



Women's Struggle in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis of Women's Protection Bill 2006

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Abstract:

Women played an important role in Pakistan Movement and have been struggling for equal rights since 1947. However, the question of women's rights remained unresolved since then. Ayub regime took some measures to uplift women's status in Pakistan by introducing Family Laws. But Zia tried to threaten women's status by introducing gender discriminatory laws under Hudood Ordinances under his Islamization project. These ordinances remained unchallenged until Musharraf came into power. Musharraf under his project "Enlighten Moderation" tried to liberalize Pakistani society in order to get international legitimacy. Women's rights were on the main agenda of his regime. His first effort following extreme opposition from the religious parties and groups across the country was introduction of "Protection of Women's Protection Act 2006." This study discusses women's struggle in Pakistan concerning the Women's Protection Act 2006 and argues that Musharraf was not basically a liberal person with regard to women's rights, rather he wanted to find justifications for his enlighten moderation project and the women's rights cause was just used as a way to extend his rule by avoiding the opposition from liberal segments of the Pakistani society.

Keywords: Pakistan, Musharraf Regime, women rights, struggle, protection act, religious parties

INTRODUCTION

Women's struggle in Pakistan has its long history before and after partition of the Sub-continent. Their struggle emerged for the right to education before the country's inception and continues till

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today. This struggle has taken up different shapes over time during different democratic and dictatorial regimes. But, an organized struggle under the banner of the women's movement in Pakistan emerged essentially in response to the reaction of Zia's Islamization project that officially tried to decrease the status of women in Pakistan. The state policies that mainly targeted women through a set of laws (implemented or purposed) under the Hudood Ordinances and Law of Evidence primarily paved way for women's movement in the country. The state refusal to amend these laws turned out to be the primary cause of the emergence of women's movement in the country. Over the years, different civilian and military government have mainly tried to target 'gender' to get legitimacy for their rule. This is to say that gender has been on the forefront of government's agenda in both democratic and dictatorial regimes. Thus, the movement that sparked against Zia's Islamization project continues to bargain women's right on different fronts, but it has come across many challenges and many changes in its resistance. The women's movement in Pakistan is diversified and stratified in different regions of the country, it is heterogeneous and there are many strands in it. Women's experiences are different in terms of their geographical locations.

The politics of women's movement has been changing over time, it adopts different strategies in accordance to the change in the power structure of the state. Sometimes it is coopted by the state and sometimes it totally goes against the state. Such changes are evident from Zia's Islamization project where women's movement challenged the state for its laws that legally threatened the status of women. On the other hand, it totally coopted with the state during the Musharraf's "Enlightened Moderation" project (Zia, 2018).

The roots of women's struggle in Pakistan can be found in pre-partition British India under the colonial rule. Women from different areas in the sub-continent actively participated in social and political struggle lobbying for the right of education for women, women's political citizenship, addressing issues such as polygamy, legal rights such as personal status and family laws. (Ali, 2000) During the first decade after independence, Pakistani women successfully established women organizations and groups such as: All Pakistan Women Association (APWA), the Federation of University Women, Business and Professional Women's Association, Family Planning Association, the United Front for Women's rights and Democratic Women's Association. These organizations worked for the welfare and education, motherhood and child rearing, while gender justice (equality) was totally absent from their agenda (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). The early women's activism is mostly characterized by elitisms as most of the activists had a political background and were working under the then government.

Initially, political developments in Pakistan have been facing tremendous upheavals since its inception in 1947. Soon after independence military interruption began and political developments have been sustained by the continuous military takeovers in the country which was not only a challenge for democratic regimes but also for social movements to emerge. Social movements have been oppressed over time by different military and democratic regimes since early years. The situation becomes even worse for women movement as it has to encounter opposition both the state and society at large. The patriarchal nature of both the state and society has always resulted in weakening women's struggle in Pakistan.

The military takeover has always resulted in sustaining the democratic process in Pakistan. In 1958 General Ayub Khan took power, introducing military coup in the country, which resulted in the disappearance of activists from the main scene of socio-political activities. Women's activism as a movement was also ceased to be visible. Activism that existed before had taken place via informal social networks of women who had access to the corridors of power (Shaheed, 2005) Active socialist groups during this period did not take up the women's issues specifically while feminist groups formed were totally absent from the main scene of politics. However, there were many feminists working for women's cause in their individual capacity.

