

The State of the Discipline of Women's Studies in Pakistan

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Introduction

Women's Studies, as a social discipline, arose within women's movements and feminist struggles that raged across the globe over the last two centuries. Although the discipline, as a field of study, has only been established in the last three or four decades, it has a history that goes back much further. Women have been expressing their wants, needs, desires, sorrows, joys, love and hate for centuries,¹ through the oral traditions of storytelling, singing and lullabies, however systematic studies of women in relation to the world go back to the 18th century Enlightenment era. The publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's book² is often taken as a starting point of women's formal entry into public political and intellectual discourse. In the 19th and 20th centuries, feminism as an intellectual discourse as well as political activism developed rapidly, and various schools of thought emerged, which contributed immensely to an understanding of women and their relationship to social, cultural, economic, political and ideological structures.

As Women's Studies developed within an interaction of theory and practice, there is a unique and special emphasis in the discipline on the relation between action and reflection. It is generally held that action gives rise to theory, which guides and limits further action, and in turn the action refines challenges or changes the theory. Women's Studies, therefore, is not simply about academic discourse or struggles for rights and justice. It is about both, each contributing to an understanding of the other. It is a dynamic discipline, which has relied fairly heavily on women's experiences and their everyday lived realities. Ever since the realisation that women experience the world in ways that are sometimes radically different from men's ways of seeing, knowing, understanding and acting, women's oral histories, oral testimonies and personal stories have played a central role in the development of the methods that are employed in Women's Studies.

Intellectually, the origin of Women's Studies can be traced to the Humanities, that is, to History, Literature and Philosophy. While the liberal social sciences, such as Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Economics and Political Science, have played important roles in furthering the discipline, the main methodological and theoretical contributions are traceable to the humanistic disciplines. Feminist historians pointed out the essential absence of women from historical accounts. History has been written traditionally as *his-* story leaving *her* out. Historical accounts written from male perspectives, and primarily concerned with celebrating heroic pursuits in war, conquest and the display of brute force, have overlooked the important contributions of women in all fields, particularly agriculture and crafts. Feminist historians have sought to reinsert women into history by highlighting their many contributions to human industry and creativity. Literary Studies have primarily contributed the methods of deconstruction, and taught feminist researchers how to read the social sub-text and the silences that speak beneath the layers of repression in language.

The fields of Philosophy and sociology of knowledge have enormously influenced feminist research methodology, which rejects the strict separation of subject and object in the process of critical inquiry. Feminist researchers and Women's Studies academics reject the idea of an impersonal and abstract science that is ethically or morally irresponsible. Women's Studies academics adhere to the idea that all knowledge is ideological as it depends upon human labour for its production and representation. Knowledge is, therefore, not neutral but always political as it invariably represents a specific vantage point and is dependent upon the methods used in its construction. Knowledge is thus partial and cannot be entirely objective or detached from the object of inquiry. It is the ethical and moral responsibility of the researcher to take the knowledge back to those who were engaged in producing it. Feminists debunk the notions of complete objectivity, impartiality, detachment, and methodological binaries such as subject/object and pure/applied. There is a great deal of emphasis in Women's Studies on subjectivity and inter-subjectivity as two or more people interact in complex ways. Women's Studies are about knowledge, about how we view the world, understand it and act upon it in order to change it.

One of the basic guiding principles in Women's Studies is that knowledge is deeply inter-related and cannot be compartmentalized into separate subject areas. The fragmentation of knowledge first into science and arts and further into physical and social sciences is an artificial division. Since the physical, social and moral universes are deeply intertwined, such a separation limits understanding. The emphasis in the discipline is upon a holistic understanding of the world, which would draw upon various disciplines and areas of study. Women's Studies is by definition a multi-disciplinary subject in which human beings are not compartmentalized. The economic, political, social, cultural and personal activities of human beings are seen as deeply inter-linked and the person is seen as a whole. The work of feminist historians, economists, educationists, scientists, doctors, activists, teachers, thinkers, sociologists, all falls within Women's Studies, even if the researcher worked within another department such as Political Science or History. Women's Studies permeate all disciplines and all disciplines permeate Women's Studies.

Since Women's Studies is so deeply related to all other social disciplines, there has been a debate about whether it is better to have separate Women's Studies departments in universities, or to integrate Women's Studies and feminist understandings into the various areas of knowledge within existing departments. The advantage of separate Women's Studies departments is that feminist perspectives would not be lost or de-prioritized in relation to other concerns. Rather, such perspectives would inform research and teaching in all the disciplines. On the other hand, the danger of separate Women's Studies departments is that of ghettoization. Feminists have feared that by creating separate departments, universities simply appease women and the subsequent treatment of such departments is that of a stepchild. Such departments are often considered superfluous and unnecessary and expenditure on them is regarded as wasteful. Very often, there is miniscule funding for Women's Studies departments, with the result that they are often cash-strapped and cannot offer lucrative scholarships or funding to eager or deserving students. This in turn reinforces the idea that such departments merely duplicate the work that can best be done within existing departments. Some feminists also believe that since feminism is about holistic and inter-disciplinary perspectives, making separate islands contradict the very purpose of Women's Studies. Feminist perspectives should be integrated within existing fields of knowledge instead of creating ghettos that serve no purpose.

Since Women's Studies as a discipline is so centrally concerned with re-conceptualizing and reinterpreting the world from alternative perspectives, it is not only about women as is commonly believed. The work of feminists has ranged all the way from studies of individual women and the family, to analyses of the gendered nature of states, religions, militaries, wars, and political and economic structures. It is a vast area and any issue, structure, idea, movement or event can become the subject matter of Women's Studies.

The main difference from general social science, which also covers any area of social concern, is that Women's Studies would look at the gendered nature of the subject being examined. This is because of the fundamental premise on which feminists work, namely that social 'reality' and language, and knowledge itself are gendered phenomena. As 'reality' is apprehended in language, which is gendered, the very way in which human beings have come to view the universe (knowledge) is gendered to the core. According to a feminist understanding of knowledge, the world is divided by language and knowledge into mutually exclusive categories such as inner/outer, subjective/objective, passive/active, feminine/masculine, irrational/rational or inferior/superior. In each binary division of the world, there is a hierarchisation, in that one category is perceived as higher than, better than or superior to the other. Women, and all that is considered feminine, are relegated to the categories of inner, lesser, passive, inferior, lower, subjective, emotional, irrational, categories, which are considered negative. By contrast, men and all this is deemed to be masculine, are associated with positive categories such as outer, rational, active, objective, better or higher. One category as a whole is privileged over the other and this inequality permeates all thinking, understanding and imagining. Feminists believe that since one of the first divisions that human beings experience is that of gender (we learn that we are male or female), all subsequent divisions and inequalities are experienced within this first sense of 'otherness' and alienation. Our minds, our work, our activities and the social structures we construct, whether it is the state, nation or religion, come to be informed at some level by the first distinction and inequality that characterises our lives and being. This, in a nutshell, constitutes a feminist understanding of the world.

Based on a feminist understanding of the world, Hafeez offers the following comprehensive definition of Women's Studies:

Women's Studies is concerned both with the examination and restructuring of knowledge itself, the social and historical conditions in which knowledge is generated, produced, legitimized as valid or true, transmitted through formal and informal education and consumed by both women and men of various social class backgrounds, ethnicity and age levels. In this way, its aims are similar to those of sociology of knowledge. But Women's Studies is further concerned with the radical restructuring of the processes for production, transmission and consumption of knowledge for transforming patriarchal, authoritarian and hierarchical society. In other words, the aim of Women's Studies is to create and imbibe anti-authority, anti-hierarchy and anti-patriarchy norms in people through innovative changes in the content and process of instruction in the classroom.³

Hafeez contends that the discipline of Women's Studies contributes to a reinterpretation of the world as an educational mechanism of the women's movement, however the discipline itself 'originated from a certain level of awareness of the society about women's subordination and patriarchy'.⁴ She thus points to the important interplay of action and reflection, which is central to an understanding of feminism and Women's Studies. As a result of the dialectical relationship between action and reflection, several schools of thought developed including liberal, Marxist, Radical, Socialist and post-modern, and the lively debates between them continue to enrich the discipline.

Feminist Struggles in Pakistan

Although feminist struggles in Pakistan go back a long way,⁵ the major turning point for current struggles was the era of Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation era when a spate of discriminatory laws were passed that affected women directly. In particular, the Hudood Ordinances of 1979, which include the highly controversial Zina Ordinance, the Law of Evidence of 1984, and the Qisas and Diyat Ordinances raised serious questions, not only regarding the status and position of women in society, but about the direction that the state was taking more generally. These measures were accompanied by the Islamisation of the judiciary by creating a parallel religious judicial system, and major changes in education and the media in the name of Islam. All these steps threatened to create a state dominated by the clergy, and based on a version of Islam highly detrimental for the rights of women and religious minorities. This version of Islam, dictated by one sect, alienated large sections of society and, unwilling or unable to make meaningful changes in the economy or other sectors, the state chose to legitimise an illegal rule by formulating restrictive laws against women.

