

# Ladies First, Gents Go To Hell: A Backlash of Western Feminism in Pakistan

Dr. Khalil Ahmad<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*The original intent of the feminist movement in America and Europe was to give men and women the same rights. In Pakistani culture and norms, women are already treated with respect. But when Western feminism spread to Pakistan, women started to assert themselves because they felt they had the full backing of Western nations, the media, NGOs, the amended legislation, and elite groups in society. They continued to abuse cultural norms under the guise of feminism to call for supremacy over males rather than equality. Rights for women should be granted, but not at the expense of rights for men or at abuse of cultural norms. Using observation as a descriptive research method of various phenomena, I argue that Pakistani society has been negatively impacted by Western feminism and that women are now seeking supremacy rather than equality. At the end I offer a reconciliatory solution for the dual conflict of women rights with men's rights on one side and cultural norms on the other.*

**Key words:** Gender equality, Feminism, Women's rights, Men's rights, Supremacy, patriarchy

## 1. Introduction

Since many years ago, feminism has been widely addressed in politics and in people's day-to-day lives, with varied degrees of intensity. Feminism is "The belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state" (Cambridge Dictionary). Accordingly, a feminist is "A person

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Wah, Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi.

who supports the belief that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men” (Oxford Learners Dictionary).

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The study explores the perception that adopting Western feminism has resulted in a shift from promoting gender equality to pursuing female supremacy. The research also aims to create a tripartite equilibrium among women's and men's rights and cultural norms in an effort to create a fair and culturally sensitive solution that upholds both gender equality and cultural values. At the heart of this investigation is the essential question of defining human rights—whether they are universally absolute or context-bound, given the diverse human experiences across different parts of the world.

### **1.2 Western Feminism**

The 1960s saw the development of women’s movement in America and Europe. Feminism was in great part initiated by women in the United States. The restrictions put on women was the real cause of the movement of feminism. Women were bound to home, whereas males were liberated to engage in social activities. Those fixed positions within a patriarchal system were interpreted by one gender role, which Western feminists were starting to doubt and to question. (Burkett & Brunell, 2021). The history of feminism includes three distinct phases which are known as waves in literature.

At the close of the 19th and the start of the 20th centuries, the first Western feminist wave emerged. The primary concern of the movement was women's voting rights i.e. Suffrage. The 19th amendment to the US constitution, which granted women the right to vote in 1919, marked the conclusion of the first American feminist wave (Drucker, 2018).

The 1940s saw the start of the second wave, which peaked in the 1960s and 1970s. Women struggled for equal social rights throughout this time. They questioned the widespread notion that women may only have an identity as a wife and mother via a man and children. One-gender roles are once more

apparent in this situation. With the publication of her book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, American feminist and activist Betty Friedan made a significant contribution to the cause for equality (Drucker, 2018). The Women's movement contributed significantly to the drafting of International documents on women's rights, including Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979).

Early in the 1990s, the third wave of feminism began. A deeper knowledge of the existence of intersecting categories like race, class, gender, and sexual orientation marks the 3rd feminist wave. Furthermore, racial concerns received increasing focus, including global feminism and the status of women worldwide. At that time, several feminist NGOs were also established, although they focused on specific feminist topics rather representing the general problems of women. In order to spread its ideas and carry out its actions, the third wave of feminism actively utilized media and popular culture, such as through producing blogs or e-zines. It emphasized incorporating feminism into peoples' everyday lives.

### **1.3 Feminism in the Third World**

The Third World feminist movements, which have begun to emerge with the third wave of feminism, became known to Western feminists in America and Europe with the advancement of globalization in the 1990s. The treatment of the Third World women including the wearing of veils in public, arranged marriages, and household responsibilities, as well as other factors, surprised feminist women from "developed" western nations. Then, feminists in the West began to see themselves as the protectors of women in developing nations, i.e. the Third world. The issue, however, was that their understanding of and proposals for these women in Third World nations were at conflict with the actual problems and challenges that women in such nations really faced. Their issues, concerns, priorities and lifestyles were ignored by Western feminists. For the First World feminists, patriarchy was the core problem for women in the Third World countries. They tried to transport the 'Western indigenous

