

# **Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century US Womens' Struggle: A Magna Carta of Inalienable Rights for the Embryonic Women's Movement in Pakistan**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Oscillating between more and fewer, women's problems are universal in nature and, are found in all societies since the genesis of human civilization. Women's struggles in diverse societies could be mirrored across times, cultures, nationalities, religions and geographies etc. to contribute a global change to their position. Viewing the U.S. womens' movement from a Pakistani perspective, this trans-historical article reviews the evolution of the womens' rights movement in the U.S. during the late 19th and early 20th Century, and the emergence of contemporary womens' rights movement in Pakistan. Though there are countries that conferred fundamental rights on their women prior to the U.S., the latter outshines them in terms of the length and intensity of womens' struggle whose match is hard to be found elsewhere. In the upshot of a remarkable transformation, the post-bellum U.S. introduced a novel way of life that had challenges for everybody—particularly women. Going all the way through a desperate struggle for their social, personal,*

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*sexual, economic, and—above all—political rights, the new woman surfaced strong, determined, self-reliant and professional. This comparative overview stresses the gradual and incomplete nature of the American womens' rights movement and considers how emerging Pakistan womens' activists might, like the American women, draw upon elements of their own culture to argue for improved status and greater autonomy.*

### **Introduction**

In the late 19th Century, the Civil War entirely upended American society in its social, political and economic relations, the arts, industry and education. In virtually every arena, America's basic norms and values were profoundly affected by the end of slavery and the attempts to heal the rift between North and South. America was growing into an industrial giant that would soon give birth to a consumerist society and a booming economy. For the first time, America was entering the field of international politics previously dominated by European powers. The U.S. would soon be in genuine competition with Europe's economies, industries, militaries and educational institutions, eventually replacing the Great Britain as world's dominant power by the end of World War-I. A distinctly American literature began to emerge in this period, which served to legitimize American English as a dialect. In his 1941 book, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, F.O. Matthiessen dubbed the period of 1876-1917 "the American Renaissance."<sup>1</sup> While ignoring the important contributions of female and African American authors, Matthiessen vaunted 19th Century American literature's worth: "England may have had Spencer, Shakespeare, and Donne, but America had Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman."<sup>2</sup> The works produced in this period

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1 F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

2 Nina Baym and Robert S. Livine, eds., *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (New York: Norton and Company, 2012).

were influenced by distinctly American philosophies such as Transcendentalism, Realism and Naturalism<sup>3</sup>. The period saw the introduction of many new ideas, not least of which was the argument for womens' rights. Although this was the beginning of a prolonged and much-contested struggle, women were now set on path to equality. Throughout the 19th Century, women grappled with an entrenched patriarchy that defined women as objects to be owned by fathers and husbands. The domestic ideal posited that women were confined to the domestic sphere, at home producing children and serving family members. As a result, women were socially, sexually, economically and politically dependent on males. Marriage was a social prerequisite that had to frame a woman's public—and even private—identity, termed by Jane Addams the "family claim". Through her activism, Jane Addams (reformer, social worker, public philosopher and leader in womens' suffrage) rebelled against this patriarchal requirement and helped pave the road towards equality. In many cases, this rebellion took the form of a rejection of marriage. Across the late 19th Century the marriage rate fell, and a tendency towards single life emerged.<sup>4</sup>

Refusing the concept of the "domestic Ideal" (it is a term, which Nancy Woloch uses for womens' domestic responsibilities), however, was not enough. Women would now also confront problems in their professional lives. They were not thought capable of performing skilled labour and were paid almost fifty percent less than their male counterparts.<sup>5</sup> They worked under terrible conditions and were constantly at risk of being fired without cause. In this regard, womens' settlements and unions would come to play a significant role for their rights at workplaces. However,

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3 They were not American pioneered literary philosophies. American literary writers borrowed them and coloured them with their own experiences.

4 Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

5 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 222.

without suffrage, women could not raise their concerns or fight for equal treatment through legal means. Although the formal struggle for equality started with the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments in 1848, this document did not call explicitly for suffrage. Instead, it mainly focused on attitudes towards women in the context of a wide range of marital and non-marital issues. From the period following the Civil War until 1920, when the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment awarded women the right to vote, the Seneca Falls Declaration (1848) remained the major statement of womens' demands for equality.<sup>6</sup>

Now, the right to vote granted them a legal position to challenge the more nuanced dimensions of their inequality, and as a result, new laws were passed to protect womens' rights.<sup>7</sup> With their voting rights, women were able to directly take part in the machinery of government. So it was not only the right to vote, but a source of freedom that the women won, a clear road towards their equality that they would continue to use in the future.<sup>8</sup> When the right to vote was gained, the narrowly focused coalition of suffragists were unable to transfer their agreement on the importance of gaining the vote to the task of addressing the many other social issues that had been left by the wayside. As a result, the movement dispersed, and the new generation, busy enjoying the fruits of their hard-earned individualism, had no time for such issues.<sup>9</sup> Since then the U.S. womens' struggle has remained focused on workplace, sexuality, family, reproductive rights and equal legal and social rights in form of waves of feminism.

Being a developing country with its weak social institutions, a majority of communities in Pakistan have narrow roles for

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6 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 219-222.

7 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 355.

8 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 357.

9 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 357-58.

women in Pakistan.<sup>10</sup> Many factors: societal norms, religious romanticizing, lack of education, etc. play a vital role in establishing these androcentric norms. Being their males' properties, women fail to have access to their fundamental social, marital, educational, economic and political rights. With some degree of variations in some parts of the country, as a whole, Pakistani society is patriarchal to the core that reduces women to the second class citizens.<sup>11</sup>

The power of language is used to construct stereotypes and gender differences. Weaker and tarnished identities are mostly attributed to women who keep on sifting through generation to generation.<sup>12</sup> In this part of the world, women are quick to be marked bad with the help of customs, religiosity, and honour killing depriving them of their rightful representation in society.<sup>13</sup> Honour killing is another grave issue for which Pakistan has gained notoriety across the globe. The statistics attest—Pakistan has the highest incidences of honour killing in the contemporary world. In majority of cases, honour killings are faked for insidious purposes; for example, to silence voices that ask for their basic/marital rights or share in property.<sup>14</sup> Religious romanticizing is an iron colour for women in Pakistan. It is systematically brought into play to curtail womens' liberty. The abstract message reads: A man is a virtual god while a woman is a chattel. The phenomenon clearly indicates the