The state's resort to such tactics to prove its 'Islamic' credentials provided the impetus for a small but strong women's movement under the umbrella of the Women Action Forum (WAF), formed in 1981. Soon after its formation in Karachi, WAF opened chapters in Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar. Although WAF was composed primarily of middle class women, who are often the vanguard of most liberation movements, the issues it raised, in particular the Zina Ordinance, strongly affected the women of poor classes and rural areas. Despite its small numbers, WAF had a strong impact in that it was able to place vital issues of concern for women on the national agenda. It gained somewhat of an international recognition for its efforts in fighting against discrimination. WAF was strongly committed to a democratic and secular state where people of all religions and women would be equal citizens of the state. Over time, WAF took up all issues including minority rights, globalisation, militarism, religious domination, creation of peace and the struggle against poverty. The realisation that all issues that affect society in general are also women's issues made WAF a radically transformative and vibrant, though small, feminist movement that created enormous awareness of issues of justice and rights in Pakistan.

One of the strongest features of the WAF movement was that it was based on the idea of a dialectical relation between theory and practice, action and reflection. Activism was thus a major part of WAF, along with study and understanding. However, the important aspect of activism diminished greatly as foreign donors entered the political arena and poured staggering amounts of money into the development sector, with large sums going to former activists. Although WAF, as an organisation, had never accepted foreign funds and had been sustained on the contributions of its own members, individual activists began to receive foreign funds for what came to be called Women in Development (WID) and later Gender and Development (GAD).

The Gender and Development discourse transformed the Pakistani feminism beyond recognition. Narrow, superficial and technocratically conceived notions of both Gender and Development led to a static view of what was earlier a dynamic discourse and an impassioned movement. The World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 had laid stress on what came to be called 'Gender Mainstreaming'. The focus on so-called mainstreaming, sometimes critically called 'male-streaming' gender, distorted the very notions of gender and feminism. Gender, which initially meant the hierarchical division and dichotomising of the world into masculine and feminine, came to be a substitute for the word 'women'. Understanding and political action came to be substituted by the concept of 'training', which implies lower order learning based on repetitive skills and mechanical tasks. Gender was combined with training to create a highly technocratic, mechanical and meaningless notion called 'gender training', which aimed to change the way people think and act within a period of three or five or ten days.

Based on faulty premises both in terms of learning theory and gender struggles, 'gender training' came to substitute political action by real people on a real and unjust world. Gender training was reduced to a series of mechanical actions and reactions, and a set of silly, childish and meaningless 'party games', which had the effect of deadening the mind and de-politicising thought and action.⁶ While the Hudood Ordinances saw hundreds of poor rural women languishing in jails, and women were being beaten, murdered, sold, bought and raped in the name of Karo Kari, Wulwar, Swarah and Vani, gender trainers were busy playing fun games, which involved clapping, dancing, blowing whistles and making awkward gestures with their bodies. This was done in the name of 'consciousness raising' a term borrowed from the 1960s and 1970s style encounter groups and popular psychology. A number of Pakistani men and women became involved in the kind of 'gender training' that relies on party games and exercises called 'ice breakers' or 'energisers', since a great deal of money was poured into this form of conservative and a-political pedagogy.

Apart from the gender training strand based on pop-psychology, another strand, which may be called the integrationist view, was also observed. This view was also based on a static notion of gender and meant the integration of gender concerns, ideas practices into all policies, programmes and practices. While one has no quarrel with integration in theory, in practice it reproduced the adage: 'add women and stir'. There was a rush to insert so-called gender concerns or gender ideas into every policy and programme of the government and non-government sector. Whether it was sanitation, health, education, drainage or elections, gender issues had to be integrated or the project would not be funded. This led to a great deal of tokenism, in that the nominal presence of women or the ineffective inclusion of women in local bodies, government or committees, came to be seen as gender integration and empowerment. Oftentimes, mere numbers became indicators of women's empowerment, when on the ground no change could be discerned in women's status, power or position.

This phenomenon also created a market for technocrats, experts and consultants on gender who became a part of the global political economy of gender. Often without any experience on the ground, ideological clarity, or involvement in serious political struggles, experts and technocratic consultants produced superficial technical reports on the issues of gender equality. The Harvard Analytical Framework, which in reality is hardly analytical or even a comprehensive framework, became the dominant form of knowledge used by these experts in their work. A highly de-contextualised form of knowledge, and abstract in the extreme, the Harvard Analytical Framework could be used without regard to time and space — any place, anywhere, anytime. As a result, its categories were sterile and its concepts a-historical and useless. It is also highly static with a number of concepts fixed and frozen in time, and its dichotomous notions do not reflect 'reality'. The dichotomies between practical and strategic needs, between sex and gender, and between the condition and position of women are, in the final analysis, false. Needs, conditions and positions are not static, and far too complex to be reduced to binary notions.

What suffered most as a result of the report producing culture in the area of gender and development, was activism and political critique for change. International donors openly and vigorously discouraged activism, which had been regarded by feminists as the very basis of reflection and theory building. Consultants and experts refused to acknowledge the heavy debt they owed to activists who had initially raised the issues. Over a period of time, the women's movement as a passionate, spontaneous and political movement died out. In its place, came the straitjacket of gender and gender training. Saturated in alienating terminology, suffused with ideas of game playing and manipulation, and overlaid with the notion of change as technique and method, gender training rapidly overtook all other concepts of development. Development was now devoid of politics and stripped of meaning. Development, in this view, no longer referred to structural change, a transformation of the economic and

social structures and in systems of ideology. It has been associated with individuals, rather than the social collective, came to be associated with patriarchy. Oppression was now a matter of individual behaviour and action, rather than a systemic feature of the fundamental structures of society. Issues such as land reforms, the redistribution of wealth, a change in the productive and reproductive systems of society, which used to form the core of feminist critique and action, fell prey to the ubiquitous presence of gender training. The latter had nothing at all to do with social transformation and material change. It focussed on a change in the behaviour and attitude of individuals in their relations with each other. According to Sabeeha Hafeez, 'the problem with these training programmes is that rather than targeting the source of patriarchy, they mostly taught the victims'.⁷

It must be mentioned here that not all feminists and non-governmental organisations fell prey to the technocratic ideology of gender training and integration. Some NGOs and individuals remained mainly committed to the political approach, characterised by the WAF movement and continued to be engaged in serious research, academic work combined with a vigorous activism. Although such approaches diminished, they exerted their influence in the direction of political and structural change. However, the international donors by and large remain committed to the narrow and technicist approach, combined with a serious discouragement of political activism. This constrains the work of some organisations that take a more overtly political line, yet they continue their own ideological struggles independently of the donors.

Institutional Arrangements for Gender Integration

The Government of Pakistan generally remains committed to an integrationist, liberal approach rather than a radical transformation of social structure. Governments tend to be much more cautious and conservative than movements, and therefore, tend to remain far behind the demands of the movements. Nevertheless, movements can compel governments to turn attention to the issues they raise. Although governments may often engage in lip service, tokenism or window dressing, they are forced to accede to some of the more urgent demands by social movements. In compliance with one of the demands of the women's movement, the government created the Ministry of Women's Development (MoWD) at the Federal level, coupled with Women's Development Departments at the provincial levels as the basic institutional framework for women's development. At the District level, no separate EDO was created to serve women's needs. The main purpose of the federal and provincial structure is to ensure that gender concerns are integrated in all policies, programmes and projects of the other ministries such as finance, agriculture, health or education. One of the key policy measures of the MoWD is thus 'mainstreaming gender issues through integration into all sectors of national development'.⁸

The vision of the MoWD includes the achievement of gender equity and equality, the social, political and economic empowerment of all Pakistani women at all levels, the creation of a just, humane and democratic society, and economic prosperity through sustainable development. The goal has been defined as 'the empowerment of Pakistani women, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, or other consideration for the realisation of their full potential in all spheres of life, especially social, economic, personal and political and in keeping with our Islamic way of life'.⁹ There is a clear contradiction in this statement as the empowerment of women cannot be simultaneously 'irrespective of caste, creed or religion' and 'in keeping with our Islamic way of life'. This contradiction seems to have crept in because of the tension within the official gender and development discourse. This tension arises from the state having acceded to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with the reservation that anything in conflict with the constitution of Pakistan would not be accepted. The Islamic character of the constitution allows the state to take recourse to cultural and moral relativism in applying the principles contained within CEDAW. Since cultural and moral relativism are often used to deny rights, this has been a problem for many states, including Pakistan.