feminism' to the Third World countries, where it was at odds with the cultural norms at one side, and men's rights at the other. As a result, instead of granting rights to the women, Western feminism created a state of chaos and fragmentation in the in those underprivileged, but peaceful and harmonious societies. It received criticism for a variety of reasons. Firstly, because it is solely intended for white women in "developed" industrialized nations, the approach cannot be used everywhere because what works in one region of the world may not work in another region (Dixon, 2011). Postcolonial feminism also has reservations regarding Western feminism for being founded on emancipation and ideals of the West that are then exported to women in the Third World nations while ignoring cultural variations and issues that these women face. This problem has been highlighted by the quote of Amos and Parmar (2005):

While Black and Third World women are fighting daily battles for survival, for food, land and water, Western white women's cries of anguish for concern about preserving the standards of life for their children and preserving the planet for future generations sound hollow. Whose standards of life are they fighting to preserve? – White, middle-class standards undoubtedly.

#### **1.4 Pakistani Culture**

Human acts, behaviors, and ways of life are all influenced by culture as a whole. According to E.B. Taylor (1871) "Culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, customs and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society." Every country has a unique culture that it values.

Prior to the impact of Western feminism, Pakistani culture was truly a component of Islamic civilization, which derived its ideals and customs from Islam and the extensive history of Islam. Muslims made up the majority of the population and still do today, and they upheld the standards and ideals of brotherhood, equality, collaboration, social justice, respect for women and the elderly, and affection for children. Males predominated in Pakistani society. The eldest male member, having had much more practical experience, served as the

head and was in charge of organizing the family's main source of income. Pakistan, a multiethnic nation, is bordered on the west by India on the east by Iran and Afghanistan. Due to its geographic position and a long history of migration and conquest, Pakistan is diverse. As a result, there are significant variances in the norms and values of this country's many regions and provinces. When attempting to pinpoint consistent behaviors, beliefs, and values, the wide range of ethnic, cultural, and religious variety creates some challenges. There are fundamental ideals shared by all Pakistanis despite the country's vast ethnolinguistic variety, such as respect and esteem for women and seniors. In Pakistani society, the concept of honor (Urdu: "izzat" or "ghairat") is deep-seated. Both an individual's behavior and that of people with whom they are linked to such as their family, community, or clan have an impact on their honor, or "ghairat". As a result, if someone behaves dishonorably, their roots (i.e., family, area, or race) may be blamed. In this sense, there is social pressure on people to uphold both their own and other people's reputations. This may require individuals to provide their positive qualities, showcasing the achievements of their family members, and respecting society standards, they may provide a public image of decency and honesty. A person or his or her family may experience severe humiliation (Urdu: sharam) as a result of acting in a humiliating, socially unacceptable, or indecent manner.

### **1.5 The Development of Feminism in Pakistan**

In Pakistan, feminism is neither a wholly new idea nor is it hostile to Islam. Islam really preached moral, spiritual, and economic equality and it was the leading religion to publicly award women a position they had not previously enjoyed. Numerous quotations from eminent Islamic thinkers, "ahadith" (Holy Prophet's sayings), and the Quran itself support women's rights in a number of areas of life such as, education, wedding, and divorce. Though feminist values have always been present in politics, they have just recently become more visible due to advancements in media and education. For example, even prior to Pakistan was founded, countless of women were courageously motivated to stand up for their rights by Fatima Jinnah. Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan founded the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) in 1949 with the

intention of improving the moral, social, and economic standing of women across the country. Similar to this, founded in September 1981, the Women's Action Forum (hereafter WMA) to represent women who are without the resources to do themselves.