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- 10 "UN Women: Pakistan" by UN Women. <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/pakistan>. Accessed July 5, 2018.
  - 11 "World Report 2017: Pakistan" by Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/pakistan>. Accessed July 5, 2018.
  - 12 Shahid Siddiqui, *Language, Gender, and Power: The Politics of Representation and Hegemony in South Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013).
  - 13 Kishwar Naheed, *Buri Aurath Ki Katha*, tr., Durdana Soomro, *A Bad Women's Story* (Karachi: Oxford University Press: 2016).
  - 14 Amir H. Jafri, *Honor Killing: Dilemma, Ritual, Understanding* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2014).

corrupting impact of this androcentric system that solely on the basis of sex empowers man while depowering women.<sup>15</sup> More to the point, women face perils of physical and verbal harassment at work as well as social places.<sup>16</sup> Owing to a large-scale increase in unemployment, harassment has run rampant at work places across the country. Majority of women do not report because of losing jobs or besmirching their family's honour. Specified laws do not exist that can protect women from the mentioned threats.<sup>17</sup> The story does not end here. Women are explicitly cheated in terms of their political rights. Generally political arrangements are done by the male members, and women just serve as tools to materialize them. When it comes to lower classes, the story gets even more frightened. In sum, women disregard politics taking it as a man's province.<sup>18</sup>

As an analysis of the U.S. womens' movement from a Pakistani perspective, this trans-historical article reviews the evolution of womens' rights movement in the US during late 19th and early 20th Century, and the emergence of contemporary womens' rights movement in Pakistan. Stressing the gradual and incomplete nature of the American womens' rights movement, this comparative analysis considers how emerging Pakistani womens' activists might, like the American women draw upon elements of their own culture to argue for improved status and greater autonomy. The experience would serve as an inspirational model for the contemporary suppressed women in Pakistan stimulating their psychological confidence to stand for their inalienable rights. Furthermore, it would teach them the required

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15 Shahid Siddiqui, *Language, Gender, and Power: The Politics of Representation and Hegemony in South Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

16 Iqbalunnissa Hussain, *Purdah and Polygamy: Life in Indian Muslim Household*, ed., Jessica Berman (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2017).

17 Sara Rizvi Jafree, *Women, Healthcare, and Violence in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2017).

18 Anna Suvorova, *Widows and Daughters: Gender, Kinship, and Power in South Asia*, tr., Daniel Dynin (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2019).

techniques on *woman question*: how to tackle the issues that are going to come across, and how to successfully proceed towards their terminal objectives?

The question arises: why to rely exclusively on the US womens' struggle as a roadmap/constitution? The sharp reply is: Though there are countries that granted rights to their women prior to the U.S., the U.S. stands tall for the length and intensity of womens' struggle. Being nourished in the melting pot of the modern world, the U.S. womens' struggle reflects the colours of all major global nationalities, cultures, religions, ethnicities, liberals and social movements, and offers comprehensive solutions to embryonic womens' struggles across the globe. It formally started from the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments in 1848, and continues thus far. In fact, such equivalent is hard to be found anywhere else in the contemporary world.

The constitution of the discussion ranges from personal to political rights. At first place, the analysis explores how the U.S. womens' struggle formed its ground. After surveying the very reasons, the U.S. womens' contemporary demands for equality are spotlighted. While refashioning these elements for Pakistani woman, the study is very careful about the fact: what forces were at work that time and what are the emerging ones in Pakistan at the hour. In addition, concerned scholarships, documentaries, social media and (national as well as international) womens' activists will serve as a medium to robustly tailor the ideals of the U.S. womens' struggle to the suppressed Pakistani women. Analyzing their struggle on the road of equality, the article categorically teaches that how each single step could be translated by the Pakistani women activists for the concerned disparities keeping in view limitations of time, culture, religion and ethnicity.

For a synopsis of the U.S. womens' struggle in the late 19th and early 20th Century, the study relies on historical scholarships like: *Women and the American Experience* (1984), *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*

(1989), *Modern American Women: A Documentary History* (2002), *Women in American History Since 1880* (2010) etc. The second division of this comparative analysis portrays the modern-day Pakistani woman with her constricted/confined roles in the society. There are several ethnicities/cultures (Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi, Balochi, Kashmiri etc.), religions (Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity etc.), and sects (Sunni, Shia, etc.), having variant roles for women but the study shortlists only the issues that are common across these divisions. The survey also unearths the solid reason behind these constraints in light of the target culture and religions. Therefore, the study uses a collective term—Pakistani woman—for women from all ethnic and religious groups to avoid the problem of generalization. Certainly, womens' position in Pakistan is variant and complex ranging from the most suppressed to the most liberal/ self-governing but this study underpins the issues that exist on national scale, instead.

Being a culturally/ethnically and religiously diverse country, it would be challenging to objectively document contemporary womens' position in Pakistan, but the study is meticulously careful to tackle the issue with valid sources. Having limited data on womens' present-day social, educational, marital, economic and political constraints in Pakistan, the study relies on a few genuine sources: *Great Ancestors: Women Claiming Rights in Muslim Contexts* (2011), *Language, Gender, and Power: The Politics of Representation and Hegemony in South Asia* (2013), *Honor Killing: Dilemma, Ritual and Understanding* (2014), *A Bad Womens' Story: A Translation of Buri Aurath Ki Katha* (2016), *Women, Healthcare, and Violence in Pakistan* (2017), *Purdah and Polygamy: Life in an Indian Muslim Household* (2017), *Widows and Daughters: Gender, Kinship, and Power in South Asia* (2019). In addition, the study documents Malala Yousafzai's book and her personal interview, two UN's 2017-reports, and a national survey. For further validation of the data, the study is peppered with many informal interviews, and 500 open-ended questionnaires. These interviews and



questionnaires were conducted at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, the country's top ranked university, from both male and female students (aged between 18 and 40), who join the university through quota system from all divisions of the country.

