Indians in the War of Independence in 1857, consolidated British rule in the subcontinent. The British saw Muslims as the main protagonists of the revolt, and hence punished them by deliberately excluding them from the public domain. Loss of power for the former rulers in the public arena meant its reinforcement in the home. Women, their only subjects, now became the custodians of their traditional values and mores, and home a citadel of all that needed to be safeguarded and preserved. Mumtaz and Shaheed point out, “women became the repositories of Muslim culture, and *pardah*³¹ a symbol of their purity and the identity of all Muslims.”³²

³⁰ Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*.

³¹ *Purdah* literally means a curtain. It is in fact a system of secluding women by veiling or segregation.

³² Mumtaz and Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan*, 39.

With the passage of time, however, the Muslim service gentry or the *ashraf* woke to the realities of the British rule as compared to the Mughal dynasty. Changing times meant one could no longer rely on being high-born for a higher status, “maintaining high status meant husbanding scarce resources while retaining literary and religious culture and advancing their professional position.”³³ Women’s role in house economy, as transmitters of culture and as companions to men seeking advanced professions, now became a matter of concern for the Muslim men who found their women lacking on all fronts.³⁴ What followed was enunciation of various educational programmes for women. Educational associations were founded; schools for women were established and books and magazines were published. Minault talks of three ‘generations of reform’ in this movement in India. The first generation reformists were men born before 1857. As they had been trained in the Islamic religious and literary traditions, their reformist educational agenda for women reflected the religious underpinnings. The second generation — educational reformists were post-1857 generation with a mixture of Islamic and western influence. They founded schools and published magazines for women and were the first religious and social controversialists. The third generation of reformists were women whom Minault calls ‘daughters of reform.’ These were the women who after being trained in these schools went on to teach others and contributed to the women’s magazines, which had been initiated by their men. These, first generation feminists, developed their own viewpoint on issues related to women like *purdah*, marriage, divorce, and polygamy and expressed them in a voice distinct from men in their writings.³⁵

Pakistan Movement

The Social Reform Movement, though it set out to educate women and reform certain traditional structures like *purdah* and polygamy, it kept women within the confines of their homes. It is only when the political struggle against imperialism gained momentum that women actively began to participate in the outside life. In doing so, they had the support

³³ Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women’s Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 5.

³⁴ Minault.

³⁵ Minault.

of many nationalist leaders.³⁶ The Pakistan Movement, 1940 to 1947, provided women with the opportunity to do the undoable. They left the safety of their private domains and stepped out into the political/public domain. They wrote articles, mobilised support for the All India Muslim League, held meetings and as the demand for Pakistan grew intense, came out onto the streets to fight for a separate homeland for themselves. They were baton charged, arrested or jailed, but nothing could deter them from their struggle.³⁷ The protests and mass mobilisation of women was not only confined to the more emancipated provinces like Punjab, but also made their way to the traditional and restrictive province of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP),³⁸ present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), where on seeing the crowds of *burqa*³⁹ clad *Pathan* women protesting against the Congress Ministry, the British Governor of the province remarked that, ‘Pakistan is made.’⁴⁰

Muhammad Ali Jinnah,⁴¹ the leader of the Muslims in India who demanded a separate country for them, was a great proponent of the rights of Muslim women. This was articulated in his speech in 1944, in Aligarh as, “It is a sin 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 conditions in which our women have to live. You should take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of life.”⁴² His modernist views infused a spirit of fervour and enthusiasm amongst the Muslim women and when they strove for Pakistan it held for them a promise of a future over and above just a separate homeland. Willmer testifies to the excessive expectations of Muslim women from the Pakistan Movement other than the nationalism

³⁶ Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*.

³⁷ Minuault, *Secluded Scholars*.

³⁸ NWFP or the North West Frontier Province, as the name signifies is the province bordering Afghanistan and is mostly inhabited by Pushtun (Pathan) Tribes. These tribes are strict observers of traditional roles of women and even today it is rare to find publicly unveiled Pathan women at-least in the rural areas. The name NWFP is no longer in use as the province was renamed as Khyber Puktunkhwa in 2010.

³⁹ A type of garment used by Muslim women to cover head and face and sometimes the entire body.

⁴⁰ David Willmer, “Women as Participant in the Pakistan Movement: Modernisation and the Promise of a Moral State,” *Asian Survey* 30, no.3 (1996): 573-590.

⁴¹ Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, was the leader of All India Muslim League, the representative political organisation of Muslims in India.