When Benazir Bhutto's two regimes (1988–1990 and 1993–1996) were in office, NGOs were given substantial power and pressed the government to make amends. The biggest support was given to Western feminism. But as soon as Nawaz Sharif assumed office as Prime Minister in 1997, women began to lose strength against conservative politics and religious revivalist thought. Killings in the name of honor increased significantly in 1997, and the Council of Islamic Ideology proposed wearing “burqa’ (veil) compulsory for women. When President General Pervez Musharraf, who served from 2001 to 2008, advocated for rights of women and supported their participation in media, sports, and other sociopolitical events. Collectively, the WMA has made it possible for several laws that support women, including the Criminal Law Amendment Act (2004), the Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill (2013), the Protection of Women Act (2006), and numerous laws that denounce honor killings and other social vices that affect women in Pakistan.

Since 2018, the feminist organization "Hum Auratain" (English: We the Women) in Pakistan has been staging a women's march each year in the nation's main cities, including Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta. The name given to this yearly meeting of feminists, queer people, activists, and organizers is "Aurat March" (Urdu: The Women's March). The “Aurat March” is often covered in articles, newscasts, and social media posts every year. This press coverage is overwhelmingly very unfavorable. The placards, banners and posters that participants carry, are captured in photos, and disseminated via Facebook and Twitter posts, are one of most infamous aspects of the “Aurat March”. The varied posters and banners of “Aurat March” have sparked passionate discussions on cultural values and norms in mainstream news reports, talk programs, and social media postings ever since they went popular on Pakistani social media in 2018. A slogan of protest that went viral on social media seemed to particularly touch a chord throughout the country, “Khana

khud garam karlo" (English: Heat your meal yourself) was the message on the poster. Criticism was leveled at her for stepping outside of social norms, disrespecting males, and reducing women's rights to 'trivial matters' like cooking meals.

Another set of posters came under fire around the country in the marches that followed in 2019 and 2020. Some of the more (notoriously) well-known posters among them read "Mera Jism Meri Marzi" (English: My Body, My Will) and "Izzat naheen insaan hay aurat" (English: A woman is human, not your honor). One of the primary complaints leveled at these widely circulated posters that discuss domestic work and specifically mention the female body is that they demonstrate that feminism is a "Western" import since they call for a reorganization of household roles and speak disrespectfully of males and cultural norms. Women's rights are significant concerns, yet in tackling them, some contend that we must preserve our own social and cultural identity.

## **1.6 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of the study are:

- to examine the impact of Western feminism on the statuses and roles of men and women in Pakistan
- to highlight the intersection of Pakistani cultural norms with Western feminist ideas and its influence on gender rights and roles
- to propose a reconciliatory model that respects both gender equality and cultural norms

## **1.7 Research Questions**

- How has the Western feminism impacted the statuses and roles women and men in Pakistan?
- How do cultural norms in Pakistan intersect with Western feminist ideas, and how does this intersection influence situations and actions related to gender roles and rights?
- What strategies can be proposed to reconcile conflicts between women's

rights, men's rights, and cultural norms in Pakistan, while ensuring a balanced approach that respects both gender equality and cultural values?

## 2. Literature Review

Many troubles have been brought on by the Western concept of feminism in Third World nations. It has been criticized from different angles by many scholars such as: it has been a cause of moral and cultural decline; that it is based on a foreign culture of no relevance to women in the Third World; that it represents the ideology of Western women and that it disengages or opposes women from their cultural, religious, and familial duties.

According to Mohanty (1998), Muslim women are consistently depicted in western academia as being helpless and downtrodden. As a result, western feminism uses images of third-world women as study subjects and as victims in need of assistance. Mohanty is right in her assertion because the only pretext to intrude into others' territory or culture is first to defame their dominant authority or culture for their atrocities on the public so that the people from the inward raise their voice for 'help', then enter into that territory or culture and you will be justified because you have already created solidarity with the so-called oppressed people through propaganda. This was the tactics, the Western feminists used to enter into other culture to sabotage their norms.

Women's access to higher education was examined by Khattak (2018), who also examined the three waves of feminism through the feminist lenses of liberal, socialist/radical, and Islamic feminism. She stated that the rise of feminism improved knowledge of the global fight for gender equality. She comes to the conclusion, however, that the methods and standards of discrimination differ from one society to another and one culture to another.