## THE CONTEXT OF AMERICAN WOMENS' STRUGGLE

### 1. Social and Sexual Equality

It cannot be denied that the aftermath of the Civil War fundamentally altered the American way of life, particularly as it affected womens' position in social, sexual and educational matters. Such shifts proved to be a double-edged sword: every advancement brought with it a dilemma of how to navigate a new situation. Women were shaped by the Victorian Code<sup>19</sup> that emphasized a stringent sense of proper behaviour under patriarchal control. Nonetheless, a growing number of women demanded freedom. Such a transformation was challenging, to say the least, particularly as it touched on overarching concepts like "home" and "work." Prior to the Civil War, those two terms were synonymous for women.<sup>20</sup> Woloch points out that home was the site of numerous female responsibilities. Prior to the advent of electric technology, women had the significant burden of physical domestic labour. And outside the home, unseen boundaries were set for them. Even once the stigma of women working outside the home began to be surmounted, they were likely to be accepted only in places that resembled homes, such as schools, offices, social work institutions, and libraries, where they would usually remain in contact with other women and children.<sup>21</sup>

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19 The concept was borrowed from the Great Britain and has commonly been used in notable American scholarships like *Victorian America, 1876 to 1913* (Grandall A. Shifflett 1996) and *Victorian American Women: 1840-1846* (1992).

20 Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1989), 125.

21 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*.

In the Gilded Age,<sup>22</sup> however, the traditional concept of “home” was challenged. A younger generation of women came of age with a new sense of their potential. They were more likely to develop analytical thinking and more liberal social behaviour.<sup>23</sup> Social and settlement movements provided women with new insights concerning the complexities of life into which they were emerging. As they came to know more clearly the world around them, their psychological confidence grew and they came to be in a better position to challenge unfair situations around them.<sup>24</sup> Much credit here goes to crusaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who challenged sexist norms on many fronts, allowing women to pull themselves out of enforced ignorance. In 1892, she published *Womens’ Bible*, a radical text that openly denounced religion as an organized tool for oppressing women. It focused on the sexual, social, and to some extent, political freedoms that were hindered by religious doctrines and practices.<sup>25</sup> Stanton’s rationale was that religion supplied the earliest misogynist sources to justify men’s exploitation of women.<sup>26</sup> Pioneering organizations like Hull House and Womens’ Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) made women aware of their central place in society and produced an army of activists who sought a variety of jobs usually unavailable to women.

Building on Stanton’s work, in 1898, the reverend Anna Garlin Spencer presented an essay to the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) entitled, “Fitness of Women to Become Citizens from Standpoint of Moral Development”. In it, she argued that although there had

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22 The time between the Civil War and World War I during which both the U.S. population and economy grew rapidly. The period is notorious for political corruption and corporate financial misdealing.

23 Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 129.

24 Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 149.

25 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Women’s Bible* (London: The Church of England, 1888).

26 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 336.

been a time when men's dominant position relative to women was justified, the world had changed, and women were capable of playing an equal role. Indeed, society and the state needed women for survival and further growth.<sup>27</sup> Spencer concluded that it was impossible for the state to keep women out of power—the potential of women could no longer be ignored. Drawing on this line of argumentation, Jane Addams claimed, “The absence of women would harm the ‘mother state-office of the state’”. She reasoned that womens' participation in the state machinery would reduce crime and immorality such as corruption, prostitution and alcoholism.<sup>28</sup>

Working from different priorities, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emma Goldman and Crystal Eastman departed from the agenda of the suffrage movement in pressing for liberation in all aspects of womens' lives. They wanted complete independence from men, and particularly from the Victorian Code that strictly delimited their social and sexual liberty in both married and single life. Preoccupied with womens' right to vote, the NAWSA failed to respond effectively to these broader issues, even though women who were entering the previously male-dominated public sphere increasingly challenged the accepted definitions of femininity and masculinity.<sup>29</sup> By redefining these terms, women confronted outdated but enduring gender norms that obstructed their full equality. By the onset of the Progressive Era, women had already learned the importance of the public sphere. This trailblazing attitude helped them gain confidence, and they tried their hands at many things that were assumed not to be within womens' ken.<sup>30</sup> As marriage rates declined, Woloch explained that single and independent life for women

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27 Anna Garlin Spencer, “Fitness of Women to Become Citizens from Standpoint of Moral Development” (Washington DC: NAWSA Convention, Document 60 (IV: 308-9, 1898).

28 Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 153- 54.

29 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*.

30 Evans, *Born for Liberty*.

became an established institution. This was a direct influence of reformers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emma Goldman, Crystal Eastman, Jane Addams and Louisa May Alcott. Soon “single life” would be one of the factors of identity for the “new woman”.<sup>31</sup>

### **Social Equality for Single Women**

A cultural and social sense that “boys will be boys” prevailed in American society until late in the 19th Century. Indeed, it is still an issue of today, though a less deeply entrenched one. Pursuits in life that were imagined for men were poles apart from the ones outlined for women. Boys and girls were raised in quite different ways beginning at birth. Boys were always encouraged to explore boldly, while girls were discouraged from participating in any activity not deemed feminine. Many activities and professions that were available to men were thought to be inappropriate for women. Sons were treated as individuals and daughters as appendages. Womens’ education was limited, and while it may have provided some minor sense of independence, it never granted true autonomy in the male-dominated workplace. Women were supposed to comport themselves in a mode of long-suffering self-sacrifice. Such experiences are depicted in the lives of characters like Jo in Louisa May Alcott’s novel *Little Women*, who is left to yearn for a life society refused her.<sup>32</sup> For a son, the situation was quite different. As Jane Addams put it, he was expected to be someone with a mind of his own. Addams herself suffered through such conditions before attaining her independence. In 1898, for instance, she wrote that it has always been difficult for the family to regard the daughter otherwise than as a family possession.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, these revolutionaries encouraged the ambitions of younger generations, who followed in the footsteps of their feminist predecessors to emerge as “new

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31 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 274.

32 Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1982).

33 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*.

woman” on the American scene. The figure of the “new woman” represented the innovative phenomenon of a well-educated, single, self-supporting woman.

