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CULTURAL SEGMENTATION OF PAKISTANI WOMEN

Abstract

Social change is a ubiquitous process. The post-colonial societies have attempted to accelerate the process of social change through the project of national development. This often results in the increased social differentiation and the widening of cultural divides in a society. This is what has happened in Pakistan. While the forces of modernization and development are well known as the drivers of cultural change, what is not commonly recognized is that Islamization has also contributed to the cultural segmentation of Pakistani society. This article examines the cultural segmentation of Pakistan through the lens of women's narratives, beliefs and practices. They are divided in three cultural segments linked together by family, class, and clan institutions. The article further explores the factors that have contributed to the segmentation of women along cultural lines.

Introduction

Social change is a permanent condition of human societies. All societies change, sometimes gradually and at other times rapidly, but change they do most of the time. The post-colonial societies have deliberately sought social change through development as a nation building project. They have pursued development as a deliberate policy of social change by promoting economic growth and the restructuring of institutions.

Furthermore social change is not only a process of change in social organizations and institutions, but also a matter of cultural transformation. New beliefs, norms and values emerge to guide relations and behaviours of people. Established ideas are challenged and modified, all a part of the process of social change. Pakistani society has also undergone wide ranging social and cultural transformations in the past six decades (Qadeer 2006). The primary driving force of social change has been the economic development and transformation of the material base, complemented by the population explosion. Yet Islamization as a social movement has emerged as a competing force of socio-cultural change. How have these two processes, development and Islamization, reorganized the social structure and cultural systems of Pakistan? This question is explored in the present article using women as a site for observing the effects of these two processes.

Conceptual Framework

Before proceeding with the analysis of socio-cultural transformations of Pakistani women as an expression of broader social changes, we need to lay out the conceptual framework. Development is a term whose scope and meaning have evolved over time. In its early formulations, it was conceived as a linear process of transformation of the productive capacity of an economy through organized investment and technological advancement (Rostow 1959). This view was soon expanded to include the goal of raising the standard of living of people, bringing in the notion of rising incomes and a fair distribution of the fruits of production. Gerald Meier after reviewing the various strands of the concept, summed up economic development as "the process whereby the real per capita income of a country increases over a period of time- subject to the stipulation that .....the distribution of income does not become more unequal" (Meier 1984:6). The notion of economic development turned into the concept of development as a generic process involving institutional reforms, democracy, good governance and human rights, bringing the process of cultural change within the ambit of development. Amartya Sen., a nobel laureate, has redefined development as "a process of expanding real freedoms" namely freedom from deprivation and entitlement to education, health, and human rights (Sen 1999:3). These rights and freedoms are bearers of wide ranging cultural changes, merging development with the process of modernization.

Modernization emerged early as a description of the norms, values and institutions that both inspire and sustain the process of development. Gunnar Myrdal in his magisterial study of economic development and cultural change in South Asia, including Pakistan, laid down the "modernization ideals" that should guide development in the region (Myrdal 1964). Among these ideals are economic goals such as raising productivity and levels of living, equalization as well as cultural-institutional values of efficiency, rationality, diligence, orderliness, frugality, entrepreneurship, punctuality. Others have emphasized division of labour, specialized roles, mobility, impersonalization of dealings etc as the necessary conditions for development (Lerner 1966). Regardless of what various theorists have said about modernization, the essential point for our discussion is that cultural change and realignment of social institutions are inextricably woven into the process of development.

The popular notion of modernization treats it as synonymous with westernization. This is the result of western packaging of the modernization's institutions and values. For example, modern medicine is institutionalized in hospitals, laboratories, patient-doctor ethics etc. The diffusion of these institutions and practices in a Third World country appears to be manifestations of westernization, but in fact they stand for universal forms of modern medicine. The same is true for industries, infrastructure, modern laws of labour relations and other material and non-material changes in the landscape of a country. Thus economic development both depends on and results in cultural change and the combination of the two processes falls

under the rubric of modernization. Pakistani society has been modernizing under the influence of planned economic development as well as the diffusion of global ideas and practices.