It is also important to note that while the state is responsible for creating the environment for women's development, as the state has acceded to CEDAW and is answerable to the UN for its actions, the women's movement is much larger than the state. It has to constantly exert itself to influence the state to ensure that it keeps its commitments. However, UN-oriented official feminism is liberal in its basic assumptions and limited by its focus on access and numbers. The work of 'femocrats' has its usefulness in changing policy up to a point, but beyond that struggles on the ground are needed as the problem is social, structural and cultural, and the state's actions are circumscribed by a number of political considerations. Nevertheless, in 1998 the government of Nawaz Sharif endorsed the National Plan of Action (NPA) prepared by the MoWD, thus committing the state to the actions suggested by the NPA regarding various areas including law, human rights, the media, the environment, the girl child, education, violence against women and health.

A long-standing demand of the women's movement was the establishment of an independent commission on the status of women. In 2000, the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) was created through an Ordinance. Its purpose is primarily to examine, review and monitor progress in women's empowerment and rights, in accordance with obligations under CEDAW and NPA, and in the light of the recommendations of the reports on the status of women, especially the report produced in 1997. The aim of the commission to review and suggest changes in any law, policy, project or procedure that does not conform to women's empowerment and development, or violates any of the norms and principles enshrined in CEDAW and included in the NPA. The NCSW reviewed the Hudood laws in 2003 and made useful recommendations, however to date no change has been made. Since the role of the NCSW is that of a watchdog, some tension between the role of the MoWD and the NCSW is bound to arise. The MoWD is the implementing agency, while the NCSW monitors and evaluates the progress and implementation of policy. Therefore some conflict is likely, especially because there is some overlap of functions and roles. Nevertheless, the two institutions are expected to work in tandem for women's development.

Although the reservation with which Pakistan acceded to CEDAW, places constraints on the MoWD, there is nonetheless a commitment to the overall development of women, including education. Among the ministry's aims and objectives is included the following: 'to expeditiously and substantially enhance women's literacy rates, improve attainment levels of girls and women at all levels of education (both academic and professional) to reduce the gender gap, and to reorient existing curricula by making them gender sensitive'.¹⁰ Thus, there is a policy commitment to higher and academic education under which Women's Studies Centres would fall. The commitment to research and analysis is also included among the roles and functions of the NCSW, which states: 'to encourage and sponsor research to generate information, analysis and studies relating to women and gender issues to provide knowledge and awareness for rational policy and strategic action'.¹¹ Both institutions created for the development of women are thus integrally related to the state of Women's Studies as a discipline in Pakistan, especially since it is not a 'purely' academic discipline and has a strong base in activism and implementation. The National Plan of Action (NPA), endorsed by the government in 1998, also recommends the promotion of the 'inter-disciplinary field of Women's Studies in public and private educational/training institutions' and the strengthening of 'action-based, policy directed research on women's issues'.

The action recommended was that the funding of Women's Studies Centres at five universities throughout Pakistan, should be ensured through the Ministry of Education and the UGC (now Higher Education Commission). It was also recommended that there should be 'linkages and exchange of information and expertise between public and private Women's Studies initiatives, including the Women's Studies curriculum of the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU)'.¹² There is thus a commitment at the state level to promote and encourage the discipline through ensured funding and support.

Women's Studies Centres¹³

The Women's Studies Centres in Pakistan can be divided into public, (those funded by the government and/or international donors, and established at state universities), and those in the non-government sector funded primarily or only by international donors. In 1989, the Women's Development Division (now Ministry of Women's Development) established Women's Studies Centres in five universities, initially as a five-year project. The major objectives of these centres were: (1) critical examination of concepts, theories, models and methodologies that have been responsible for excluding or rendering women invisible in scientific investigation and development; (2) redefinition of curricula at the university, colleges and high schools with a view to incorporating knowledge on women and contributions by women scholars; (3) creation of awareness and generating a debate on women's issues; (4) development of introductory foundation courses in Women's Studies for the university students; (5) promotion of academic and action-oriented research on women in development; (6) identification, replication and translation of relevant materials from other languages into the national language. The initial funding for the creation of the centres came from the Women's Development Division (now MoWD) and, subsequently, some centres were able to raise independent funding through tuition fees and donations by foreign donors. The following is a brief overview of the state of the public sector Women's Studies Centres.

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The aims and objectives of the Women's Studies Centre at Iqbal Open University, established in 1997 with funding from the Ministry of Women's Development, include among others; to introduce Women's Studies as an academic discipline through the distance learning system, create awareness and sensitisation to gender issues at the community level through seminars and workshops, and to launch media programmes to emphasise women's role and their contributions in national and international development.

The aims and objectives of the Women Research and Resource Centre (WRRC) of the Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi, are 'to sensitise women on Gender issues and to focus on Fatima Jinnah Women University students for enhancement of education and employment opportunities in all disciplines'. It was established in 1999 emphasises 'research in various gender and social issues, which reflect on the academic and professional development of women by focussing on providing support services for women students of FJWU'.

The Institute of Women Development Studies (IWDS) was established in 1994 by the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. The aim of the Institute is 'to replace the outmoded value system with one that emphasises equality and mutual respect and dignity among members of both sexes and to help to remove disparities in the provision of educational facilities'. The report by the IWDS indicates that the institute seems to conflate Women's Studies with Home Economics, which is a major problem as the discipline of Women's Studies challenges some of the basic assumptions of the ideology of Home Economics as a knowledge form that is meant to re-create and reinforce the gender division of labour. The focus on the 'uplift of rural women and enhancing the literacy rate, and installing better health practices', reflects a social welfare approach, which conflicts with a radical approach based on the transformation of material and ideological structures of patriarchy.

Courses and Training Programmes

There seems to be fairly wide variation in the kinds and levels of courses being taught at the Women's Studies Centres and departments in the public sector. The courses vary from highly theoretical and historical ones to courses based on practical community work. In some cases, there seems to be immense confusion regarding Women's Studies as a discipline as courses in Home Economics, dietetics, flower making or embroidery are defined as Women's Studies courses. Whether a course is a Women's Studies course depends on how a subject matter is treated. Courses in Home Economics, embroidery and flower making are generally not considered Women's Studies courses. Occasionally, such courses contain conservative issues, and in most cases the content of such courses is not transformative or the kind that challenges existing structures of inequality and oppression. The basis of such courses in some public sector centres comes from the erroneous assumption that Women's Studies pertains to anything that deals with women, irrespective of how conservative it might be. Although the subjects of art, crafts, literature, poetry, dance, music and drama certainly form a part of the Women's Studies approach, the difference lies in the manner in which they are addressed. Arts, crafts and literature and poetry that contain the potential for transformation are normally considered a part of Women's Studies, but not when arts and crafts are designed to reinforce patriarchal and dominant values that define what a 'good housewife and mother' must know. Some centres, such as the one run by Karachi University, reflect a serious and rigorous Women's Studies approach in their course contents, while others, such as the centre in Jamshoro, Sindh or the Punjab University, are not based on a clear conceptual understanding of Women's Studies.

The Women's Studies Centre, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, has offered three certificate courses attended by 64 participants. The courses were interdisciplinary in nature and content. Currently, the Centre offers a six-week introductory course in Women's Studies, which is constrained due to a severe shortage of funds. However, 24 students have enrolled for the course. The Centre has proposed to integrate Women's Studies into the other social science departments of the University. It has sought to integrate women and development into Economics, feminism and anthropology into Anthropology, the history of the women's movement in Pakistan in the History department, women and peace in the Department of Strategic Studies and Defence, gendered international relations within the International Relations department, the role of women in the Pakistan Movement at the Institute of Pakistan Studies and gender issues in management within the Department of Management and Business. However, only the Department of Anthropology responded with a list of course contents and interest in integration was expressed only by the Department of Economics. There was general indifference by the other departments, which were not responsive to the idea of integration.

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The Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, www.megalecture.com university reflects a comprehensive and holistic approach in its course contents. There are introductory courses in Women's Studies along with courses on feminist theories, feminist research methods, women's history in South Asia, the social construction of gender and gender and development. Additionally, there are courses on the women's movement globally and in Pakistan, as well as courses on women in Islam, reproductive health, women and media, women and the environment, women and law, women in technology and entrepreneurship, gender and development and women and work. A brief overview of the course contents indicates that the feminist perspectives underlies the courses, which have a global, national, local and cross-sectoral approach.