### **Social Equality for Married Women**

The oppressive situation of single women was one side of the Victorian Code, or the “domestic deal” or “domestic claim”; the other side was applied to married women. An extensive set of responsibilities was associated with marriage, and they were enforced stringently. There were creeds and codes making man master, woman slave, one to command and other to obey. These demoralized womens' sentiments and affections. Furthermore, everything within the confines of the home was the responsibility of the woman of the house. Domestic labour was unpaid; as a result, women were dependent on men. As Marx remarks, economy is the cause and rest are the effects. The dependency resulting from womens' domestic slavery led to many problems.<sup>34</sup>

The majority of late 19th Century American men were unready to accept womens' liberation. One husband in Tennessee, for example, declared that “When I married my wife, I married her to wait on me and she has got all she can do right here for me and the children”.<sup>35</sup> This was not the voice of a single man, but rather the voice of most men of the era. Both socially and psychologically, “home” for them was an established, sacrosanct institution and the only legitimate sphere for women.<sup>36</sup>

With the newly acquired freedom from the “domestic ideals,” women gained time, which fuelled their activism in social, economic, and political activities. “Home” expanded its boundaries to include many social and economic activities that were once considered masculine. Unfortunately,

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34 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*.

35 Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 120.

36 Evans, *Born for Liberty*.

working-class female domestic and factory labourers were too busy with the business of daily survival to have direct access to the benefits of the new changes. Consequently, such developments had little influence on their homes, which were in many ways different from those of the middleclass. With the passage of time, however, the distance between “working-class women” and “new women” decreased. Towards the beginning of the 20th Century, the gap was shrinking.<sup>37</sup>

### **Sexual Equality for Single Women**

Like social equality, sexual equality also meant radically different things in the contexts of single and married life, with each confronting a different set of the Victorian Code’s authoritarian social constraints. Crucially, advocating for sexual equality for single women in the late 19th Century was something far more radical. There were, of course, variations according to class and region—for the middle and upper classes, for example, some limited liberty existed previously. Similarly, the rules were slightly more flexible in major cities than they were in rural or suburban areas. However, in the latter, religious, social and familial restraints were rigid. As a whole, women had very limited sexual liberty compared to men. Piety, prudence and traditional values were demanded; and it was mandatory for a woman to safeguard her virginity. This regard for virginity worked its way into all aspects of daily life: for example, the graduation ceremonies for female college graduates in the Progressive Era involved black gowns worn over white dresses meant to signify purity and virginity.<sup>38</sup> With respect to issues like these, the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments (1848), delivered by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, demanded personal liberty even prior to a call for the right to vote.

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37 Susan Ware, *Modern American Women: A Documentary History* (New York: McGraw Hill Publisher, 2002), 4.

38 Ware, *Modern American Women*.

## Sexual Equality for Married Women

The problem of sexual equality was difficult enough for single women to achieve, but married women had the added disadvantages of husband and family. Laws associated with marriage were inflexible. For instance, birth control was entirely out of question. Marriage was an iron collar around the woman's neck, as was depicted by Edna Pontellier's position in Kate Chopin's autobiographical novel *The Awakening*.<sup>39</sup> Hence, activists and settlement workers like Margaret Sanger, Emma Goldman, Victoria Woodhull and Elizabeth Stanton were struggling for reformations of the institution of marriage—reformations that often were overshadowed by other causes, like the right to vote.

The marriage question emerged as a burning public issue in the 1870s as divorce rates continued to rise and marriage rates fell. The very status of marriage was laid open to doubt, a fact which, in connection with newly liberal divorce laws and falling fertility rates, triggered new social problems that threatened to yield counterproductive effects from the perspective of womens' liberation. Horace Greece foretold that "easy divorce" would lead America to destruction. Falling fertility rates led the government to issue strict laws against abortion. Some activists, such as Woodhull, were arrested for speaking on the issue in public.<sup>40</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe opposed what she viewed as the radicalism of Woodhull's and Stanton's positions, and she wrote a novel in which she critiqued them, respectively, in the guises of the character Audacia Dangereys, an advocate of free love, and Mrs. Cerulean, a staunch social activist.<sup>41</sup>

## 2. Education

It would not be wrong to claim that the Civil War took place not only over slavery but also over everything that was

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39 Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1995).

40 Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 143.

41. Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 320.

wrong with America including the question of womens' social position. The upheavals of the war afforded some loosening of antebellum social strictures, with womens' involvement in some areas of the Civil War encouraging a spirit of equality. As in other fields, education was a key realm in which women were held in a position of inferiority. Luckily, with the passage of time, education proved one of the areas where women made notable advances that would fuel the coming generations with guidance and support.<sup>42</sup> After the Civil War, American society became an increasingly consumerist society on a global scale, opening new industries, which provided new employment opportunities for women. However, this did not simply translate into equality in the workplace; women rarely made their way to the top positions. This exclusion often followed from fallacious "scientific" assumptions such as the idea that womens' brains were weaker than men's, and that they were therefore not capable of complex tasks or higher education. Such pseudo-scientific misogyny had the effect, among other things, of undermining womens' confidence.<sup>43</sup> Soon, however, women overcame such so-called scientific and social views and started securing a place for themselves in the workplace and the classroom. Education was the first arena in which palpable change could be felt. The number of colleges and specialized schools for women quadrupled in the immediately post-bellum period.

### **3. Economic Equality**

While the Civil War killed two percent of the U.S. population and left cities, towns and villages devastated, it nonetheless had the positive effect of introducing a nearly endless string of new opportunities. At the end of the war, women caught a glimpse of equality, spurring them on to strive for a position of equal contribution and independence. More than a million men were killed or wounded in the Civil War, creating space

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42 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 382.

43 Evans, *Born for Liberty*.



for women. New waves of consumerism had a significant impact on social life, requiring individuals to contribute to their families. Eliza Frances Andrews asserts in her memoir that working was obligatory in the 1870s. Not everyone worked—the numbers were lower for women in particular—but a trend had been established that would put the majority of women to work by 1900.<sup>44</sup> These specific occupations varied largely by class. Middle-class women mostly sought white-collar jobs while the lower classes, immigrants and minorities worked in factories, houses and farms.

In the 1880s, new waves of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe flooded American cities in search of better lives. Some came to make the new land their home, while others came to work there temporarily before returning to their homes. Many, however, brought their families with them; and since one person could not support the family, many immigrant women came to work at factories. One Polish woman, for instance, wrote to her husband: “The wheelbarrow of life is too heavy for my shoulders . . . take me wherever you are . . . otherwise I shall perish”.<sup>45</sup> Partly as a result of this immigration, women had become a substantially larger portion of the American labour force by the end of the 1880s. In Philadelphia, they constituted 26 percent of the city’s workers; in Fall River, Massachusetts, 34 percent; and in Atlanta, Georgia 35 percent. Women were still in the minority but they were in the process of breaking the constraints of dependency.<sup>46</sup>

Hampered by the “domestic claim,” women in both urban and rural areas were socially and politically dependent on their husbands, a situation that not only caused depression and stress but also often led to domestic violence. The WCTU extended its support to deal with the situation insofar as it could. It included many influential individuals who

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44 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 229-25.

