



The Women's Movement(s) Pakistan... Whose culture, whose issues, whose movement?





Which
women
?



Rural women



Metal scrap workers

Urban women



Stock Exchange
workers



Who defines
'womanhood'?
'Culture'?
'authenticity'?

Which Issues? What strategies?

Education

Women's Reform Movement – The struggle for 'modern' education



**Nazi Fyzee & Atiya
Fyzee, 1906**

**1925
Atiya & Nazli
gatecrash &
disrupt MEC
Conference
to ensure
women never
excluded
again**



Zohra Fyzee & Atiya Fyzee

**Economic Rights:
1935, 1951...2008**
**Inheritance
Property rights**

**1935 –1937 Muslim Personal
(Shariat) Application Act**
Gives women right to inherit
property, never implemented



**1951: economic rights: exclusion from
Inheritance & Property rights**



Demanding land

Demanding work

Personal status rights?

State culture

vs.

Sub-state collective identity
= family, clan, ethnicity,
religion



SG training - Lahore High Court
Women's Bar Room

Collective identity blocks
de jure rights as 'customs'

Voting & running for office
Employment,
Education

Whether & who to marry

Which historical & political environment?

Independence movement

Gain right to vote and stand for elections
17 years before France 1921-1925



Courting arrest



Demonstration Women's Jail, Lahore



Redefining group
membership as
citizens



Women members assembly

1977-1988

**Martial law justifying itself
as “Islamic”**



**Criminalises
consensual sex,
Qisas & diyat –
introduces
barbaric
punishments
religious
apartheid**

**Questions +
rescinds women's
rights
Introduces new
dress codes**



**Burning veils –
protesting
cultural
impositions
&
Control**



**Religious
interpretations
Taking the streets
Jalsas: songs,
poetry & laughter**

Women's Action Forum

**Protesting new
criminal laws**



Whose movement?



Vexatious questions

Engage with the state or not

State-centred activism vs. ground changes

Political or non-political & links with politicians

Within framework of Islam or not

Feminist vs. women's rights movement

WAF

limited by class
&
urban location...
still

Defied martial
law

Rejected

"Islamic"

laws/policies

Put women
permanently on
national agenda

Alliances with

- other women

- other groups

Democratisation meant...

Inserting women into other movements...

Joint Action Committee for People's Rights

Lobby political parties

Labour groups

Peasant groups



**No single voice for women...
Unity in diversity**



2000-2003

Women's Thappa brigade



Peasants confronting the state for land





Thappas =
Women's
threshing sticks

Thappas =
protection
family & fields
Symbol of
resistance



**Gaining/using
knowledge**

Legal awareness

**Social & political
awareness**



Movements are about solidarity

Linking across the divides



Asian Conference – Lahore 1932

WLUML Training - 2000



Peasant women –Pakistan 2008

Democratic or authoritarian states shape the context & so women's movement(s)

How to integrate & sustain movements



Shirkat Gah planning 2005

Women's location in social
groups shapes their dreams
of the possible & strategies
for change

Who speaks for the
community?

Which oppression is
critical & which can be
challenged today?

What sources of support?

What obstacles?

Land from government not
from brothers



**Empowerment can be catalysed
by any activity...**



**but always entails a cycle of reflection,
analysis and decision for action: Paolo
Freire**

Women are the fulcrum of their own empowerment

United we stand, divided we fall

Our culture must become ours to define...