There has so far been no teaching activity at the Women's Studies Centre, University of Balochistan in Quetta. A few certificate courses were conducted earlier but the space for teaching has been given to the Islamiyat and Persian departments, with the result that all teaching activity has been suspended. The approach of the Centre seems to be currently based on gender sensitisation workshops and seminars. The short seminar courses are focussed on issues such as the social empowerment of women, Islamic, legal and constitutional rights of women, women and work, women and education, and women and decision-making.

The courses offered at the AIOU include a course on the psychology of women, the role of women writers in Pakistani literature, research methods in women's studies and feminist theories. Apart from these, the Open University requires students to attend courses in the departments of Sociology, Social Work and Population Studies. The latter include a course in social statistics and the sociology of gender. There is thus an attempt to follow an interdisciplinary orientation. The department has also prepared two TV programmes as a part of its distance learning initiative. Additionally, there are visiting lecturers by eminent scholars in the government, private and non-government sectors. In the future, the AIOU plans the following courses at the Postgraduate levels: gender and development, perspectives on women's studies, the changing role of urban women in Pakistan, the economic contribution of rural women, women's health issues, the contribution of women in education, arts and science, and technology, and women and Islam.

The WRRC of the Fatima Jinnah Women University offers various courses in gender oriented development issues, which include a course on women and development, women in management, and self-esteem and mental health. Apart from these, a Women's Studies course called 'Status of Women in Pakistan' is offered for PhD candidates of the University. Training and sensitisation workshops on issues such as 'women in higher education', 'managerial skills' and 'Gender and Governance' are held at regular intervals. In November 2002, an international workshop on 'Women in Higher Education Management' was held in collaboration with the British Council and the Association of Commonwealth Universities. The University has an eminent lecture series in which internationally renowned scholars and practitioners make presentations for students and faculty.

The only courses mentioned by the IWDS at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, are those based on Home Economics and community development, as well as short courses in income generation activities such as fabric painting, pot painting, tie and dye, fancy arts and crafts. The latter are designed to enhance income generation and do not fall within a Women's Studies paradigm. There are courses on social research methods, nutrition and dietetics, diet therapy, physiological chemistry, health and diseases, economic problems of Pakistan, women's health and mental illness and gender. The courses reflect a relatively vague notion of gender and how it is related to the economy and health, but the critical edge of Women's Studies courses is lacking. However, the Institute has organised workshops and seminars including one on 'Gender and Governance' and one on 'gender sensitisation' in collaboration with the MoWD. It has also held lectures on 'women and the media' and women's economic development by prominent scholars and members of the government.

Degrees Awarded

The Women's Studies Centre at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, has prepared the curriculum for the MA programme in Women's Studies after a great deal of consultation with feminists, activists, academics and consultants working in the field. However, due to various reasons, the MA programme has not been started. In 1992 and 1994, the Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies (CEWS) at Karachi University offered two certificate courses in preparation for the degree programme in Women's Studies. In 1996, the first batch of students was admitted for the full two year MA course. In 2002, CEWS launched the MPhil and PhD programmes in Women's Studies. The interdisciplinary nature of the courses is evident from an examination of the structure of

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the courses. The Centre for Women's Studies, www.sineofalec.com was made a department at the initiative of the University in 2001, and offers an MA in Women's Studies. The Women's Studies Centre at Peshawar University, has now become a full-fledged department of Gender and Women's Studies, which has offered certificate courses and is now ready to launch a diploma programme. The AIOU currently offers courses at two levels: a one-year Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) and certificate courses. There are plans underway to introduce the MSc programme. In the future, Open University plans to launch the MPhil and PhD programmes in Women's Studies. In the future, the WRRRC of the Fatima Jinnah Women University plans to develop an MA in Gender Studies in coordination with the University of Glasgow. The Institute of Women Development Studies at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, offers an MA in Women's Studies, it appears that so far there has not been enrolment in the degree programme.

Research and Publications

The Women's Studies Centre at the Quaid-i-Azam University has prepared a directory of theses on gender issues produced in various departments of the university and this will be published upon the availability of funds. The Centre has contributed research articles to two books published in the USA and Canada. Currently, the Director is involved in a research project on 'Continuity and Discontinuity of Women's Movement in Pakistan', and has co-authored a book on 'Women's Contribution in the Cotton Industry', due to be published soon. The director and staff, in their individual capacities, have contributed research papers in various national and international publications and have presented a large number of papers at international conferences.

The CEWS at Karachi University has completed about 100 major and minor studies on socio-economic, legal, health and environment issues. These include studies by both the faculty and students on home-based workers since Karachi is a major industrial and commercial Centre, while others are on child trafficking, legal and health issues. However, publication seems to be a relatively less developed area as no books or periodicals of any significance have yet been produced. The Department of Women's Studies, Punjab University has conducted a study of women's development NGOs in the Punjab, a study on the gender differentials in academic achievement from primary to higher education in Pakistan, and a review of theses related to women's issues at the MA level at the Punjab University. All three studies have been published by the University.

The Peshawar University, Department of Women's Studies has published a study on the 'UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child, Islamic Law and Pakistan Legislation' by Shaheen Sardar Ali and Baela Jamil, a comparative study of CEDAW (UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), Islamic laws and Pakistan legislation by Shaheen Sardar Ali, a study on violence against women and honour killing in N.W.F.P. by Amirzada Asad, and a case study of Bahrain, District Swat on women and economic empowerment by Basharat Hussain. The centre staff contributed to the formation of the Gender Reform Action Plan of the MoWD. The Women's Studies Centre at the Balochistan University has conducted research studies on communities, rural women's access to health facilities, a survey of women in jails and their needs assessments, the economic contribution of women in development, a profile of women in *Katchi abadis* (squatter settlements), violence against women, employment of women in the public and private sectors (sponsored by the NCSW) and the Asian Development Bank, and has contributed to the development of the Gender Reform Action Plan of the MoWD funded by the Asian Development Bank. The Centre has also been deeply involved in the Beijing +5 and +10 processes as a facilitator in organising consultative meetings at the provincial, national and local levels.

The Allama Iqbal Open University has published two research studies, 'Voiceless Melodies', and 'The Case Studies of Successful Women in Pakistan'. Currently, the AIOU is in the process of carrying out the following studies based on the priorities within the NPA and in collaboration with the MoWD: needs assessment of both rural and urban women in income-generating skills development, impact of electronic and print media in changing the image of women in rural areas of Pakistan, evaluation of credit schemes and linkages with First Women Bank and entrepreneurs, analysis of gender gaps in access to education and training, international armed conflicts and impact of refugees on Pakistani women, the impact of the structural adjustment package on women in Pakistan, women in politics in the past and present, and women and decision-making in Pakistan.

The WRRRC of the Fatima Jinnah Women University has supervised the writing of 16 theses on gender issues at the MA levels. A monograph series is being published, which includes 'A Critical Analysis of Government Policies, Plans and Funding of Education for Women from 1971- 2001', and 'Status of Women in the Light of

Four Major Religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam) in the Subcontinent with Special Reference to Pakistan'. Institutional research studies in socio-cultural and economic areas are regular feature of the centre's activities.

The faculty of Institute of Women Development Studies at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, has published two studies both by Professor Parveen Shah.¹⁴

Journals

The Women's Studies Centre at the Quaid-i-Azam University brought out the first issue of the *Journal of Women's Studies* based on the theme 'Women and the Family' in 1994. The second issue has not been published due to lack of funds for honoraria for writers, although papers for the second issue have been collected. Similarly, the Centre has published a quarterly newsletter, which was discontinued in 1997 due to lack of funds. The feminist and Women's Studies periodicals to which the CEWS at Karachi subscribes include *Women's Studies International Forum*, *Feminist Review*, *SIGN*, *Studies on Women*, *Abstracts*, and *Women's Studies Quarterly*.

The AIOU plans to publish a Women's Studies Journal, which will focus on contemporary gender issues within a national and international perspective. The work of the students of the Open University will be recommended for publication in social research journals of repute.