In their paper "The Women Activism in Pakistan: An Analysis of 'Aurat March,'" Khushbakht and Sultana (2020) extensively addressed the state of the feminist movement in Pakistan and provided a thorough analysis of the "Aurat March" (English: Women March). Using discourse analysis as a methodology, they



argue that the "Aurat March" glorified the western mindset and lifestyle through "false" placards and posters while disregarding legal, cultural, and religious limitations of local community. The slogans also failed to capture the communal and personal challenges faced by Pakistani women. They claimed that the idea of feminism as a means of enhancing the status of women is nothing more than a fiction which is made up by the upper class for their own particular objectives. By displaying a picture of free women, it persuaded a lot of ladies. Unfortunately, it makes them into a confused, independent, and strong woman who is alone. It drives them astray and transports them back in time.

By emphasizing the fact that religion and culture have not been taken into account, their study raised a crucial argument. They recommended making changes to posters and slogans as well as getting rid of any concepts that were lifted from western ideologies. They emphasized how crucial it is for Islamic values and traditions to be upheld before implementing any policies or adopting foreign strategies. They also suggested that policies, aspirations, and plans be modified to ensure that the cause adheres to its core theological and cultural principles, which is unquestionably crucial for Pakistani society.

The protest banners used in Pakistan's "Aurat March 2019" were analyzed by Akhtar et al. (2021). They provided a distinctive viewpoint on Pakistani patriarchy by examining the visual and textual techniques to comprehend the participants' points of view. They discovered that the "Aurat March" participants believed patriarchy to be a system that dehumanized women by confining them to the typical gendered roles of housewives.

In a study of the problem with the Western idea of feminism, Naz et al. (2022) asserted that it was insufficient to describe the lives of Pakistani Muslim women via the prism of the West. They examined the controversial relationship between Islamic culture and feminism in Pakistan, a Third World nation that is both Islamic and strongly established in postcolonial history, while also highlighting the problematic nature of Western feminism.

In line with the studies mentioned earlier, the current study also focuses the negative impact of Western feminism on Pakistani cultural norms in general, and the men's right in particular which provides a distinctive gap in literature.

### **3. Methodology**

The present study is based on the critical debate to see the impact of Western feminism on Pakistani cultural norms, the rights of men, and society at large. Drawing on the post-colonial cultural theory, the study, used observation technique which is a descriptive research method. The researcher collected observational data from different phenomena in every sphere of the country. According to Williams (2007) observation (descriptive research method) involves observing and gathering data on a population or phenomena without manipulating variables. It is employed in social science studies to track and understand human behavior. The data collected through observation was analyzed and interpreted through descriptive method based on evidences collected.

The observation yielded some important and sensitive facts that emerged as a backlash of the import of Western feminism to Pakistan.

### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

Before the arrival of the Western feminism, Pakistanis enjoyed a peaceful life, abiding by their social, cultural and religious norms and values. Every individual was protected under the multifarious responsibilities of the head of the family. Elders, children and specifically women were given due respect. There was a strong bond of brotherhood, cooperation, love, sympathy and solidarity in the people all around. But, after the import of Western feminism, Pakistani society disintegrated in terms of husband-wife relationships, clans' relationships, the roles previously assigned to both male and female members of the society-which were the cause of their happy life. Hackett & Haslanger (2006) have rightly put this:

We are by no means prepared to think that the Western woman of today is a model to be copied. What has often been termed in the West as the emancipation of women is only a glorified name for the disintegration of the family.

Feminism created a havoc particularly in urban areas of Pakistan and instead of human rights, women rights were focused. Instead of calling for the equality of rights of men and women, only women rights were zoomed out. Feminism ignored that people from different cultures have different experiences with gender roles and the female identity is different according to each culture and their customs. Patriarchy in Pakistan was portrayed as dark anaconda full of all vices, holding absolute power to crush female members of society. Human rights were translated to women rights only. Questions arise in the mind, such as what is the need of calling for women rights when human rights are already protected under 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the UNO? Does the phrase 'human rights' mean 'women rights'? Or does it mean cultural or religious emancipation? Such questions provide a clue to the intent and ulterior motives of Western feminism that instead of equality, it seeks supremacy of women.