45 Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 131.

46 Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 130.

supported other women in similar fields.<sup>47</sup> An official from the National Labor Union (NLU) stated that housework was the duty of the wife, as a part of domestic life. Across the late 19th Century, sexual stereotypes restricted the freedom of working women. In 1898, Elizabeth Cady Stanton stated that “So long as woman labors to second man’s endeavors and exalt his sex above her own, her virtues pass unquestioned. . . . But where she dares to demand rights and privileges for herself, her motives . . . and character are subjects for ridicule and detraction”.<sup>48</sup>

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) was a leading scholar of womens’ social, sexual and economic struggles in the early 20th Century. She came from a family that was directly involved in suffragist activities. She was also a descendant of Beecher Stowe. Her sufferings in her first marriage paved the way for her feminist activism. After divorcing her first husband, she remarried, wedding her cousin Houghton Gilman. This relationship helped to provide her with mental stability. Elevating womens’ role in the society was the key objective of her feminist struggle. Impressed by Edward Bellamy’s novel *Looking Backward* (1889), she wrote *Women and Economics*<sup>49</sup> which was hailed by Addams and other activists as a “masterpiece” on the question of womens’ equality.<sup>50</sup>

Gilman’s rationale was that women were not oppressed by men but by their dependency on men. They did not have proper opportunities to put themselves to use. Furthermore, women were underpaid and had no job security or stability. Situations like this made them dependent on men, structurally preventing anything like equality. In addition, a

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47 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 128, 189.

48 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 325.

49 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Boston: Small, Maynard, & Company: 1890).

50 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 344.

dependent woman had been shorn of the power of ingenuity and creativity. She was prevented from contributing to society, a situation which only seemed to give credence to the false notion that women were incapable of great achievements in either intellect or action.

She further explained that while 'home' had a significant role in human civilization generally, in the context of 19th Century America it had reversed its function. It disabled half of the population, thereby wrecking the national economy. It was disastrous not only for women but also for men and society as a whole. Furthermore, it had generated or contributed to numerous social problems such as domestic violence. It prevented half of the population from experiencing the benefits of civilization by quarantining them in the home. Economic independence would release woman from her slavery and would give her equal status but in order to gain economic independence, the oppression of "home" had to be done away with.<sup>51</sup>

### **Prostitution**

Low pay, lack of job security and hazardous working conditions frequently pushed young women to prostitution. In 1889, a survey concluded that there were 4,000 prostitutes in cities in the East and Midwest coming from working-class families—victims of city life and male predators. Jane Addams argued that "rural or urban, the girl who loved pleasure and adventure could easily be recruited to a vicious life". According to historian Ruth Rosen, prostitutes in the Progressive Era could earn five times more than a common factory worker. These comparatively high wages, often coupled with a lack of familial, social or financial support, led many women into the difficult life of prostitution.<sup>52</sup>

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51 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*.

52 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 233, 234, 235.

#### 4. Political Equality

Formally starting in 1869 and ending in 1920, the struggle for womens' suffrage could be called one of the longest wars for human rights ever fought on American soil. One reason, for this struggle being so long was its complex relationship to fight for the civil rights of black Americans. It took suffragists a great amount of time to convince people that womens' suffrage was a necessary aspect of a more universal fight for equal rights.<sup>53</sup> For black Americans in the South, life was frequently no different from the situation under slavery; analogously, some felt that womens' suffrage would be a similarly empty, merely nominal right.<sup>54</sup> In the 1870s and 1880s, women began to understand the situation and the tactics that it called for. The 13th, 14th and 15th<sup>55</sup> amendments had granted—if only *de jure*—equal rights to blacks, including the right to vote. That this right was only granted to black men was viewed by some educated women as an affront, and it intensified their fervor for the womens' suffrage movement. Forming their own associations, they adapted the movement to these new challenges.<sup>56</sup>

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Solitude of Self* (1892) and *The Woman's Bible* (1895) were two masterpieces of the womens' rights struggle. They critiqued both the political and social problems faced by women. *The Solitude of Self* presented arguments concerning political rights<sup>57</sup>, whereas *The Woman's Bible* challenged religious dogma that favored

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53 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*.

54 Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 125.

55 The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude on April 8, 1864. The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution, which was adopted on July 9, 1868, addressed the citizenship rights and equal protection of the laws. The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution awarded the African-American the right to vote on February 3, 1870.

56 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 337.

57 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Solitude of Self" (Hermitary, 1892).  
<https://www.hermitary.com/solitude/stanton.html>.

men. Along with other writers like Susan B. Anthony and Jane Addams, the theoretical works of Elizabeth Cady Stanton were fundamental in preparing women to fight for equality.<sup>58</sup>

The womens' association and settlements were instrumental in spreading feminist awareness and in creating a feminist community and tradition that would guide later generations of women. Evans shows that paying special attention to communal aid enabled women to develop important support systems and advocacy groups. A sense of flexibility and understanding were the key factors in building successful forms of collaborative labor aimed at elevating their position relative to that of men.<sup>59</sup> Such work fostered a kind of national "sisterhood," drawing on gender-based sympathy regardless of caste, color or creed. The WCTU, for instance, worked to bring about prison reform while continuing to encourage women to assert their moral and political rights. This collaborative, communal aspect can be seen in the fact that Charlotte Perkins Gilman insisted that "The Womens' Movement' rests not alone on her larger personality, with its tingling sense of revolt against injustice, but on the wide, deep sympathy of women for each other"<sup>60</sup>. In organizations like the NWSA and the AWSA, the WCTU, and Hull House, women found an irreplaceable ground on which to generate new plans to better their domestic and professional lives.<sup>61</sup>

Black women, who still faced worse hurdles, extended their support to the womens' suffrage moment. At some stages, they were denied membership out of a concern that their participation would enrage Southern white members, but they nevertheless continued to voice their support of the cause with other members of the movement. Although they

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58 Nancy J. Rosenbloom, *Women in American History Since 1880* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

59 Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*, 120.

60 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 326.

