

Role of State Feminism in Elimination of Gender Disparities: Study of Pakistan

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Advocates of Neoliberalism contend for minimum state role in economic domains leaving the marginalized strata's, classes and "second" gender (female) concerned. On the other hand, in tradition oriented societies state efforts to engineer social relations are contested by the custodians of tradition. In Neoliberal age women participation in public sphere is the need of time. Women entry in economic sphere makes them prone to workplace structural violence and multiple roles strain. Hence, an active state role to protect the weak, underdeveloped and deprived "Sex", and to create equitable gender roles in both private and public aspects of life is required. The paper reflects on vital questions about state role from the perspective of gender. To what extent state can penetrate in lived experience of women beings to protect them in work and family spaces from male beings (Feminist theorists like Charlotte Hooper contest the universal notion of "human" and divides them into male and female beings based on their diverse experience as living beings as well as the conflicting interests they represent in day to day life. (Hooper, 2001)) and influence and transform the most personal levels of gender relations; in context that gender roles are guarded and protected by the custodians of tradition? The study is normative in content and methodology of qualitative analysis is employed to critically evaluate the impact of state legislative (Punjab Women Protection Laws 2014 and 2016 initiated by Punjab Commission on Status of Women (PCSW) reforms initiated by 'Women Policy Agencies' (national and provincial) on women lives. The technique of "Gap Analysis" is used to understand the gap between the intended and present scenarios. A core finding of the research is that Pakistani state is acting as custodian of women rights but state reforms are contested in society. State initiated reforms like empowerment bills (Women empowerment packages presented by Punjab government in 2012, 2014 and 2016) and packages have stirred the status quo of tradition and practical steps are taken to remove gender inequality in private as well as public sphere. Though the study concludes that equity between genders is still a perceived utopia but state feminist policies can be considered as first step towards the ideal.

Keyword: *State Feminism, Gender Disparities, Pakistan, Women, Second Sex*

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