Upon returning to civilian rule under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's administration, a number of women's groups emerged on the scene that came up with progressive agendas and policies. The constitutions of 1973 strengthened the status of women in Pakistan by introducing legal procedures relating to gender justice such as equality before law, non-discrimination in public services, and reserved seats for women in assemblies. A Women's Rights Commission was also established for the first time in Pakistan's history. This decade promoted women activism to some extents. Impressed by the International Women's Year 1975, a number of organizations emerged which started working for the purpose of women's employment through increased access to information, resource, skills and decision-making institutions. These organizations started working on grassroots level by forming Community Based Organizations (CBOs) (Shaheed & Warraich, 1998).

Under the Islamization process of General Zia-ul-Haq many gender discriminatory policies were introduced, which tried to weaken the status of women in Pakistan legally. The outcome of these legislations resulted in victimization of women in multiple ways. Law of Evidence and Hudood Ordinances went beyond acceptance for women. Women Action Forum (WAF) was established in 1981 that openly challenged the state's approach towards lowering the status of women legally. WAF a platform in co-ordination with many women organization challenged the state's laws introduced during Zia regime. It adopted non-structured approach in membership within the organization and chapters were established in major cities across the country such as in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, and Peshawar. It also adopted the policy of non-political organization and did not call itself as feminist organization. It had no reliance on any governmental or donor funds. In 1988 it introduced the charter of demands, demanding women's constitutionally guaranteed rights as citizens, repealing the discriminatory laws, special budgetary allocation for women related needs of health, education, social welfare services, non-discrimination in media and employment, and property rights protection against violence (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987).

Women's movement established its roots in society by openly challenging the state's discriminatory attitude. During the decade of civilian rule in 1990s women's movement focused mainly on advocacy programs. It developed strategies to influence the power structure of the state by engaging in dialogue with advisory committees, working with groups and workshops. Women activists and professionals started to build links with other political movements like the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), to increase their interaction with different organizations. It also adopted strategies to reach the grassroots level. Many women's organizations relied on international funding to expand their activism towards gender-sensitive development. In this decade, Pakistani society also saw proliferation of NGOs, working on legal rights, adult literacy, or income generation. This proliferation of NGOs led to the negotiation of women's struggle in

Pakistan as various leading women activist from the WAF went to NGO sector or established their own NGOs (Bari & Khattak, 2001). Funded activism of NGOs in Pakistan has remained controversial about its linkages with women's struggle which is often co-opted by international donor agencies. Advocacy programs on community base were weak especially under the Musharraf regime. The agendas and policies of the women's movement in Pakistan have been rapidly changing over time. In the contemporary period, women activists prefer to lobby with policy makers, parliamentarians and those in power over advocacy work at the grass-root level. Leaders among women activists often use 'developmentalist approach' which do not serve the ordinary women's interests.

The agendas, strategies and focus of women's movement in Pakistan has been changing over time. For example, in the early year welfare works were mainly on the agenda of women's organizations. While working within the framework of government, many organizations enjoyed full support of it. During 1970s, the second wave of international women's activism and ground realities under Zia Islamization process influenced the emergence of WAF in Pakistan. WAF successfully dealt with the state in repealing many of the gender discriminatory laws but it failed to establish its roots at grass-roots level. For many ordinary women these gains (change in legal provisions) are of little concern. Hence WAF has not gained much popularity in changing the patriarchal nature of society.