Professional Associations

The idea of setting up a Pakistan Women's Studies Association (PWSA) was first conceived by Sabeeha Hafeez in 1987. The main aim of PWSA was 'to introduce and promote the discipline of Women's Studies in Pakistan by providing a forum for exchange of ideas among experts, policy makers, programmers, NGOs, teachers, other concerned organisations and the general public'.¹⁵ However, on account of the pressing previous commitments of various members, the association could not be established. Five years later, in March 1992, Pakistan Women's Studies Association (PAWS) was set up by Tahira Aftab, Professor of History and Director of the Women's Study Centre at Karachi University. It was intended to provide 'a forum of interaction and coordination for those engaged in teaching, research or action forewoman's development, national and internationally'. The Association has organised national seminars on 'Women's Struggle for Survival', 'Human Rights Abuse in the Family' and 'Women's Work Experiences'. The journal *Alam-e-Niswan* (Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies) is brought out by the Association. It also brings out a quarterly newsletter called *Panghat*. The latter is distributed free of cost to non-government organisations, grass roots workers, and concerned people working on women's issues in rural and semi-urban Sindh. PAWS has 72 members and has developed close links with women at the grassroots level, in particular with self-employed women. It has also published other works.¹⁶

Affiliations and Linkages

The Women's Studies Centre at the Quaid-i-Azam University has not reported any formal linkages with other institutes, however a large number of eminent scholars and practitioners in the field of Women's Studies, such as Maria Mies, the well-known German feminist, have lectured at the Centre. However, the Centre has worked in collaboration with the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), and Pattan Development Organisation (PDO). There are informal links with women's NGOs and institutes, which are not currently institutionalised.

The Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies at Karachi University runs collaborative ventures with both International organisations and Pakistani non-government organisations. It also works closely with government and semi-government institutions. It had academic linkages with the University of East London between 1975 and 1997. Additionally, CEWS has linkages with Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada and the University of Jakarta, Indonesia. These linkages involved an exchange of students, faculty as well as the collaborative holding of workshops, training programmes along with formal and informal visits. CEWS worked with the legal organisation, Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA) on a study on trafficking of female children and this was launched in 2002. Other research and training linkages include a collaborative study of female home-based workers with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), workshops on reproductive health issues with Shirkat Gah and documentary preparation with Pakistan Women Lawyers' Association (PAWLA). The Women's Studies Centre at the University of Balochistan maintains regular liaison with other Women's Studies Centres as well as government departments in order to keep abreast of intellectual or policy level developments.

Funding Sources

The Women's Studies Centre at the Quaid-i-Azam University has received a total of Rs. 2,896,345 since 1989 from the government. The full budget was never disbursed and as a result the activities of the Centre were severely affected. Teaching, research, publication and acquisition of materials have all been hampered by the excessively low allocation of funds.

The CEWS at Karachi University was set up by the government in 1989 as a research centre. While its initial funding came from the University Grants Commission through the Women's Ministry (earlier Women's Division), it subsequently received funds from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ILO, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF). The source of funding for the Department of Women's Studies, Punjab University, is the government and the funding is channelled through the Higher Education Commission and the University. The University of Peshawar has taken up the recurring budget of the Department of Gender and Women's Studies. The Women's Studies Centre at Balochistan University is federally funded through the Ministry of Women's Development and the Higher Education Commission.

The WRRC of the Fatima Jinnah Women University, has been funded for its capacity building programmes by CIDA, USIS, the British Council and DFID. These donors have funded the higher study of faculty abroad as well as the organising of workshops, seminars and conferences.

The IWDS of the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, is funded primarily by the University of Sindh, however funding for specific programmes was supplied by the MoWD.

Faculty

The faculty of the CEWS at Karachi University consists of a Director, a Research Associate, two Cooperative Lecturers and part-time visiting external lecturers. The faculty is diverse in its interests, and interdisciplinary in orientation as it belongs to various branches of the social sciences including Social Work, Geography, and History. One faculty member has an MA in Women's Studies. One faculty member, the Director, holds a PhD in Social Work. The Department of Women's Studies, Punjab University has two permanent staff members, one a PhD from the USA and the other an MA from Punjab University. Most of the adjunct faculty hold doctorates from Pakistan and the US. The Department of Gender and Women's Studies at Peshawar University has four full-time faculty members, a full-time Director and two lecturers have been sanctioned. The usual qualification for faculty members is MA in the social sciences, however there is one MPhil faculty member who has qualified from the University of Manchester, England. The Women's Studies Centre at the University of Balochistan currently has one Director along with support and technical staff. The AIOU Department of Women's Studies has one Associate Professor, and one Lecturer, apart from technical and support staff. The Associate Professor has an MPhil in History from Quaid-i-Azam University and a PhD in Women's Studies from the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. The lecturer holds an MSc in Anthropology from Quaid-i-Azam University and an MSc in Women's Studies from the University of London. Currently, she is pursuing a PhD from Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand. Most of the faculty member of the IWDS of the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, are economists, while one member holds a degree in food and nutrition. Currently, the Institute has a director, two lecturers and two research associates apart from technical staff.

Students

The majority of the students of CEWS, Karachi, are now placed in various administrative positions in NGOs, international welfare organisations, research organisations, Planning and Development, and government and semi-government and private teaching institutions at the local and national levels. The MA at the Punjab University is a two-year course in which the third batch of students has been enrolled in 2004. The number has doubled from 37 students in 2001 to 74 in the batch enrolled in 2003. About 35 students are enrolled each year in the short arts and crafts courses of the IWDS of the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. In most cases, Women's Studies students find employment in the non-government sector, research institutes, government social sector departments, and welfare organisations.

Books and Teaching Materials

The Women's Studies Centre at the Quaid-i-Azam University maintains newspaper clippings and its library has approximately 200 books. However, most of the books lack any relevance to Women's Studies and the Centre is unable to expand the library once again due to financial constraints. However, various international donors including UNICEF, UNIFEM and the Asia Foundation have donated books for the Centre.

CEWS, Karachi has over 3000 books in the fields of Women and Development, Women's Status Law, Work, Education, History, Cross-cultural works, Health, Technology, Media, Economics and Feminism. Apart from these, there is a collection of encyclopaedias, rare books, reports of NGOs and research institutes, bibliographies and official documents of relevance. There is a significant collection of rare books in Urdu so that a larger number of women can gain access to the materials. Apart from books, reports and documents, the centre regularly keeps newspaper clippings from major dailies. The Centre is in the process of developing a documentation centre, which would contain audio-visual materials for use in seminars and workshops. The Centre also has a student advisory service, which addresses their intellectual guidance needs as well as conducting personal and vocational counselling. The students of the Punjab University Department of Women's Studies use the library of the University for their studies. The Peshawar University Department of Women's Studies has a well-stocked library for the use of the students. The Women's Studies Centre at the University of Balochistan, Quetta, has its own resource centre/library equipped with the available material on gender. The AIOU is in the process of preparing textbooks and readers as well as support material for teaching.

The Allama Iqbal Open University is currently establishing a resource centre within the University's central library. The resource centre is being equipped with books, journals and internet facilities for which both students and faculty may benefit.

Summary and Reflections on Women's Studies in the Public Sector

The overall picture that emerges from the above account of the Women's Studies Centres in the public sector is bleak, although it must be kept in mind that the information provided by some of them is sketchy and incomplete. There is an immense variation in course design and content, which stems from the incoherence, which plagues the subject in Pakistan. Some departments offer a course in feminist theory and feminist research methods, while others do not run courses at all. One or two departments focus on history and literature, especially the history of women's movements, while others are concerned purely with development issues and women's integration into development. **Instead of full degree courses, which are few, there is emphasis on short training workshops based on the problematic notions of 'gender training' and 'gender sensitisation'.** There are very few publications that may be called genuine contributions to the discipline and this may again be due to a shortage of funds and lack of support. However, some members of the faculty in various Centres have published papers as individuals in their own capacity.

There is only one professional association, which is mainly focussed on Sindh. This means that there is very little formal interaction and exchange among academics, researchers, activists and scholars. However, a large number of conferences and workshops do take place, which are not generally organised by professional Women's Studies associations. Most often, they are held by NGOs working on feminist or women's issues. Outside of *Alam-e-Niswan*, there does not currently appear to be a significant journal of women's studies in Pakistan, and once again the severe resource crunch can be cited for this failure. **The majority of faculty members do not hold degrees in Women's Studies but in the social sciences such as Economics or Psychology.** The absence of a minimum number of professionals trained in the subject is also one reason for the lack of a coherent approach. **Most of the students find employment in women's or social sector NGOs, while some become academics.** The great majority of students of the centres that do hold classes, are female as the subject is not considered one that has a strong market, and male students prefer subjects that can more easily lead to jobs.

Some of the significant findings from the available information must be discussed. First, there seems to be a severe **dearth of funding for Women's Studies**, as it has not been an area of high priority. The funding has been so meagre that some Institutes were never able to begin classes or institute worthwhile programmes. The space and materials provided for the teaching of Women's Studies was either highly inadequate or taken away, as in the case of the University of Balochistan. While some centres, such as the CEWS at Karachi, were able to tap other resources from international donors, the centres, which relied entirely on funding from the ministry, were not able to become vibrant and active Centres. Second, not only was **material support extremely inadequate, intellectual**

support was also lacking as is clear from the experience of Quameen University, where some of the social science departments did not respond to requests for course contents or for the integration of Women's Studies into their courses.