⁴² Mumtaz and Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan*, 7.

of Muslim League. He quotes Begum Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz, a woman Muslim Leaguer, as saying in December 1945, that “Muslim women are fully alive to their responsibilities today and are more impatient for Pakistan than men.”⁴³ This idea about women’s greater impatience gives an indication that while struggling alongside their men for the shared dream of Pakistan they had a dream of their own as well.

Post-independence Period of Struggle

Although women are members of their national collectivity just as men, yet there are certain rules and regulations that apply only to them as women.⁴⁴ This became evident to women after the creation of Pakistan in August 1947. Even though Pakistan was created in the name of Islam, during the Pakistan Movement certain radical Islamic scholars like Maulana Abul Ala Maududi were against both the Indian and Muslim nationalism. Opposed to the creation of Pakistan, he, nevertheless, migrated to Pakistan after the partition and later founded the right-wing political party Jamat-e-Islami.⁴⁵ And while the succession elites were busy in building the administrative machinery for the fledgling country, radical factions gained root and demanded increased political say. These radical groups had the power of black-mailing the ruling elite by either labelling them un-Islamic or by creating law and order situation in the country over religious and sectarian grounds.⁴⁶ Women who had actively participated in the struggle of Pakistan on an equal basis found themselves the objects of reform of these Islamists. Rules and regulations pertaining just to them as women started originating. A reversal of the debate, nationalism being complementary to feminism, and fortification of the viewpoint that nationalism is antagonistic to feminism started becoming evident.

Incidents such as opposition to the Muslim Personal Law of Shariat granting rights to women to inherit all forms of property including agricultural land, refusal by certain extreme elements to sit in the assembly with women who were either unveiled or under the age of 50

⁴³ Willmer, “Women as Participant in the Pakistan Movement.”

⁴⁴ Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*.

⁴⁵ The Jamaat-e-Islami is an extreme right wing political party.

⁴⁶ Mumtaz and Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan*.

started surfacing immediately after independence.⁴⁷ Maududi went as far to say that voting rights should be extended to all men but limited only to educated women; women should be barred from taking any occupation that brought them into contact with men and public offices like the head of the state should only be held by men.⁴⁸ The dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) further added to the zeal of these radical elements by making Islamising of the country a state responsibility. Discriminatory laws like the Hudood Ordinances⁴⁹ were passed. These ordinances not only downgrade a woman's legal status, but are also legally endorse sexual discrimination against women.⁵⁰ Educated, urban, middle and upper class women were outraged and got together to protest against these laws and fight for their rights. Keddie in 1987, in an interview, said of the Pakistani women that they (in 1985 when she had visited Pakistan) "have the most effective women's movement of any Muslim country that I have been to."⁵¹ Had they always been so organised after 1947 to play their part in nation-building they would have easily gotten together in the times of crises. A review of literature on women's participation in political front after 1947, tells us that they only sprang into action, when they were jolted by any major usurpation of their rights. The two important aspects of women's movements in Pakistan pointed out by Mumtaz and Shaheed are firstly any attempt by the women to ask for their rights has been seen as a threat to religion by the

⁴⁷ Fareeha Zafar, "Introduction," in *Finding our Way*, ed. Zafar.

⁴⁸ Mumtaz and Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan*.

⁴⁹ Hudood Ordinances deal with the crimes of theft, drinking of alcohol, 'qazf' and 'zina'. 'Zina' is fornication and adultery and qazf is the false allegation of 'zina.' These crimes are punishable by 'hadd' or 'tazir.' *Hadd* punishments are severe like the amputation of limbs and stoning to death and therefore they require very stringent criteria of proof. As this criterion is almost practically impossible to meet, most crimes are punishable by 'tazir.' 'Tazir' punishments include public floggings, imprisonment and fines. The ordinances have been attacked by women activists as discriminatory against women on many grounds. For one they require the same level of proof for rape as for adultery, i.e. rape victims are required to bring four pious Muslim men who are eyewitnesses to the actual act of penetration. The ordinances also exclude the witness of women and non-Muslims in cases of 'hadd' and treat a ten year old female child as an adult on account of her reaching puberty.

⁵⁰ Ayesha Jalal, "Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan," in *Women, Islam & the State*, 77.