As a result of feminist propaganda, Pakistan turned to a country where profemale discrimination is pervasive in all fields of life. Men's rights are violated and exploited in preference to women. Men's voices are suppressed by the full support of Western nations, the media, NGOs, the amended laws, and elites. Some of the phenomena in the data that were recorded through observation from different spheres of life in Pakistan are given below:

**Public Transport:** In public transport, from rickshaw to spacious urban buses, seats are specified for women. No male member is allowed to sit on their seats. In case, the number of women increases than their allocated seats in a bus, the poor men vacate the seats for them and they themselves continue their journey while standing or in most cases, in a worse bending position.

**Business and Transaction Centers:** At banks, passport offices, restaurants, bus stations, railway stations or NADRA offices (National Database and Registration Authority) etc. where individuals are standing in queues and

waiting for their turn, I have observed 30 to 40 men standing in a queue in scorching heat, in open space, sweating and struggling for hours for their turn to submit a bill, to take a ticket or to draw cash from an ATM. All of a sudden, a lady gets down a luxurious car, wearing dark glasses, and the security guard announces, ‘Ladies First’.

**Education and Employment:** There are around 244 universities approved by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan including 99 private and 145 public universities in Pakistan. Out of these universities, there are 44 women-only universities, and 200 are coeducational universities (Jaamiah.com, 2023). In women-only universities, neither male students, nor male faculty or staff are allowed –giving full opportunities to females for education as well as for employment. Contrary to this, there is no men-only university in Pakistan that could provide similar opportunities to males as have been provided to females in women-only universities. And in coeducational universities, which are meant for both male and female students and employees, females are favored and exceed in number than men.

**Elections and Parliaments:** National Assembly of Pakistan is the house of the parliament at national level. There are total 342 seats in National Assembly, out of which 272 are general seats (for both males and females), 60 are reserved for women and 10 for minorities. Whereas in Senate of Pakistan, there are 104 seats, 66 are general seats, 17 are reserved for women, 17 for technocrats and 4 for minority. Now if we look, through an eye of equality, to the number of seats in these two parliaments (Pakistani.org, 2023). In both houses, seats are reserved for women, i.e. 60 in National Assembly and 17 in Senate of Pakistan. These seats are reserved only for women as a bonus. Besides, women also contest election in open general seats equally with men. But still, there are no reserved seats for men only. It is the outcome of the Western feminism pressure and influence.

**Domestic Expenses:** In situations where both husband and wife are employees, i.e. both are earning money. Only the salary of the husband is allocated for the domestic expenses, such as house rent, utility bills, school fee for the children,

food, etc. The poor husband works extra hours to meet these expenses. On the contrary, the wife's salary is for her only, for her beautification, dresses, shoes, parties, and savings. Do they enjoy the same comforts being the life partners? In this situation again, men suffer.

**Workplace Discrimination:** At work place, male employees suffer a lot starting from hiring and culminating at firing, on one side from the female co-workers, and on the other side from the chief executive or boss. Female employees misuse the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010. This act was passed as a result of feminists NGOs, Western media, and elites. According to Section 509 of Pakistan Penal Code: If a man labels any woman, utters any disrespectful word, or is offensive by their gesture, he's liable to the punishment of three years or fine or both. This act meant for the protection of women, but in its promulgation, the men's rights were neglected. It is the only act through which men are exploited most. In the misuse of this act, only a single SMS on WhatsApp Messenger is enough for the expulsion of a male employee from the service. Keeping the disastrous consequences of the harassment act, the female employees feel confident and bold. In case, if the female workers don't like a boss or a colleague. They jointly began to forge a case of harassment against the male boss/employee. The rest of the female workers become witnesses to the event. The poor male boss/employee is never listened to, and finally not only fired, but takes a heap of allegations and stigmas along. Apart from the female co-workers, the attitude of the boss has never been positive or favorable towards the male subordinates. I am witness to many cases, where in an organization, if there goes something wrong on the part of the female employee, the boss calls her to office, makes her sit in front of him, his eyes shining behind his glasses, draws the corners of his toothless mouth to the maximum to give her a big smile, 'No issues, my dear; it happens. After all, we learn from our mistakes. Just take care next time' And thus his eyes go with her to the door. Contrary to this, if the same mistake is done by the male subordinate, it happens to be a doomsday. With taken off glasses, grumbling and cursing, the boss blasts, "You are the source of infamy and notoriety for the organization, take this and be off". The male subordinate with swollen heart, takes the warning letter, and meekly leaves the office.