Third, and this is a crucial aspect, there seems to be an absence of any clear or coherent understanding or framework of Women's Studies. A considerable amount of confusion seems to persist about what constitutes the discipline of Women's Studies. In the first place, there is a great deal of lack of clarity about gender studies and women's studies. The two are often confused and the terms are used interchangeably, whereas gender studies as a field of knowledge has a different focus. The concept of gender may form a part of women's studies, but does not by itself constitute women's studies. Furthermore, gender is a theoretical construct and not a substitute word for 'women'. This understanding seems to be absent in most cases with the clear exception of the CEWS, Karachi University, which has a very clear focus on women's studies and an underlying feminist perspective. In some instances, as in the case of the University of Sindh, even a conservative subject like Home Economics is lumped together with Women's Studies. A common error that seems to characterise most Centres is that any study on women or on gender is defined as a contribution to Women's Studies. In reality, a study on or about women or gender can be done from a very conservative or patriarchal point of view, in which case it would not be a contribution to Women's Studies. The discipline is based on feminist theory and struggles, and without a feminist perspective underlying the study, it does not fall into the subject of Women's Studies.

Women's Studies is a political subject with a definite ideological bent. Studies with underlying patriarchal assumptions would not fall within the discipline, as they would contradict the basic premises of feminism. This is not to suggest that a debate is not possible within Women's Studies. On the contrary, feminism and Women's Studies have produced some of the most vibrant and lively debates on the issues of patriarchy, militarism, peace, war, culture, globalisation and the state. The point here is that studies from one feminist perspective do lead to a debate with another

— for example, the last two decades saw extremely energising debates between Socialist and post-modern feminists. But a study done in order to further a patriarchal enterprise, or to discredit feminism, or to reinforce a traditional cultural norm would be a study on or about women, but not a part of Women's Studies. The latter means deconstructing existing knowledge categories and ways of conceptualising the world, and creating alternatives. Since the subject developed as much out of activism as out of theoretical debate, Women's Studies can never be reduced to studies about women or gender. Therefore, whether some research study is a part of Women's Studies or not is determined not by the subject matter, but the manner in which it is addressed. From the overview of public sector institutions above, it is hard to make this judgement since the details are not available to find out how a particular subject matter was treated. However, there is some reason to suspect that not all studies are strictly speaking feminist or within the rigour of the discipline known as Women's Studies.

By and large, there seems to be a combination of liberal, integrationist, developmental, psychological and gender training approaches. There is generally very little critical work that seems to have emerged from the relatively new discipline in Pakistan. The CEWS at Karachi is a notable exception as there is a clear notion of feminism underlying Women's Studies, and an alternative view of knowledge as the basis of the subject. In general a great deal of ideological confusion exists regarding the theory and practice of Women's Studies.

Women's Studies in the Non-government Sector

The non-government sector in Pakistan has played a significant role in introducing the concept of Women's Studies as well as its ideological base in feminism. Although the only teaching institute is the Institute of Women's Studies, Lahore run by Nighat Said Khan, women's NGOs have made important contributions to feminist debates and analysis. The development of Women's Studies and feminism in Pakistan may be very slow and insignificant compared with the levels attained in other countries in the region, in particular India and Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, in comparison with the public sector initiatives, the non-government sector has been much more dynamic.

The most outstanding and path breaking work in the introduction of feminism and Women's Studies in Pakistan, has been that of the Institute of Women's Studies Lahore (IWSL), which developed out of the ASR Resource Centre. Established in the mid-1990s, the IWSL began its annual certificate course in 1998. The course, which reflects sound feminist theory and practice based on a socialist feminist position, is taught by an international faculty drawn from the South Asian region as well as Europe, North America, Africa and Canada. The students

are also drawn from several different countries. IWSL has highly qualified, respected and acclaimed feminist academics and activists such as Uma Chakravarti, Neloufer de Mel and Jasodhra Bagchi on its faculty. The library has several thousand books on feminist theory, history, literature, sociology, education, research methodology and works in related disciplines. The Institute is equipped with the latest teaching technology and up to date teaching space. It can easily be described as the best Women's Studies Institute in Pakistan and is highly regarded throughout the South Asian region.

The course contents reflect a deep familiarity with feminist debates and issues. The course is designed in a holistic manner and covers a wide range of topics that are dealt with critically. Some of the contents include women's movements globally and locally, identity and ideology, political economy, a version of history that does not exclude women as historical actors, English and Urdu literature, and the performing and visual arts. The entire course content and methodology are designed to inculcate feminist consciousness and understanding, as well as creating activists in the field.

Apart from teaching activity, which includes the annual certificate course and short workshops and conferences, the IWSL carries out research and publication within a feminist perspective. ASR/IWSL has published the largest number of books and papers on women's issues from feminist and critical perspectives. Additionally, the Institute has reprinted well-known works by Egyptian feminist Nawal-al-Saadawi, Sri Lankan feminist Kumari Jayawardena, and Moroccan feminist, Fatima Mernissi. Some of the publications include Jayawardena's *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*,¹⁷ *Hidden from History: Forgotten Queens of Islam*,¹⁸ *The Heart Divided*¹⁹ and Sa'adawi's famous novel *Woman at Point Zero*.

The Institute has also published works by Pakistani feminists, academics and activists including Saba Gul Khattak, Neelam Hussain, Ayesha Khan, Durre Ahmad, Najma Sadeque, Samina Rahman and this author. Some of these include Ayesha Khan's *Rhetoric and Reform*,²⁰ Nighat Said Khan's *Voices Within*²¹ and *Up Against the State*,²² Fareeha Zafar's *Finding Our Way*²³

(edited volume), Durre Ahmad's *Masculinity, Rationality and Religion*,²⁴ Afiya Zia's *Sex Crime in the Islamic Context*²⁵ and *Watching Them, Watching Us*,²⁶ Rubina Saigol's *Knowledge and Identity*²⁷ and, *In Her Own Write*, a book of translations of short stories by famous Urdu writers, edited by Samina Rahman.²⁸ Apart from these books, ASR/IWSL has published co-edited books, which include *Locating the Self*,²⁹ *Unveiling the Issues*,³⁰ *A Celebration of Women*³¹ and *Aspects of Women and Development*.³² Apart of these, a number of books of Urdu literature by women writers, and collections of poems have been produced by IWSL. The Institute also has to its credit the publication of a number of reports based on issues raised at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995, and reports from other international conferences including the World Summit on Social Development.

In the books mentioned above, IWSL has covered a wide range of topics including the State, nationalism, militarism, globalisation, education, the media, law, political economy and the environment. Almost all of the work reflects feminist consciousness and a commitment to social change. A large part of the work is critical and geared towards the vision of an alternative world. The IWSL as an institution keeps abreast of the latest developments in feminist and social theory, and incorporates these into its courses and workshops. An annual lecture series by highly regarded feminist scholars is a well-attended event, which allows interaction and exchange to take place. Moreover, activism is an essential part of the thinking at IWSL and academic activities are combined with activism against militarism, war, discriminatory laws and all forms of social and economic injustice. The work reflects clarity on feminist issues and a deep understanding of Women's Studies. Overall, it can safely be said that the Institute of Women's Studies, Lahore is one of the best institutions promoting the discipline in Pakistan, and even in the South Asian region.

The other non- government organisations that have contributed significantly to the development of feminist thought in Pakistan are Shirkat Gah, Simorgh Women's Resource and Publication Centre, and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute. Although these organisations do not conduct courses in Women's Studies, they hold workshops and conferences that allow for critical feminist exchange on the issues of globalisation, militarisation, legal structures and systems, customary practices, the media and education. Additionally, they publish material nationally and internationally, which is critical in orientation and has feminist underpinning. Shirkat Gah has done extensive work on informal legal systems and customary law in all the provinces of Pakistan. Their publications on the subject have shed new light on the issues of non-state parallel systems of

Shirkat Gah has also produced a great deal of critical literature on globalisation and its impact upon women. The members of this organisation, Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed produced the seminal work on the women's movement in Pakistan.³³ No Women's Studies course in Pakistan would be complete without studying this work. In addition to this, Shirkat Gah has also completed a comprehensive study on women's perceptions of, and expectations from, the state. This has been published as a major study on Citizenship in South Asia and is a critical examination of the state in the region. A large amount of informational material on various issues of feminist concern has been produced for NGOs, CBOs and activists. This material is available usually in both English and Urdu for wider consumption.