Owing to the shifts in international and national politics, this study focuses on the women's struggle during Musharraf regime with special reference to "The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendments) Act 2006" and argues that the Act was not only the Musharraf's political agenda to present himself as a moderate ruler rather women's active struggle and the international changing dynamics and Pakistan's international commitments resulted in the passage of the Women's Protection Bill in 2006. Musharraf taking over power as a military dictator needed to gain some support both from within and outside. For the Western world he tried to present himself as what he called 'Enlightened Moderate' to get their support for his regimes. For the religious parties he offered them different prominent ministries to form his controlled government. And for the active women he came up with so-called women's friendly laws under the banner of Women's Protection Act 2006. Women active in the women's movement have strongly opposed the conservative laws under Zia's Islamization process, but were completely silent during the Musharraf regime. Thus, the Women's Protection Act 2006 was a move by Musharraf to continue his rule and to prove himself as 'enlightened moderate'. This study argues that he was not a moderate, all he cared for was to prolong his regime and stay in power until a strong lawyer's movement and political opposition led him to surrender.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Instead of generating fresh data through primary research methods, secondary data research methodology entails gathering and analysing existing data from a variety of sources. The following procedures can be taken into consideration when performing secondary data research when looking at the Women's Protection Act in the context of analysing women's struggle in Pakistan during the Musharraf regime. Secondary data has been compiled from a range of sources, including news stories, statistics databases, government reports, academic journals, NGO publications, and current research studies. During data analysis, relevant information was discovered about Pakistani women's struggles, such as socioeconomic metrics, legislative frameworks, policy documents, case studies, and research relevant to the Musharraf administration and the Women's Protection Act.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present research work revolves around Women Protection Bill 2006 emancipated during Musharraf era. The existing review of literature reveals that very little work has ever been done on this topic. Few articles and research work describes the significance of the bill but the major effects on Pakistani society especially on lives of women is severely missing in them. Tahir Usmani (2006) writes in his article about different realities of women bill 2006 in the light of some liberties given to the females during Musharraf era.

Saigol R. (2016) discusses women rights and their movements in Pakistan in detail, and shed light on its impacts particularly on females and on the society. Though this article is an attempt to understand the event history of women movement but the Musharraf government's stance for female and their rights is also discussed briefly.

Lakhvi (2010) tried to convey the readers about the similarities between women protection bill 2006 and western rights for females. She has tried to make an elastic comparison but still there are many misconceptions about her article that the fundamental rights of females are same but eastern and western concepts about females totally deny each other. Women who are the major part of the Pakistani population are now well aware about their rights. During every big regime, their rights have been discussed in different spheres according to the need of time. Likewise, the current topic has some unique aspects about females which are discussed below.

WOMEN RIGHTS DURING THE 1990s

The decade 1990s is marked by drastic changes for both the state and society of Pakistan. The death of Zia-ul-Haq on August 17, 1988 in a plane crash provided a new opportunity for democratic rule in the country. Political parties which faced extreme oppression from the dictatorial rule of Zia were trying to form new alliances to regain their lost support. While WAF was also looking forward for these democratic forces to amend the gender discriminatory laws passed during the decade long Islamized dictatorship. Furthermore, the decade of 1990s came up with new ideologies in the international political arena, especially US promoting neo-liberal ideology by the end of the Cold War, which heralded the New World Order and resulted in the rise of 'civil society' across the world, and Pakistan was also not an exception in this regard. The scope of civil society is broad, however, this study focuses on the relationship and effects of civil society on women's movement in Pakistan.

In Pakistan the development of neo-liberal ideology coincided by both the restoration of parliamentary democracy and the proliferation of NGOs. Nevertheless, there were several NGOs such as Shirkat Gah, ASR, Simorgh and SAHE which were established and active during the 1970 and 1980s, conversely, the decade 1990s saw a mushroom growth of new NGOs working on issues such as: labour, sustainable development, environment, child rights. This growth resulted in the establishment of a number of women's rights NGOs, among them major were Rozan, Bedari, and Aorat Foundations (Saigol, 2016: 19). Although the outreach programs conducted by these NGOs were positive developments, but this initiative led to the NGOization of Women's movement in Pakistan (Bari & Khattak, 2010: 237). Though, WAF was not fundamentally NGOized but many prominent and leading members of WAF formed their own NGOs. The NGOisation factor with regard to women's movement in the country is further elaborated in the upcoming chapter.

The 1990s decade saw a hasty change in the governments as no political party was able to secure a simple majority to form a strong government at center in the early years. Due to the coalition government setup (some major mistakes the major political parties) the military was able to dismiss civilian governments consecutively. Both the governments of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were cut down in the middle of their constituent terms. The powerful establishment interference gave no space to the civilian governments to take some major steps. Nevertheless, some positive steps were taken during the tense democratic period.