61 Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*, 128, 129.

took part in all kinds of events, their contributions tended to go relatively unnoticed due to entrenched racism.<sup>62</sup>

### **The National Women Suffrage Association (NWSA) and The American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA): The National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA)**

The womens' suffrage movement can be divided into three periods: 1848–1869, 1869–1890 and 1890–1920. Although the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments of 1848 did not directly call for the right to vote, it did draw attention to an organized forum where women could fight for their rights. Until 1869, women worked with abolitionists in hopes that the two groups' mutual problems might be solved together. This alliance dissipated somewhat once blacks were awarded so-called social and political rights. In 1869, both the NWSA and the AWSA were established to advocate for womens' social, sexual, and political rights on a separate basis. In 1890, the two groups were merged into the NAWSA, which led the womens' suffrage movement until its goal was achieved in 1920.<sup>63</sup>

### **Settlement Houses and Clubs**

A major obstacle to the womens' cause was the insidious idealism of the so-called "domestic claim." Settlement houses and clubs, in this respect, functioned a bit like an informal university, where one learned about and from others. Partly as a result of this, by the 1880s and 1890s, many more women were conscious of their justified demand for equal rights than they were in the 1860s. Hull House played a particularly significant role in advocating for female industrial workers. In short, these institutions were very important in formalizing the struggle for political equality and in developing a unified front.<sup>64</sup>

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62 Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*, 122.

63 Evans, *Born for Liberty*.

64 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 145.

## Unions

The Civil War had many positive consequences for women. One of them was the womens' government commissions during the war, which paved the way for their club movements and associations. These amounted to a sort of counter-measure to male-dominated saloons, where men sought companionship and spent much money. These commissions were highly organized: constituting something akin in formal womens' political parties, they met on a regular basis, elected members, produced minutes, and debated issues. One of the most prominent of these groups was the WCTU.

## Radicals

The end of the 19th Century brought further radicalization to womens' political activism. Public parades and picketing of the White House and other official buildings became common. The Socialist Party's sympathy to womens' rights attracted a large number of women. By 1912, roughly 15 percent of its 118,000 members were female. Greenwich Village in New York City was a hotbed of this radicalism. The socialists mostly targeted urban areas with a high population of newly arrived immigrants. But, as was the case with so many other unions and clubs, the socialists' work was brought to a halt by the commencement of World War I.<sup>65</sup>

In the early part of the 20th century, new tactics and strategies were introduced in the struggle for equality. In 1910, public parades were one of the NAWSA's tactics to draw the public's attention to their cause. These parades were followed by open-air meetings, an idea which freedom fighters like Florence Luscomb (1887-1985) borrowed from British suffragists. The radical suffrage movement in England likewise was a major influence on the American suffrage movement. British activist Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia, frequently spoke in

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65 Ware, *Modern American Women*, 75.

America. By 1908, they were much in the public eye, aiding the NAWSA and providing the association with international connections. These methods were successful in gaining public and governmental sympathies. Events after 1910 seemed to favour the movement. With the outbreak of WW I, the NAWSA's activities were naturally somewhat curtailed, but under the strong leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt, the group's obvious patriotism won it many supporters in the government.<sup>66</sup> They took their meetings to the public, sold newspapers, and occupied streets corners. In 1913, they managed to catch the attention of Woodrow Wilson at his presidential inaugurations. The tactics of "open-air meetings" and "front door" were meaningful in pressuring the government to pass the 19th Amendment.<sup>67</sup>

Like many other changes in the Progressive Era, womens' entry into actual political activism marked a new era in American gender relations. Amongst the many notable freedom fighters of the period was Mary Ritter Beard (1876-1958), whose enthusiastic political activism and writing brought many new converts. She sought to demonstrate that, in actual fact, women played just as critical a role in building the nation as did men. Her book *Womens' Work in Municipalities* (1915) details the many ways in which, all across the country, women contributed indispensably to the vitality of the nation. In it, she discovered "in the making, before our very eyes, a conscious national womanhood". Amongst her mature writings was a book co-authored with her husband, the historian Charles Beard, entitled *The Rise of American Civilization* (1927). In 1946, another contribution to the field of American history appeared, again insisting on the important role of women: *Women as Force in History*.<sup>68</sup>

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66 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 354.

67 Ware, *Modern American Women*, 98, 108.

68 Ware, *Modern American Women*, 43-44.



## 5. Embryonic Waves of Feminism

After attaining the right to vote in the 1920, the emerging American feminist movement provided the womens' rights struggle with a unanimous platform and focused on the issues which had long been overshadowed by the right to vote. Some historians group it into three waves and some into four. Caroline Dorey-Stein groups the movement into three parts in her article, "A Brief History: The Three Waves of Feminism" which is commonly quoted in feminist scholarship.<sup>69</sup> "The first wave (1830s–early 1900s): womens' fight for equal contract and property rights; the second wave (1960s-1980s): broadening the debate; and the third wave (1990s–present): the 'micropolitics' of gender equality" (web article). Martha Rampton, a history professor and director of the Center for Gender Equity at Pacific University, supports the four waves schema in her essay, "Four Waves of Feminism."

It is common to speak of three phases of modern feminism; however, there is little consensus as to how to characterize these three waves or what to do with womens' movements before the late 19th century. Making the landscape even harder to navigate, a new silhouette is emerging on the horizon and taking the shape of a fourth wave of feminism.<sup>70</sup>

## CONTEMPORARY WOMENS' STATUS IN PAKISTAN

### 1. The Birth of a Baby Girl vs Baby Boy

*UN Women: Pakistan* (2017) states, "Pakistan's ranking for gender equality remains one of the lowest in the world."<sup>71</sup>

Noor Sanauddin portrays a portion of Pakistani society precisely in his doctoral thesis, "A home that does not have a

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69 Caroline Dorey-Stein, "A Brief History: The Three Waves of Feminism" (Progressive Women's Leadership, 2015).  
<https://www.progressivewomensleadership.com/a-brief-history-the-three-waves-of-feminism>.