Similarly, there are hundreds of such pro-female discrimination cases in which men are exploited and oppressed, even in higher education, the attitude of the supervisor/teacher towards female supervisee/student and towards male supervisee/student is not impartial but unjust and indifferent towards the later.

Considering the above mentioned situations, the Western feminism has not produced any positive impacts on Pakistani society but rather has created a negative impact in the form of disintegration of society, bias in the gender roles, and has driven wedges in the relationships, and destroyed Pakistani cultural norms which are deeply rooted in Islam – the religion of the Muslims.

#### **4.1 Why Do Pakistani Actors Promote Western Feminism?**

Pakistani actors are active in promoting Western feminism for all or any of the following three reasons:

- i) Material Purposes
- ii) Popularity and Fame
- iii) Frustration

Third World Countries have their own priorities. They need money for their basic needs, such as food, shelter, health, etc. and more money for a good life and still more money for a luxurious life. They raise slogans of Western feminism and carry on that agenda, not because they, in true sense, worried about the rights of women, but for the glittering US Dollars and Euros; for fame, popularity, coverage in media, and colorful gatherings in five star restaurants and hotels. And the West is lavishly providing these amenities to them. Had feminism started from any of the Third World countries, I bit, no one would have joined it, nor supported it, but rather would have criticized and suppressed it.

The advocates for Western feminism in Pakistan may fall into any or some or all the three categories. They are either destitute, or suffering from bandwagon fallacy, chasing popularity or frustrated in establishing a successful conjugal

life. That's why they make, for the most part, a group of overage unmarried, separated, and divorced women and queers. They don't have, in most cases, their children to train them, to educate them, to clean them or to cook for them. Women marches, meetings, and gatherings are the best avocations for them.

## **4.2 Bridging the Gap**

Western nations place a high importance on their culture and maintain that Western feminism is valid and should be accepted as it is without modifications. The liberal group in Pakistan, for some reasons that will be addressed in a later section, openly demands complete freedom from the cultural and social constraints at the expense of men's rights, which seems like an unreasonable desire. There are several ways in which Pakistani society differs from Western culture. The concepts that guide society are those of culture, religion, and family. The faith in individuality held by the West is opposed by Pakistani belief in social identity and responsibility. Western feminism disregards the biological limits that constrain women's situations and holds that men and women are completely equal. Islam, on the other hand, upholds equity and makes allowances for women's limitations. Islam is perhaps more feminist in spirit than Western feminism in many aspects. In Pakistani culture, women are still prohibited from occupying a public location without a head covering for a day in order to demand the rights to justice and equal opportunity that Islam has already granted them centuries ago. Thus Western feminism and Pakistani culture which is deeply rooted in Islam, are poles apart. They cannot be brought together unless a local reconciliatory version of feminism is introduced. Such an approach will need a touchstone for both the extremes on the base of which all the practices on both sides will be judged, and that can only and only be Islam. Only Islamic principles can efface evil practices from Pakistani culture such as Karo Kari and Swara or Vani, and immodesty, debauchery and liberalness from the Western version of feminism. Only then, feminism could bring positive changes in Pakistani society and could be acceptable to all.

### **4.3 Reconciliatory Strategies**

Islam can only emphasize the need of putting into practice policies that support and empower women.

Appropriate strategies would be to incorporate Islamic principles, cultural norms, and the preservation of men's rights in the rights for women drive.