Benazir Bhutto's election as the first woman Prime Minister in Muslim World was in itself a positive sign for the women's movement of Pakistan. The controversies from clergy never ended, yet her government was far better in taking some women friendly initiatives than Nawaz Sharif. In a short period her government was successful to take some initiatives to uphold women's status in the country. During the two terms Benazir Bhutto's government successfully established Women's Studies Centers in public sector universities across the country. While at the same time the First Women Bank was established to provide loans on easy terms and conditions to women entrepreneurs. Other important initiatives were the establishment of separate women's police stations that could help women to easily register their complaints. Furthermore, Benazir Bhutto's government due to lack of required majority failed to amend the 'draconian' laws passed by the Zia's dictatorial regime under the notorious 8th amendment to the constitution of 1973 (Saigol, 2016: 2).

Although no such bold steps were taken during Benazir Bhutto's rein, but the democratic rule brought about some major changes in the general atmosphere of the country, which was more liberating and open as compared to the Zia dictatorial rule. "For women this was a big change, as they were not forced to observe dress codes and were free to participate in spectator sports as the restrictions imposed by the Zia's violent vigilantes were lifted. However, it was the Benazir Bhutto's second terms when she went to participate in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, where Pakistan acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The requirements for the convention were not met during her second term as the gender discriminatory laws remained untouched due to the presence of conservative elements in the parliament. Nevertheless, the PPP claiming to be a leftist party remained much devoted to upholding women's status in the country compared to the Nawaz Sharif's rule".

On the other hand, Nawaz Sharif's twice rule is categorized by the continuation of Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization project, as the religious right and conservative forces aligned together against the leftist PPP by adopting a purely Islamic approach in their manifestos for elections. It was the Islamic Jamhuri Ithihad (IJI) alliance that led Nawaz Sharif to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan. While by the endorsement of the National Action Plan (NAP) in 1998, the government's focused on implementation, remained limited only to the health and education sectors. Furthermore, by taking the advantage of majority in the National Assembly the Nawaz government purposed the 'controversial' Shariat Bill to further complicate women's status in society. WAF actively protested against the adoption of the proposed Bill. At the same time the Nawaz government also formed a commission in 1994 to review the law regarding women's status in the country and suggest appropriate measures to be taken to improve the status of women, but before these two efforts

were made possible his government was overthrown by the 'liberal' dictator General Musharraf by imposing military coup in 1998.

By providing a comprehensive account of the decade of 1990s Robin Saigol (2016: 22) writes:

“In the decade of the 1990s, Pakistani women’s relationship with the state vacillated between cooperation and collaboration with Benazir Bhutto, and confrontation and contestation during the time of Nawaz Sharif. After the revival of democracy, the women’s movement became quiescent and seemed to have lost its steam as the steady spate of discriminatory laws and measures stopped, although the ones passed during the Zia regime were not reversed. During the second stint of Bhutto, women activists helped the government to write the National Report for the Beijing conference in 1995. The relationship, characterized by bonhomie and the spirit of mutual accommodation, was strong.”

Women’s Struggle During Musharraf Era

After a tense decade of democratic rule and the blame game of both the largest political parties the PPP and PML (N) the military got a space to come into power. The then Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf overthrowing the Nawaz Sharif’s government introduced military coup in October 1999. Once again, the democratic process was sustained in the country as both the largest party’s leadership (Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif) were forced into exile. The Musharraf’s regime did not face many challenges from the women’s activists and civil society because he imbedded as a self-proclaimed ‘enlightened moderate’ and was warmly embraced by the liberal intelligentsia.

Unlike other military rulers, General Musharraf also found willing partners among the civilian and political forces, who have helped him to prolong his regime. General Zia-ul-Haq found legitimacy by inducting religious groups, while Musharraf engaged the liberal elite to gain legitimacy for his regime. In his very first speech he assured the Pakistani people that his was not a religious agenda, so the liberals both within civil society and the women’s movement joined hands with his government and no opposition was witnessed on the ground. “The reason there was no concerned serious protest movement against this was that liberals saw him as a bulwark against the conservation ambitions of the previous government” (Zia, 2007: 167). To present himself as ‘Enlightened Moderate’ he took several measures inducting women into public services as a matter of policy, such as: Governor of the State Bank, women pilots in the coast guard and the armed forces and many senior positions in the cabinet and bureaucracy (Zia, 2009: 229).