70 Martha Rampton, "Four Waves of Feminism" (Pacific University, 2008).  
<https://www.pacificu.edu/about/media/four-waves-feminism>

71 Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2017: Pakistan".

male child should be demolished”; or “A girl’s father is never at rest”; or “Keep women under your hand . . .”; or “Ruined is the man who listens to the advice of women”; or “A woman goes seven foot ahead of the devil”.<sup>72</sup> The issue commences with the birth of a child: the society takes the birth of a baby boy a good omen, while the birth of baby girl, a bad one.<sup>73</sup> Two different sets of language-use, laws and roles are devised for them since their first cry in the new world.<sup>74</sup> Unlike boys, girls are discouraged, and a sense of inferiority complex is instilled in them.<sup>75</sup> Majority of the participants are also of the opinion that—with some degree of softening in recent years—girls are discriminated against boys in majority of families and societies in Pakistan. This discrimination ranges from their personal matters to actual participation in nearly all spheres of life.<sup>76</sup>

## 2. Freedom of Movement

Starting with the freedom of movement that carries a significant difference for a girl/woman and a boy/man, home is thought to be womens’ right sphere, therefore, freedom of movement has been restricted for women since the genesis of this society. But with the recent surge in womens’ harassment, females’ movement has evolved into a critical concern across the country. Lately, Asma, a four years old girl from Mardan, Zainab Ansari from Kasur and Farishta

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72 Noor Sanauddin, "Proverbs and Patriarchy: Analysis of Linguistic Sexism and Gender Relations among the Pashtuns of Pakistan," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 2015), 308-309..

73 Syed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Pukhtane Khaze Au Da Qam Khidmat* (Peshawar: Bacha Khan Research Centre, 2012).

74 Siddiqui, *Language, Gender, and Power*.

75 Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb, *I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban* (New York: Little Brown and Co., 2013).

76 Five Hundred Students of Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad who participated in the study through their questionnaires and interviews (Participants from QAU).

Momand<sup>77</sup> from Islamabad were kidnapped, tortured, raped and strangled to death.<sup>78</sup> Keeping in view the ongoing phenomenon, it promotes us to assume the situation for women in Pakistan is getting from bad to worse. Including Human Rights Watch<sup>79</sup> and Malala Yousafzai's affirmation<sup>80</sup>, round about 80 percent participants<sup>81</sup> attest that freedom of movement is very limited for women in Pakistan, and will take a considerable amount of time and struggle to normalize the situation.

### 3. Education

The insecure environment, religious misinterpretations and cultural restrictions provide a ground for the exploitation of womens' basic rights, such as education.<sup>82</sup> Almost 55 to 65 percent girls fail to register at schools. With the passage of time and rise in education levels, the number of registered 35 to 45 percent keeps on falling that touches the rock bottom in higher education.<sup>83</sup> The main reason behind Malala Yousafzai's shooting was her voice that she raised for girls' education. These days, she is the most active ambassador of womens' education/rights across the world. If she had not been opposed, she would not have been there where she is now. Her tragic story is a roaring example of this androcentric form of thinking in Pakistan. In her personal

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77 Gulf News Asia. <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/pakistanis-demand-justice-as-10-year-old-raped-and-murdered-1.64087616>.

78 AlJazeeraNews.com. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/asma-raped-strangled-death-mardan-180117120102537.html>. Accessed June 23, 2018.

79 Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2017: Pakistan".

80 Author's interview with Malala Yousafzai (August 23, 2015)

81 Participants from QAU.

82 Naheed, *A Bad Women's Story*.

83 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Development Profile of Swat District: Situation Analysis & Baseline Surveys for Poverty Reduction through Rural Development in KPK, FATA & Baluchistan. <http://ppr.org.pk/PDF/District%20Profile%20Swat.pdf> Accessed December 13, 2017.

interview, she stated, “Primarily, I would be trying to transform the status of womens’ education in Pakistan”.<sup>84</sup>

#### 4. Lack of Awareness

Illiteracy is one of the major causes behind womens’ lack of awareness in Pakistan. Women believe whatever they are told about their status in the society. Being clutched in androcentric, culture, religion and clannish customs, women fail to question discrimination against themselves. Women are not allowed to express themselves openly. If they do, the act is taken outlandishly. Women with their own heads are not considered pious and ideal for matrimonial ties: passive ones are preferred, instead!<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, societal norms and romanticized virgins of religion (or the recent teachings of radical Wahhabism)<sup>86</sup> do not allow women to observe their individual ways of life. From dressing to social relations, everything in womens’ life is monitored by the family’s male members. In some situations, a family honour solely relies on the shoulders of a woman and its dignity is measured through prism of its womens’ life style.<sup>87</sup> The entrenched system restrains women while allows men with extreme freedom<sup>88</sup>.

#### 5. Domestic Violence

Most of the cultures in Pakistan take the issue of womens’ rights for granted as they do not consider women worthy of equal rights. Domestic violence is a common phenomenon. Though it is quite astonishing, majority of women justifies violence against themselves on the basis of established cultural norms. This very misogynistic mood of thinking lays

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84 Yousafzai, “Personal Interview”.

85 Naheed, *A Bad Women’s Story*.

86 PBS: Publishing Broadcasting, “For more than two centuries, Wahhabism has been Saudi Arabia’s dominant faith. It is an austere form of Islam that insists on a literal interpretation of the Quran. Strict Wahhabis believe that all those who don’t practice their form of Islam are heathens and enemies”.

87 Jafree, *Women, Healthcare, and Violence in Pakistan*

88 Yousafzai, *I am Malala*, 25.

a ground for use of force against women making the phenomenon as an integral and rightful part of the society.<sup>89</sup> Apart from the unreported cases, round about 70 percent of cases reported at the police stations are related to domestic violence triggered by honor issues.<sup>90</sup> Up to 90 percent participants attest the fact that patriarchal shackles are very hard on womens' personal lives in Pakistan. In other words, they believe that women do not have personal life in Pakistan; their lives belong to their families.<sup>91</sup>

## 6. Marriage and Divorce

The story of injustices chases a Pakistani woman at every stage of her life, even in the most important decision of her life—marriage. Women in Pakistan are not allowed to marry or divorce according to their own will. In terms of marital consent, girls are mostly informed while boys are asked. Up to 82 percent marriages are arranged on the basis of economic or clannish or familial grounds. With some change in the recent years, this is entirely a patriarchal province to decide the matter. Marriage is a social contract for a woman which merges her position into her husband's property. After marriage, a woman's personal life ceases trying to behave within the codes of her father-in-law's family.<sup>92</sup>

Divorce is another dilemma in Pakistani society which has many taboos associated with it. Unfortunately, when a marriage fails on some grounds, the couple is doomed. Neither can they divorce nor can they live with each other. Along with the partners, divorce leaves deep scars on the names of both families, respectively. Therefore, a divorce is an unusual phenomenon that only takes place in some critical situations. Still it has different faces for a man and a woman.<sup>93</sup> Unlike a man, in most cases, the debris of a

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89 Jafree, *Women, Healthcare, and Violence in Pakistan*

90 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), *Development Profile*, 24.