Simorgh Women's Resource and Publication Centre is primarily concerned with publications but has also engaged in workshops and training programmes from a feminist perspective. Simorgh has done highly commendable, and difficult, work with the higher judiciary and police in sensitising them to the issues of women. This organisation has produced supplementary books for children at the primary level with human rights content. This material is lively, enjoyable and fun to use so that young readers can enjoy as they learn. As regards the contribution to feminist thought, Simorgh has produced a study of the media's portrayal of women during the Zia years.³⁴ This study shows how the media operates to disseminate a particular brand of conservative, state ideology meant to control the mind, spread a particular kind of morality, and to manipulate public behaviour. The co-ordinator, Neelam Hussain, has translated Khadija Mastoor's famous novel, *Aangan* (Inner Courtyard) into English thus providing a glimpse into the thinking of women writers involved in the Progressive Writers's Movement.³⁵ A number of works by Fatima Mernissi and other feminists have been re-printed by Simorgh and some have been translated into Urdu. Simorgh's publication³⁶ reflects a feminist understanding of the state, economy, education, media, performing arts, visual arts, literature, militarism and health. This work focusses on the manner in which the state is produced, re-produced and inscribed on the minds of the population through the written word, in art forms and public monuments. Currently, Simorgh is in the process of publishing booklets on violence against women, patriarchal language and a number of other issues within feminism. Simorgh is also the first women's organisation to bring out a journal, *Bayaan*, a socio-legal journal, which bridges feminist and social theory with legal thought in an effort to provide critical perspectives on legal structures. The first issue of this bi-annual journal has been published while the second is due in the summer of 2004.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) is primarily a research institution and a policy-oriented organisation, but it has a strong dimension of feminist thought mainly due to the presence of Saba Gul Khattak. Khattak's work on the military, and the ideologies of war and militarism, has become seminal, in that it was the first work of its kind to be produced in Pakistan.³⁷ Khattak has also worked on the gendered nature of the state and nation and this work is indispensable for any course on Women's Studies. SDPI has carried out research studies on conflict, displacement and refugees from a feminist perspective and this work has been published as a part of the Working Paper series. Conflict studies constitute another area in which Saba Khattak has taken the lead in Pakistan.³⁸ Additionally, SDPI in collaboration with the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) has conducted one of the most comprehensive studies on the impact of liberalisation and globalisation on home based workers in Pakistan.³⁹ The findings of this study are startling and it is essential reading for the political economy section of a Women's Studies course because of being critical in its perspective.

Although Shirkat Gah, Simorgh and SDPI do not engage in formal Women's Studies courses, they contribute to them by producing the kind of materials that can be used for courses in the public and non-government sectors. Apart from written materials, these organisations produce audio-visual materials such as short films or documentaries for academic purposes. The other women's NGOs like Aurat Foundation produce materials that are informative, but since most of the material is in the form of pamphlets, leaflets and brochures or reports, it has limited utility for Women's Studies. This kind of material is more useful for activism and in that sense very important, but it does not necessarily have a feminist orientation.

Issues for the Future

One of the biggest problems that Women's Studies, as a discipline, faces is related to **sources of funding**. The public and non-government sectors are both **dependent on external funding**. While the public sector institutes might ultimately be able to raise funds from tuition fee, in the near future the chances of this are bleak as it is not a subject that leads to lucrative jobs. With history, philosophy and social science departments closing or scaling down due to shortage of students and funds, Women's Studies is unlikely to flourish against the onslaught of

Information Technology and Management courses www.megalectures.com in the multinational and private sectors. The discipline is being kept alive by sheer will and a commitment to a more just and humane world by academics, scholars and activists.

In the past, international donors have been generous with funds for 'gender', which became a faddish issue rather than a serious political one. However, a large part of this funding was consumed either by consultants making technocratic adjustments in the system, or by the dubious world of 'gender training and sensitisation'. Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the Harvard Analytical Framework, with its static and dichotomous categories, was able to obtain funding and use it on workshops. This approach was uncritical as the assumptions underlying it were that categories like 'gender issue', 'gender gap' or 'practical need' are fixed, immutable and static categories instead of dynamic discourses and subject to change and development, and ultimately even rejection. An overwhelming focus on this kind of work led to a steady de-politicisation of the issues and concerns of women. The 'integration of gender' approach was also static and based on false premises. Here the assumption was that 'gender' is like an object that can simply, mechanically and automatically be plugged into anything, be it the environment, education, health, sanitation or drainage. Project after project was launched on integrating gender into drainage or other 'community development' schemes. Everything just went down the drain, including gender, because of the crass inanity exemplified by this approach. It was assumed that once 'gender' (whatever that meant, and it meant different things to different people) was duly integrated into the scheme, all would be well. Underlying this approach were liberal assumptions about the state and socio-economic structures being all right and acceptable, but lacking only in gender. Once that was integrated, no problems would arise.

Approaches like this did more harm than good to the cause of feminism. They led to the faulty premise that simply providing access to women within the existing social structures was adequate. The structures themselves were not challenged and the patriarchy underlying state structures and policy was not questioned. Based on this kind of thinking, women were given enhanced seats in parliament, the provincial assemblies and local bodies. Since it was done without sound feminist and intellectual thought, no attention was paid to the way in which entrenched social power would ensure that the women who enter law-making bodies represent the interests of particular classes, either feudal or capitalist. The women, often given no voice in the debates and decisions, ended up rubber stamping decisions made elsewhere. The increased number of seats for women came to mean the reinforcement of feudal power and of the existing social structure. Instead of providing feminist critiques of governance⁴⁰ and devolution, a number of non-government organisations became the partners of a military regime creating local constituencies for itself by bypassing the provinces and centralising power from the federal government directly to the districts. Instead of the decentralisation of service delivery, the military-dictated devolution became a 'decentralisation of repression' and a means of extracting taxes at the local level.

Therein lies the deep contradiction. International donors, especially those that represent foreign governments, increasingly fund only those organisations that are willing to work on the agenda of global governance (which is the political face of economic globalisation), and do not fund activities, which are critical of the exercise. Since knowledge and understanding have become fragmented, through intentional or unintentional donor fixation, there is increasingly an inability to see military governments or 'controlled democracies' as antithetical to human rights and justice. A number of donors, including for example CIDA and the UNDP (both of which lay claims to promoting human rights — a UN agenda), find themselves unable or unwilling to perceive the contradiction between their support for a militarised regime, and their commitment to human rights, of which women's rights form a part. Their arguments run along the lines that as long as the military delivers on gender (which is also questionable) it does not matter that it has systematically eroded the independence of the judiciary, the supremacy of parliament or the importance of free speech and expression.⁴¹

Since issues are perceived as divorced from one another, and kept in separate compartments of the mind, rights are not seen as a whole, as interconnected. It becomes difficult in this kind of straitjacket thinking to understand how the erosion of democracy can lead to greater injustices for women as well. Even within liberal feminist thought, justice for women is inseparable from democracy and human rights, and cannot be achieved by cancelling the latter. An example of the intense ideological confusion resulting from compartmentalisation is that some consultants working on 'gender' happened to be staunch supporters of the Taliban regime, which cancelled all rights for women, and enamoured of Adolf Hitler's racist militarism. However, a political thinking promotes precisely this kind of fragmentation, but it is 'safe' from the donors' point of view as it promises that the change

will not be too great and will be firmly controlled and directed. Donors generally fear change, especially one that they cannot control or direct. Thus we find democracy and 'good governance' increasingly promoting private and market interests instead of the interests of citizens.⁴² Nonetheless, 'good governance' and 'global governance' are consistently promoted by the IFI's and international donors, as the new panacea for all ills affecting society, while no change in socio-economic structures is envisaged.

For feminists the dilemma is that ideologies that need to be deconstructed and subjected to critical scrutiny are the ones being promoted by donors. Yet, feminist organisations are dependent upon them for support and the MoWD's support also comes from them. If the trend persists, there is the danger that the critical edge of feminism will be lost to the liberal practices of 'gender integration and training' for good. If feminism remains caught within the paradigms of 'development' as conceived by foreign donors, it is increasingly likely to become apolitical and 'safe'. Its potential for transformation will be reduced to the extent to which it succumbs to the pressures of mainstreaming. As feminism becomes co-opted and reduced to 'gender mainstreaming', 'safe' and 'manageable', Women's Studies will suffer as a discipline. Women's Studies is threatened with becoming 'just a study about women'.