There was no such vibrant and active women’s struggle in the country during the Musharraf regime as the activism that existed before was co-opted by NGOs and women’s organizations via informal networking, where street activism was not witnessed condemning the illegal transfer of power to the military dictator. The response of WAF towards Musharraf’s administration was not clear as it remained in opposition to the military rule via press releases and statements, but also collaborated with the dictator for women’s friendly legislations which were introduced during his regime. So, under the Musharraf regime, both women’s rights activists and the women’s organization, predominantly organized efforts under the ‘universalist’ human rights framework.

Musharraf the self-styled enlightened moderate took measures regarding women rights, soon after coming into power. The first step he took with regard to women’s rights was the reserved seats for

women in both local government (33 percent) and the parliament (17 percent), but no attention was paid to the senate. Whereas this initiative was not intended to show his serious concerns about the women rights in the country rather it was the part of his enlightened moderation project to present himself as a liberal leader to the Pakistani liberal intelligentsia and the Western world at large. However, this initiative served as a base for the upcoming legislations promoting women rights in the country.

The Gender Reform Action Plan was initiated to meet the international commitments that Pakistan is signatory to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. By introducing this plan, the government proposed a comprehensive gender reform agenda to bring into the line policies, structures projects, and programs regarding gender equality. GRAP was mainly intended to bring reforms in political, administrative, fiscal and public sector employment. These reforms were designed to improve women's participation across governance spheres at district, provincial and federal levels (Yazdani and Jawad: 2010).

GRAP was initially a donor driven project in 2002 which was opted as a full-fledged public sector development plan by the government of Pakistan in 2005. The Federal government allocated an amount of Rs 300 million for a four-year plan that was implemented in two years and two phases (DAWN, May 26, 2005). It was no doubt deficient and ambiguous in its design as its activities mainly focused disbursement of Gender Development Grants, training for gender sensitization and provision of basic facilities in government setup to facilitate women's employment in the public sector. Whereas, a 10 percent quota was also reserved for women in Central Superior Services (CSS) of Pakistan.

One of the major achievements of the women's struggle in Pakistan during Musharraf regime was the formation of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in 2000 as a legal body. It was no doubt the decades long lobby of the women's movement, but the international pressure on the government that is signatory to a number of international commitments cannot be ignored. The commission was set up to be not only a watchdog of women's rights, but also the highest body of policy making for women in the country. It would work under the Minister of Women's Development to review laws, rules and regulations regarding the status of women in Pakistan (Zia, 2012).

THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN (CRIMINAL LAWS AMENDMENT BILL 2006

Over the years, Hudood Ordinance promulgated by the Zia regime has been the main source of contestation of the women's movement in Pakistan, which legally decreased the status of women. The national commission on the status of women in 1997 proposed amendments to the Hudood Ordinance, which was not entertained, but by 2000 it became a legal body to serve as a watchdog on women's rights. The Commission in 2003 proposed a report to the National Assembly for amending the Ordinance, by the efforts of women parliamentarians and the women organizations, the National Assembly passed 'The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2006 which was nevertheless a great success of the women's movement. The Bill however, failed to repeal the whole Hudood ordinances and its gender discriminatory sections, but two of the Hudood Ordinances, the Ziana and Qazaf were amended, under which the rape was taken from the hadd and

placed in Taazir under the Pakistan's criminal procedure (Zia, 2012: 20). A clear distinction between the rape and adultery was made, where now the rape cases would be investigated in a proper manner. Furthermore, Musharraf also released over 1600 prisoner women who were in jails suffering from the allegations under the Hudood Ordinances.