91 Participants from QAU.

92 Jafree, *Women, Healthcare, and Violence in Pakistan*

93 Hussain, *Purdah and Polygamy*.

divorce falls on a woman's character who fails to get a respectable place again in the society.<sup>94</sup>

### 7. Honour Killing

Losing the right both to her body and will, women's position vacillates between a sub-human and an object of sex. In such personal issues, women are meant to be subservient. If a woman dares to raise her voice against these masculine norms, she is taken for an infidel licentiating her husband to punish her according to his own whims.<sup>95</sup> The society remains silent and justifies the act as part of the societal order.<sup>96</sup> Unlike for male, an extra-marital affair for a married as well as for an unmarried woman invites justified honour killing. Pakistan has the highest number of honour killings in the contemporary world.<sup>97</sup> According to Human Rights Watch about 1000 women are killed in the name of honour each year in Pakistan.<sup>98</sup> Malala Youasaffzai cements this argument with her own experience in Pakistan:

I am very proud to be a Pashtun, but sometimes I think our code of conduct has a lot to answer for, particularly where the treatment of women is concerned. . . . There was a beautiful fifteen-year-old girl called Seema. Everyone knew she was in love with a boy. . . . In our society for a girl to flirt with any man brings shame on the family, though it's alright for the man. We were told she had committed suicide, but we later discovered her own family had poisoned her. . . . When I complained these things to my father he had told me that life was harder for women in Afghanistan.<sup>99</sup>

### 8. Economic Dependency

Womens' economic dependency is another key issue in Pakistan that pushes them back from the mainstream of the society. They also face problems in job market and property

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94 Participants from QAU.

95 Jafri, *Honor Killing*.

96 Participants from QAU.

97 Jafri, *Honor Killing*.

98 Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2017: Pakistan".

99 Yousafzai, *I am Malala*, 66-67.

inheritance. There are not as many job opportunities for women as there are for men. Women are mostly found in public sector jobs, i.e. education, nursing, police, offices, etc. whereas in open market and factories, there are a few opportunities for them. Recently, some women have started walking into these sectors but there are high risks of their harassment.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, they are considered weak and vulnerable; therefore, they are not appointed on key positions. Property inheritance is another chapter in womens' miseries in Pakistan. Without challenging their shares in courts, they are mostly excluded from the family's possessions. Taking their shares with force of law, pushes women into a family clash, which is never smooth. Most of the family members ostracize her to discourage the trend.<sup>101</sup>

### 9. Political Exclusion

Like many other societal functions, Pakistani women lag behind in the arena of national, provincial and local politics. In most cases, political participation in Pakistan is a masculine department as cooking is a feminine one.<sup>102</sup> Female members of elite families either contest elections for national and provincial assemblies or they get selected on reserved seats for women. But middle class women are far away from actual stream of politics. They do not have political clubs or associations to cluster them for their political, and other basic rights. In many ways, women are not appreciated in political gatherings and local elections. As a result, very few women are seen in political campaigns though the phenomenon has begun changing lately. In some areas, there is often zero percent female turnout during national elections.<sup>103</sup>

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100 Jafree, *Women, Healthcare, and Violence in Pakistan*.

101 Participants from QAU.

102 Suvorova, *Widows and Daughters*.

103 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Development Profile.

## **10. Emerging Voices**

Besides the government's warm stance on the issue, there are many activists—Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Malala Yousafzai, etc.—and NGOs (like The Association for Womens' Rights in Development (AWID), and UN Women, etc) working to improve womens' situation in Pakistan but the speed is comparatively slow. A few local women writers in Pakistan have also picked on the "woman question" in some ways like: Ishrat Afreen (1956-), Tehmina Durrani (1953-), Kishwar Naheed (1940-), Fahmida Riaz (1946-), and Hajra Masroor (1930-2012). In sum, the grasp of cultural restraints and religious fanaticism is extremely tight on the lives of women in Pakistan. Majority of women groan under psychological and physical suppressions. Neither they have a right to their ways of life nor individualism nor body. For breaking a change for them, it is obligatory to break the shackles of religious romanticizing and cultural constraints, which is possible with both men and womens' universal awareness that directly comes from formal and informal education. So the liberation of a Pakistani woman from patriarchic shackles is as imperative as the liberation of a Pakistani man from ignorance.

### **Conclusion**

Stressing the steady and ongoing nature of the American womens' rights movement, this study proposes how emerging Pakistan womens' activists might, like the late 19th and early 20th century American women, draw upon elements of their own culture to fight for improved personal, social, educational, economic and political rights. The U.S. womens' struggle appears to have the desired potential to effectively stimulate the emerging womens' voice in Pakistan. Indeed, the study could not eclipse the fact of two different times, cultures, nationalities, religions, geographies, etc. but argument is delimited enough to only examine universal womens' issues that share the same ground across these limitations. Among the most suppressed ones in global ranking, Pakistani woman needs a titanic struggle



to achieve her desirable place in the society. It is quite disappointing that nearly with difference of one and a half century our women share only the commonality of the right to vote (that also in theory) with her American sisters. Every movement or fight needs a roadmap to achieve its objectives, so does the emerging womens' struggle in Pakistan. In this regard, American womens' struggle is so comprehensive and seems capable of guiding the rising womens' voice in Pakistan at every desired step for their basic-equal rights across all expected storms. Availing the given opportunity at hand, women activists in Pakistan could use the U.S. womens' struggle as a constitution for their basic rights. In this regard, concerned scholarships, documentaries, social media, and (national as well as international) womens' activists will help in translation of U.S. womens' struggle to the contemporary Pakistani women. Giving birth to souls like themselves, the iconic characters of Jane Addams, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Victoria Woodhull, etc. could blow the spirit of revolution in the contemporary Pakistani woman. The day seems to be in sight when we will have our own heroes—like Malala Yousafzai — to make Pakistani woman emerge stronger, determined, self-reliant and professional like the ones in late 19th and 20th century America.