

Identifying the Faces of colonialism: An Analysis of Gender Inequalities in Economic Participation in Pakistan through Postcolonial Feminist Lens

Authors : Umbreen Salim, Anila Noor

Abstract : This paper analyses the influences and faces of colonialism in women's participation in economic activity in postcolonial Pakistan, through postcolonial feminist economic lens. It is an attempt to probe the shifts in gender inequalities that have existed in three stages; pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial times in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. It delves into an inquiry of pre-colonial as it is imperative to understand the situation and context before colonisation in order to assess the deviations associated with its onset. Hence, in order to trace gender inequalities this paper analyses from Mughal Era (1526-1757) that existed before British colonisation, then, the gender inequalities that existed during British colonisation (1857- 1947) and the associated dynamics and changes in women's vulnerabilities to participate in the economy are examined. Followed by, the postcolonial (1947 onwards) scenario of discriminations and oppressions faced by women. As part of the research methodology, primary and secondary data analysis was done. Analysis of secondary data including literary works and photographs was carried out, followed by primary data collection using ethnographic approaches and participatory tools to understand the presence of coloniality and gender inequalities embedded in the social structure through participant's real-life stories. The data is analysed using feminist postcolonial analysis. Intersectionality has been a key tool of analysis as the paper delved into the gender inequalities through the class and caste lens briefly touching at religion. It is imperative to mention the significance of the study and very importantly the practical challenges as historical analysis of 18th and 19th century is involved. Most of the available work on history is produced by a) men and b) foreigners and mostly white authors. Since the historical analysis is mostly by men the gender analysis presented misses on many aspects of women's issues and since the authors have been mostly white European gives it as Mohanty says, 'under western eyes' perspective. Whereas the edge of this paper is the authors' deep attachment, belongingness as lived reality and work with women in Pakistan as postcolonial subjects, a better position to relate with the social reality and understand the phenomenon. The study brought some key results as gender inequalities existed before colonisation when women were hidden wheel of stable economy which was completely invisible. During the British colonisation, the vulnerabilities of women only increased and as compared to men their inferiority status further strengthened. Today, the postcolonial woman lives in deep-rooted effects of coloniality where she is divided in class and position within the class, and she has to face gender inequalities within household and in the market for economic participation. Gender inequalities have existed in pre-colonial, during colonisation and postcolonial times in Pakistan with varying dynamics, degrees and intensities for women whereby social class, caste and religion have been key factors defining the extent of discrimination and oppression. Colonialism may have physically ended but the coloniality remains and has its deep, broad and wide effects in increasing gender inequalities in women's participation in the economy in Pakistan.

Keywords : colonialism, economic participation, gender inequalities, women

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