#### **4.3.1 Redefining Patriarchy**

Patriarchy has so far been defined by the Western feminism as, "A system of society in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it" (Chon, 2016). This definition is actually the representation of the term by the West in order to make it something evil, dark, and detestable first and then to take some practical measures to eliminate it by formulating laws in the countries where it is the main feature of their cultures. In order to make feminism acceptable for the local cultures, we need to redefine patriarchy in the actual sense of the term as it is understood in the cultures concerned such as I suggest "A system of society in which the most experienced (usually the eldest) male is head of the family and who undertakes the responsibility of the rights and needs of his dependents". We can approach to the true sense of the term if we define it from the local perspective. Patriarchy should not be looked through the lens of power, but through the lens of responsibilities. The West is only emphasizing the power aspect of it and de-emphasizing the responsibilities it undertakes which is unjust and unfair. The fundamental idea of equality between men and women has been abandoned by feminism, which now despises whatever men say or do. This interpretation of feminism has only produced a strong reaction and impeded the desired justice for the other half of humanity.

#### **4.3.2 Redefining Human Rights**

Mostly, human rights are defined in the sense of, "An entitlement to something, whether to concepts like justice and due process or to ownership of property or some interest in property, real or personal" (law.com). Human rights have been defined by the United Nations (un.org, 2023).as follows:



Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more.

But the question is whether they are universal and absolute or context-bound because humans have different experiences across the world, in various regions.

I argue that human rights are not universal but rather context-dependent. This concept of "cultural relativity" argues that different cultural, social, political, and historical circumstances may affect how human rights are interpreted and applied. The idea of human rights has changed over time and will likely continue to do so. History, social movements, and shifting views have all influenced how some rights are understood and recognized.

Different nations have different legal frameworks and political philosophies, which have an impact on how human rights are established and protected inside their boundaries. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights offers a unifying foundation, a country's laws, policies, and political agendas may affect how those rights are interpreted and applied. It is therefore advisable to redefine the human rights in accordance with the norms of the culture where it is intended to be implemented.

### **4.3.3 Considering Cultural Norms**

Promoting feminism in any cultural context requires a complex strategy that respects local norms while advocating for gender equality and empowerment. It is crucial to find a common ground that supports both cultural and feminist goals. In order to effectively advocate for women's rights in Pakistan, one must recognize and respect the country's unique cultural norms, traditions, and social structures which are deeply rooted in religion. To imitate Western women, Pakistani women would face even more challenges due to factors such as religion, class, ethnicity, and caste. Only a feminist movement that respects cultural settings and is inclusive and conciliatory would be effective in addressing these intersections. For instance, feminism may support equal

opportunity, healthcare, and education for women who wear the veil. Only such a well-rounded feminism can increase social cohesion, economic development, and general development in a society like Pakistan.

#### **4.3.4 Preservation of Men's Right**

The goal of the reconciliatory strategy is to build a society where everyone, regardless of gender, is treated with dignity, respect, and justice and where both men and women may achieve their full potential. Women's right should not be emphasized to the extent that they may de-emphasize men's rights. Men's concerns include mental health, paternal rights, attitudes towards them and professional demands need to be addressed as well. Taking care of these issues promotes the development of a society that respects the rights and welfare of all people and it can open a venue for the involvement of males in the effort for women's rights as active participants and allies.

### **5. Conclusion**

The study focused on the argument that the original intent of feminism was calling for the equal rights of men and women. This movement proved useful in the West because it was designed for them. As soon as it reached Pakistan, woman started to abuse cultural norms on one side and violated men's rights on another. Having the backing of Western countries, NGO's, elites, and the pro-women amended laws, women became over confident so much that they did care neither for men's rights nor cultural norms. This situation led to an impression that in the guise of feminism, Pakistani women actually call for supremacy instead of equality. As a result, instead of bringing some positive changes, Western feminism negatively impacted Pakistani society and proved to be the cause of the disintegration of the families. Role relationships of male and female individuals were disturbed. Attitudes towards men were grown to be negative. The pro-women laws were passed and implemented under the pressure of the West. The dominant feature of Pakistani culture, patriarchy, was demonized through print, electronic, and social media and it was interpreted through the lens of absolute power, not responsibilities. Men and culture were

targeted and feminism was misused for the exploitation and suppression of men. The study has given many instances of discrimination against men and has exposed the misuse of feminism in exploiting men's rights and self-esteem at one hand and abusing cultural norms at the other. The finding reveals the miserable exploitation of men as a result of Western feminism to the extent that one feels the need to call for men's rights instead in Pakistan. .