Eventually, "a new bill was passed by the parliament in November 2006 called Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006. This bill too, created a wide spread controversy and invited opposition of various political and religious parties in the country. As mentioned earlier, every progress in this regard would cause further controversy and difficulties, as the string of the women rights issue in Pakistan has always been grasped from the wrong end. The same happened with Women Protection Bill 2006. Some of its clauses, which are the amendments in Hudood laws, are taken as a gross violation of Islamic law by the majority of religious scholars and some legal experts. Some legal experts believe that more than being un-Islamic; the procedure of administering punishments in this bill is so haphazard that it is well-nigh impossible for an adulterer to get any sort of punishment. This will result; it is regarded, in further promotion of wickedness and discrimination that will harm women more than men. This bill in the long run will be transformed from a bill for protection of women into an 'open license for adultery'. The threat to honour and purity of women will be far more intensified (Women Commission Jama'at Islami 2006: 13) The legal implications of the 'Protection of Women Bill' are only known to the people who are well versed with the intricacies of the legal system. The picture is being painted from the other side that the bill provides a remedy to those women who are facing severe oppression and hardships due to the Hudood laws. It is regarded as a great relief to countless women. It is also being claimed that the bill does not violate the injunctions of the Quran and Sunnah (the basic sources of Islamic Law). A realistic study of the bill would cause arriving at the conclusion that the bill modifies the punishment of rape, adultery and false accusation of adultery, which is a clear violation of the injunctions given in the Quran and Sunnah (Usmani, 2006: 5). As far the discrimination aspect of the bill is concerned, a progressive organization active for women rights in Pakistan, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPP) expresses its acute disappointment that the rights of women have been dealt with carelessness."

"The implementation of the bill will cause chaos and discrimination in many aspects and the chasm between males and females will be increased contrary to the international struggle for women rights. Some discriminative and different punishments are introduced for the same crime in the Bill. Offence of *zina* (adultery) is divided into three kinds and all three entails different punishments. This is discriminatory and inequitable as well as derogatory to Islam. Some of the amendments made could be taken as positive. Automatic occurrence of *Hudd e Qazaf* (false accusation of adultery), and some procedural refinements could be quoted in this regard. In *zina* offences, the male partner is subjected to be punished unavoidably while the female partner has so many defenses, and there are very little chances for her to be punished. She can exploit him using her legal position which is more likely to happen in a community like Pakistan. In offence of rape (*Zina by force*), the female partner is exempted from the punishment anyway, only the male is punishable, even if he is a mere object of the offence, as such incidents occur in the society. Punishment of *Qazaf* (false accusation of adultery) is also an amendment in the unalterable Hudood of Allah. This retrenchment in punishment may magnify the chances of occurrence of this offence. Every commission of *Zina* by a girl below the age of sixteen is regarded as *Zina bil-jabar* (rape)

which exempt her from punishment and is against Islam and the current Law and the principle of 'equality'. However, as a boy under the age of sixteen is not exempted from the punishment. Some forms of Zina are brought under the category of *Zina bil-jabar*, and are transferred from *Hudood* to *Taazir* punishments. Most of the Muslim scholars relate it as contrary to Islam, which seemingly is (Lakhvi, 2010: 248)". But the issue is debatable to some other scholars, who differentiate this offence from that of *Zina* and hence, do not put it under the Hudd (unchangeable Sharia Law). The provision of Capital punishment for Zina by force without any distinction is un-Islamic. Unmarried delinquent cannot be sentenced capital punishment in Islamic Law. This clause is another example of biased phenomenon against men. The abolition of punishments for the attempt of *Zina* or preliminary acts of *Zina* as laid down in the Hudood Ordinance 1979 is repugnant to Islam and a violation of human rights too. It is a kind of license on one side, to the villains of the society to make attempts of *Zina* (or provocation, or to pass lustful remarks) on the pious women. This happened in the society and was regarded so serious an issue that a new legislation has to be passed recently called Women Harassment Bill 2010".

Musharraf an Enlightened Moderate or A Conservative Dictator?

The NGOization and depolarization process of the women's movement that began back in the 1990s, when a number of women from WAF movement turned to paid activism, the WAF remained static to few press releases and statements from its offices, as there was no lobby as pressure group across the country (Zia, 2018). Furthermore, the advocacy programs weakened to great extents from the platform of WAF, which also remained silent on many developments during the dictatorial rule of General Musharraf.

Apart from the soft corner of civil society and full-fledged support of the liberal elite General Musharraf also got legitimacy from the Western countries by presenting himself as enlightened moderate and joining hands in their so-called war on terror.