Finally, Women's Studies as a discipline, is also threatened from other sources. Since feminism is the ideological and intellectual base of Women's Studies, the organisations and centres that promote the subject need to reflect the feminist principles of non-hierarchical functioning, and fair play and justice in the workplace. However, neither the public sector departments, nor the organisations in the non-government sector are organised non-hierarchically or develop well-established rules and Standard Operating Procedures. Excessive ad-hocism is the norm with the result that decisions and actions become entirely arbitrary and dependent upon the whims and fancies of directors and heads. This means that rules are also often contradictory and not applied evenly across the board. On account of excessively hierarchical functioning, top-down power structures, absence of systems and standards of operating, lack of tolerance for dissent and disagreement, and inconsistent application of rules (the latter is more evident in the non-government sector as the public sector has certain standard procedures), feminist principles of inclusion, justice, equality and fair play are often violated. There is usually no recourse to an independent authority for the redress of grievances and employees are often at the mercy of their seniors. This kind of managerial authoritarianism, combined with the fact that most directors in the non-government sector are permanent, lifelong heads with no procedure for transfer of authority, the entire organisation is at the mercy of their whims and passing fancies. This problem seriously plagues the non-government sector and needs to be urgently addressed if feminist and non-feudal, non-personalised forms of the organisation of work are to be established.

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Notes

¹ Susie Tharu and K. Lalita (eds.), *Women Writings in India: 600 B.C. to the Present* (Feminist Press at the City University of New York, New York, 1991). Distributed by Talman Co., New York.

² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (W. Scott, London, 1891), with an introduction by Elizabeth Robins Pennell. First published in 1792 and has been published several times since.

³ Sabeeha Hafeez, 'Towards Developing a Women's Studies Perspective in Pakistan: Some Parameters', in *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies, Alam-e-Niswan*, Vol. 2, pp. 75-97, 1995, ISSN: 1024-1256, pp. 87-88.

⁴ Hafeez, 'Towards Developing a Women's Studies...', *op.cit.*, p. 81.

⁵ Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* (Vanguard Books, Lahore, 1987).

⁶ A large number of 'Gender Training Manuals' produced by UNIFEM and other donors, reflect the game-playing, pop-psychology approach that is extensively used by expert gender trainers. The very notion of a 'manual' is problematic as manuals were typically designed for how-to purposes to enable people to quickly fix something or assemble something. Applying this notion to political issues reflects the quick fix mechanical approach that dominates the world of gender training. Manuals are typically fixed in time present knowledge as fixed, static and not as contained within a debate. They are designed to freeze issues in time instead of presenting debates as ongoing and knowledge as incomplete and open-ended. Additionally, manuals are based on the assumption that 'gender' problems can be solved by applying a given set of tricks and techniques.

⁷ Hafeez, 'Towards Developing a Women's Studies...', *op.cit.*, p. 86.

⁸ Ministry of Women's Development, Key Policy Measures, No. 3.

⁹ Vision and Goal statement of the Ministry of Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education.

¹⁰ Ministry of Women's Development, Aims and Objectives, No. 6.

- ¹¹ National Commission on the Status of Women, Role of Women in Development.
- ¹² National Plan of Action, p. 68.
- ¹³ The information in this section is based on the reports and materials provided by the Centres. This information may contain gaps since the author did not have direct access to the Centres. Additionally, the information provided here is highly uneven with some Centres given more detailed and comprehensive reports than others.
- ¹⁴ Parveen Shah, 'Socio-economic condition of women in Pakistan with special reference to Sindh province', in *Sindhological Studies*, Summer-Winter 2001, Vol. 19, No. 1-2 and 'Education for Rural Women in Pakistan' in *University of Sindh, Arts Research Journal*, Vol. XXXIII, 1998-2001.
- ¹⁵ Hafeez, 'Towards Developing a Women's Studies...', *op.cit.*, p. 80.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (ASR, Lahore, 1994).
- ¹⁸ Fatima Mernissi, *Hidden from History: Forgotten Queens of Islam* (ASR, Lahore, 1994).
- ¹⁹ Mumtaz Shah Nawaz, *The Heart Divided* (ASR, Lahore, 1990), 2nd edition.
- ²⁰ Ayesha Khan, *Rhetoric and Reform, Feminism Among Indian Muslims: 1900-1940* (ASR Publications, Lahore, 1999).
- ²¹ Nighat Said Khan, *Voices Within: Dialogues with Women on Islam* (ASR, Lahore, 1992).
- ²² Nighat Said Khan (ed.), *Up Against the State* (ASR, Lahore, 2004).
- ²³ Fareeha Zafar (ed.), *Finding Our Way: Readings on Women in Pakistan* (ASR Publications, Lahore, 1991).
- ²⁴ Durre S. Ahmad, *Masculinity, Rationality, and Religion: A Feminist Perspective*, (ASR Publications, Lahore, 1994).
- ²⁵ Afiya Shaherbano Zia, *Sex Crime in the Islamic Context: Rape, Class and Gender in Pakistan* (ASR, Lahore, 1994).
- ²⁶ Sheerbano Zia, *Watching Them, Watching Us* (ASR, Lahore, 2004).
- ²⁷ Rubina Saigol, *Knowledge and Identity: Articulation of Gender in Educational Discourse in Pakistan* (ASR, Lahore, 1995).
- ²⁸ Samina Rehman (edit and translation), *In Her Own Write: Short Stories by Women Writers in Pakistan* (ASR Publications, Lahore, 1994).
- ²⁹ Nighat Said Khan, Rubina Saigol, Afiya Shaherbano Zia (eds.), *Locating the Self: Perspectives on Women and Multiple Identities* (ASR Publications, Lahore, 1994).
- ³⁰ Nighat Said Khan and Afiya Shaherbano Zia (eds.), *Unveiling the Issues: Pakistani Women's Perspectives on Social, Political and Ideological Issues* (ASR Publications, Lahore, 1995). Transcribed and translated by Naureen Amjad and Rubina Saigol Lahore.
- ³¹ Nighat Said Khan, Rubina Saigol, Afiya Shaherbano Zia (eds.), *A Celebration of Women: Essays and Abstracts from the Women's Studies Conference* (ASR Publications, Lahore, 1994).
- ³² Nighat Said Khan, Rubina Saigol & Afiya S. Zia, *Aspects of Women and Development* (ASR Publications, Lahore, 1994).
- ³³ Mumtaz and Shaheed (eds.), *Women of Pakistan...*, *op.cit.*
- ³⁴ Malik, Maha & Neelam Hussain (eds.), *Re-inventing Women: The Portrayal of Women in the Media in the Zia Years* (Simorgh, Lahore, 1985).
- ³⁵ Neelam Hussain (Translator), *Inner Courtyard* (Simorgh, Lahore, 2001). An English translation of Khadija Mastoor's, *Aangan* with an introduction by Samina Choonara.
- ³⁶ Hussain, Neelam, Samiya Mumtaz & Rubina Saigol (eds.), *Engendering the Nation State* (Simorgh, Lahore, 1997), Vol. I & II.
- ³⁷ For example see Saba Gul Khattak's paper, 'Gendered and Violent: Inscripting the Military on the Nation-state' in Hussain, et.al., *Engendering the Nation...*, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 38-52. Also see Saba Khattak's 'Militarization, Masculinity and Identity in Pakistan — Effects on Women', in Khan, N. S. & Afiya Zia (eds.), *Unveiling the Issues...*, pp. 52-64. Also see her paper, 'A Reinterpretation of the State and Statist Discourse in Pakistan (1977-1988)', in Khan, et.al., *Locating the Self...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 22-40.
- ³⁸ For example see her paper 'Violence and the Centrality of Home: Women's Experience of Insecurity in the Karachi Conflict', Working Paper Series No. 73, 2002. Apart from this, Saba Khattak has worked extensively on Afghan women refugees on which there are several published working papers available at the SDPI.
- ³⁹ Sayeed, Asad & Saba Gul Khattak, *Women's Work and Empowerment Issues in an Era of Economic Liberalisation: A Case Study of Pakistan's Urban Manufacturing Sector* (PILER/SDPI, 2001).
- ⁴⁰ Vivienne Taylor, *Marketization of Governance: Critical Feminist Perspectives from the South* (A Dawn Publication, Cape Town, SADEP, 2000).
- ⁴¹ For example see Masooda Bano's article 'Striking power balance' in *The News*, February 27, 2004. Bano reveals how false are the pretences of democracy of the present government. A seminar on the '17th Amendment and its Implications for Federalism' organised by the Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement (PONM) was forcefully stopped by the police. This is a blatant violation of people's constitutional right to freedom of speech, expression and debate, but no debate on the Legal Framework Order and its insertion into the constitution was permitted by the 'democratic government'.
- ⁴² Taylor, *Marketization of Governance...*, *op.cit.*