The study provided the historical background of the Western feminism, then its advent to the Third World countries and discussed how it was received in those countries. Most of the Third World countries reacted to this movement because it overlooked the local cultures and traditions. Pakistan being a third world country also reacted against the Western import. Western feminists consider themselves as saviors of those women in the Third World countries. The Third World countries' real-world problems that women had to deal with and endure ran counter to the ideals of Western feminism. The issues, concerns, and aspects of other countries' cultures and cultural peculiarities were ignored by Western feminists. This study has attempted to investigate the impact of Western feminism on the roles and statuses of women and men in Pakistan. It also examined the intersection of Pakistani culture with Western feminism and the resulted situations of the gender roles. Towards the end, the study in the light of analysis, proposes a balance between the two extremes, i.e. Western feminism and Pakistani cultural norms. Some reconciliatory strategies are put forward in order to bring culture and feminism together in the form of local version of feminism which respects cultural norms and attempts to promote women's right while preserving men's rights.

### **5.1 Need for the Future Inquiry**

The concept of 'cultural relativity' needs to be examined in relation to the spread of Western feminism in comparable settings. Further inquiry is needed in similar other countries to investigate the impact of Western feminism whether it has brought positive changes in those cultures or resulted in disintegration of families.

## References

- Akhtar, A., Aziz, S., & Almas, N. (2021). The Poetics of Pakistani Patriarchy: A Critical Analysis of the Protest-signs in Women's March Pakistan 2019. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 18(18), 136-153
- Amos, V., & Parmar, P. (2005). Challenging imperial feminism. *Feminist review*, No. 80: 44-63. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3874364>.
- Burkett, E., & Brunell, L. (2021). Feminism | Definition, History, Types, Waves, Examples, & Facts. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
- Cambridge Dictionary (2023) "Feminism". Retrieved on 25 September, 2023 from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feminism>
- Chon, D. S. (2016). A spurious relationship of gender equality with female homicide victimization: A cross-national analysis. *Crime & Delinquency*, 62(3), 397-419.
- Dixon, V. K. (2011). Western feminism in a global perspective. *Inquiries journal*, 3(02).
- Drucker, D. J. (2018). Feminism and science in *Masters of Sex*. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(5), 859-872.
- Hackett, E., & Haslanger, S. A. (2006). *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Khattak, S. S. G. (2018). Revisiting Gender and Feminism: Global and Pakistani Perspectives. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 17(1), 253-277.
- Khushbakht, S. M., & Sultana, M. (2020). The Women Activism in Pakistan: An Analysis of 'Aurat March. *Al-Milal: Journal of Religion and Thought*, 2(2), 50-69.
- Legal Dictionary. "Rights". Retrieved on 24 September, 2023 from

<https://dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?selected=1857>

“List of All Universities in Pakistan”. Retrieved on 27 September, 2023 from <https://jaamiah.com/list-of-all-universities-in-pakistan/>

“Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament)”. Retrieved on 30 September, 2023 from <https://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part3.ch2.html>

Mohanty, C. (1998) ‘Under Western Eyes’ *Feminist Review*, 28(2) 499-535.

Naz, B., Shahid, Z., & Irshad, S. (2022). Dynamics of feminism, third world women, culture and Islam: a postcolonial reading of aurat march. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 19(1), 7-22.

Oxford Learners Dictionary. “Feminist”. Retrieved on 26 September, 2023 from [https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american\\_english/feminist](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/feminist)

Taylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art and custom* (Vol. 2). J. Murray.

United Nations Organization. “Human Rights”. Retrieved on 2 October, 2023 from <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>

Williams, C. (2007). Research methods. *Journal of Business & Economics Research (JBER)*, 5(3), 65-72.