But a man cannot hide his true face forever, ironically Musharraf too took some steps and remarked on different occasions that revealed his real ambitions. His true face was exposed when he remarked referring to a high-profile case of Mukhtaran Mai's gang rape that: Pakistani women get raped in order to get foreign visas and millions of dollars, many women rights NGOs protested against this but it was soon forgotten. (Ibid)

Overwhelmingly, there was political crisis in Balochistan and a conflict between Musharraf and Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti which sparked to its ultimate end concluded the turmoil. Baloch are well known for their hospitality and honor of women, where women are considered as the honor of family and the tribe. Dr. Shazia who was serving as a lady doctor in the OGDCL plant hospital in Dera Bugti was raped by military personnel and kept imprisoned in that hospital for more than three days. This news emerged on the media and Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti demanded free and fair investigations and punishment for the military personnel, but Musharraf's administration refused to punish their personnel. Hence the tension reached to its peak and Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti started an open revolt against the state. The military under its installed government in Balochistan announced a military operation in 2005 to counter and crush the Baloch National Movement. (Alamgir, 2012) This incident also indicated that Musharraf had no intentions

to upheld women's rights in the country, rather his only interest was to use the slogan of enlightened moderate to prolong his rule.

Furthermore, there are many contradictions in the NGOs phenomenon, on the one hand it has taken strong stands against the violation of women's rights and provided funds for research work and advocacy programs, while on the other hand the welfare oriented organizations seemed to support the state escape from provisions of the fundamental right of citizens.

The downfall of Musharraf started when the operation 'Silence' was carried on Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafsa as the extremist outfits started to conduct their operations across, which resulted in a number of suicide attacks killing a large number of people across the country. Meanwhile, there was also a massive movement by the Pakistan Lawyers Association, for restoration of judiciary and Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Choadhry. This movement is considered the most vibrant movement in the history of Pakistan in which a large number of women lawyers and civil society activists participated. Furthermore, he also killed one of the Baloch Nationalist leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti which gave rise to a new phase of Baloch insurgency. Meanwhile, Musharraf lifted emergency and announced elections to be held in December 2007 which were delayed after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto by Taliban in Rawalpindi. Elections were conducted in February 2008. After a massive pressure from the civilian government, Musharraf resigned as a president and left the country. Although, he proclaimed to be an enlightened moderate but had no different opinion regarding the status of women than ordinary Pakistani, yet during his rule Pakistani women gained much as the reserved quotas in parliament and local bodies were never expected in that particular decade. He also introduced many women friendly laws, regardless of having a negative perception towards women.

CONCLUSION

The recent study has analyzed women's struggle in Pakistan over decades. The struggle that evolved during the British rule is prevailing till date. Whereas, women rights have always been controverrcialized in Pakistan since its inception. Every government be that of military dictator or civilian rule use gender to get support to prolong their rule. Ayub came up with laws to support women's rights, but Zia almost reversed the laws to get support for his Islamization project. Meanwhile, Musharraf too was not an exception to play with women's rights when he introduced controversial women's protection bill in 2006. He had no intentions to free women from the conservative laws, rather he used the bill as a bargaining chip to deal with liberals, civil society and women activists to present himself as enlightened moderate and also to get support from the Western world for his dictatorial regime.

Nevertheless, international political scenario was also rapidly changing. Feminist movement around the world was much succeeded in committing different governments around the world to work for gender equality. That is evident from the fact that Pakistan signed CEDAW, EFA, MDGs and many other international commitments to ensure women's security and equality. But in Pakistan the commitments have never been met and now it is again lazily working on SDGs whereas, it has failed to meet any of the 8 MDGs set to be met by 2015.

Musharraf with no iota of the doubt was liberal in his life style, but never ended up with his conservative mindset that reflect a wider segment of the Pakistani society. His reaction in Dr. Shazia

case where he supported the culprits made it clear that how much he cares for women rights in the country. Furthermore, his remarks during an interview to an international news agency unmasked him properly when he talked about Mukhtaran Mai case. His remarks as discussed earlier, were totally disgracing to all the women of Pakistani society. In a nutshell, as discussed in this study Musharraf has never been a moderate person, rather was a conservative military dictator who used the 'enlightened moderation' slogan as a tool to prolong his regime. Whereas, some chips for women's rights was not due to his will, but the 2006 women's protection bill was the outcome of indigenous and international pressure. Moreover, the democratic rule under PPP and PML (N) in the country has passed many women friendly laws than that of Musharraf. Among them the major one was Women's Protection against Harassment at workplace 2010.

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