⁵¹ Eric Hoogland and Joe Stork, an interview of Nikki Keddie titled as, "Nikki Keddie: Pakistan's Movement Against Islamisation," published in Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) Middle East Report (1987).

radical factions and has resulted in a confrontation between them and women. Secondly only a minority of women, belonging to the urban, educated, professional, middle and upper classes have been fighting for women's rightful place in the society.⁵²

Mumtaz and Shaheed have given an elaborate review of women's organisations formed from 1947 to 1987. Although they give an impressive account of very vocal and politically active women. It is also true that these political struggles have been confined to a minority of educated women. Special emphasis has been laid on women's organisations formed to retaliate against General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation drive in the country.⁵³ But then Korson and Maskiell, showing the limited followership of such groups, have added that since in Pakistan civil rights were enjoyed by only a few educated women, their curtailing also threatened these few.⁵⁴ Kurin has also shown that how the majority living in villages were indifferent to the Islamisation process, which women so vehemently protested against in the urban centres.⁵⁵ Also these struggles have had no qualitative net effect on the condition of women in Pakistan. As Jalal points out with a reference to a 1986 report by the National Commission on the Status of Women that: "the average rural woman of Pakistan is born in near slavery, leads a life of drudgery and invariably dies in oblivion. Pakistan has one of the lowest percentages of women in the labour force and only 16 per cent qualify as literate."⁵⁶

Conclusion

The historical overview of three generational political activism of Muslim women in British India and later in an independent Pakistan provides much material for the concerns raised in the introduction of this essay. All along, women were a part and parcel of the national independence movement. This lends support to the argument that women's emancipation was acted out against nationalist struggle and,

⁵² Mumtaz and Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan*.

⁵³ Mumtaz and Shaheed.

⁵⁴ Henry J. Korson and Michelle Maskeill, "Islamisation and Social Policy in Pakistan: The Constitutional Crises and the Status of Women," *Asian Survey* 25, no. 6 (1985): 589-612.

⁵⁵ Richard Kurin, "Islamisation in Pakistan: A View from the Countryside," *Asian Survey* 25.no.8 (1985):852-862.

⁵⁶ Jalal, *Women, Islam & the State*, 77-114.

hence, feminism was complementary to nationalism. But one must keep this in mind that they did so in a way that did not violate the dominant ideas about women's position in society – that is by the side of their men. They also did it in ways that were dictated by their male leaders and very then accepted at large by their men folk.⁵⁷ Even when men sought out to reform and educate women it did not necessarily lead to female liberation as in typical Muslim mindset education is not a preamble to liberty.⁵⁸

The answer as to why women so wholeheartedly took part in the nationalist projects is that they felt that it would provide them with a platform to further their issues, but they failed to question the basic issue of women's subordination in the traditional patriarchal structures. The lack of a feminist consciousness that evolves during such processes meant that they were unable to bring about a radical change for women or even question underlying structures that cause gender discrimination. They didn't attempt to create a space that germinates revolutionary thought they provided momentary platforms for rallying women's voices with limited possibilities of change. The reason why they were dissociated from national processes after the achievement of the objectives is best explained by Yuval-Davis's argument that, "ethnic projects mobilise with all relevant resources for their promotion. Also people positioned differently within the collectivity would sometimes use the same cultural resources for promoting opposite political goals."⁵⁹

Women seemed a valuable resource that could be used for providing legitimacy to the freedom struggle and once achieved could be conveniently forgotten by those in power. Also we have seen that Islam was and continues to be very useful 'cultural resource' to gain opposing objectives at different points in time. As to the question of women progressing with their political activism in the post-independence era, it is evident from the case study that the struggle for legal and political rights for the women of Pakistan was and is limited to only a few economically privileged and educated members of the society.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*.

⁵⁸ Jalal, *Women, Islam & the State*.

⁵⁹ Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, 44.

⁶⁰ Jalal, *Women, Islam & the State*.

The case study of Pakistan makes it clear that the woman question is vital to nationalism. There were times in the history of Pakistan when feminism and nationalism were compatible to each other as both sought to address similar issues such as women's education, challenged traditions of *purdah* and polygamy and that both led to the political activism of women in the face of foreign domination. However, with the establishment of the nation-state, they both became hostile to each other as nationalist agenda now meant for stronger control over women by limiting their political and legal rights and feminism saw the nation-state as the main cause of women's oppression. The view, therefore, that nationalism serves the agenda of men using women only as symbolic, cultural and biological reproducers seems more convincing. When women's emancipation furthered their nationalist agenda, it was supported by them as we see in the Social Reform Movement and the Pakistan Movement. It was strongly repressed when their masculine national identity felt threatened by it as is the case in the post-independence Pakistan.