One more point needs to be clarified before concluding the discussion of modernization. It is the alleged dichotomy of tradition and modernity. Defined as human practices, beliefs, institutions and artefacts that are handed from the past to the present and that have been the blueprint for social life, tradition is often regarded as an antonym of modernity. Tradition also changes, though slowly and imperceptibly whereas modernism is a process of rapid change. Yet both tradition and modernization can be the bases for social change. Particularly the invention of tradition by reference to some idealistic or mythical past can serve as the justification to reorganize existing social institutions and cultural systems. This is what is Islamization, a process of restructuring beliefs, behaviours and narratives in conformity with the conceived 'purist' traditions and divine edicts of Islam, casting off the supposed cultural accretions of the recent past. It has become a strong force of social change in Pakistani society, particularly since General Zia's coup of 1977. It aims at suffusing all social institutions with Islamic values and norms. It has found a place in the state ideology and policies. The two processes, modernization and Islamization, run on parallel tracks in Pakistani society, each spawning groups and subcultures of its provenance. What narratives do they give rise to and how do they segmentalize society along cultural lines are the questions addressed through the lived experiences of women in Pakistan. Why are women the site for observing socio-cultural change in Pakistan?

Cultural Segmentation of Society and Women

Societies are organized in classes, ethnicities, life style communities and religious groups. Social change affects these components of societies in different ways. For example, modernization sweeps up urban, middle and upper classes and spawns social disparities. Similarly Islamization may affect some regions and groups more than others. What is being witnessed in Pakistan is the appearance of cultural fissures within social classes and ethnic as well as moral communities. Distinct cultural segments have emerged that cut across social classes, occupational and ethnic-regional groups.

This is the process of cultural segmentation that splits coherent social formations into groups of different life styles, ideologies, moral and ethical orders, values and orientations.(Qadeer 2006:263). Pakistani society is culturally splitting into three broad groups, Modern, Traditional and Islamists. Each of these represents a distinct cultural ethos, rooted in respective narratives and epistemology. Social classes are breaking into cultural segments and rural-urban as well as regional-ethnic groups are being divided into life style and moral-ideological communities. This process is being played out strikingly on the terrain of feminity and women's status and role in society.

Coming to the question of why do we focus on women's status and role as the arena to observe the segmentation of society along cultural and ideological lines, the

primary reason is that gender is a defining element of the moral order envisioned by respective narratives of national development. Modernization and development theories and strategies hold women's education and participation as critical factors in economic growth and social progress. Traditionalist ideologies in Pakistan peg the moral order on notions of sexuality, patriarchy and primacy of women as the bearer of family honour and solidarity. Islamist narratives, particularly the revivalist, envisage segregated but activist participation of women in the public life. Their promised social order is also anchored in sexuality, holding women as the custodians of morality. Thus gender is at the centre of the processes of social change (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987, Khan, Saigol and Zia 1995). It is a mirror of what the envisaged social and cultural order may look like. One objective of this article is to hold up this mirror to show what Pakistani society is beginning to look like under the influence of the competing paradigms of socio-cultural development.

In order to analyze the cultural divisions among women, I will begin by sketching three models of feminity emerging from the dialectics of modernity and Islamization acting on the traditional roles of women. Modernity and tradition are widely recognised as the polarising force of social change. What is not acknowledged in the literature of social change is the infusion of religious revival as another driving force of realigning social structure and cultural system. Together these three forces are spawning distinct cultural segments in Pakistan and probably in other countries.

Tirpartition of Social Structure

Religiosity is on the rise all across the world, but among Muslims it spawns a distinct lifestyle. I am alluding to the emergence of orthodox or literalist communities which subscribe to the view that Islam provides a complete code of life, with divine prescriptions for marriage, family, education, dress and every act of daily life. Such communities split social structure and introduce another basis of social differentiation by religious beliefs and life style, over and above class and ethnicity. New social configurations emerge dividing people by beliefs, life styles and narratives over and above classes and ethnicity. This splitting of social structure complements the cultural and social divisions arising from the on-going processes of modernization, economic development and indigenisation. Thus cultural fissures have come to divide Pakistani society and culture into three distinct subcultures or life styles of traditional, modern and Islamic provenance[1]. This is the tripartiton of social structure, which in turn divides women in three broad cultural segments.

The three models of femininity are, of course, overlapping not in their ideologies and practices but in family, clan (Biradari), economic organization and other social institutions, giving rise to hybrid categories and diffused borders. They may be viewed more as processes rather than as structures.

In elaborating these three segments of Muslim women, l will focus on their respective sub- cultures in Pakistan in all its fluidity and dynamism. With almost 3-4 million Pakistanis living in the Middle East, Europe, North America, Africa and

even Japan, the Diaspora has become a significant part of the Global Pakistani society and culture Pakistani women in the Diaspora are both influenced by the discourse of femininity in Pakistan and they also feedback ideas and practices into women's life styles in the homeland. Thus a study of the evolving femininity of Pakistani women is an investigation in the global currents of social change. What do these three models of femininity mean and how has this differentiation of beliefs and practices come about? This question is pursued below.

Profiles of Femininity

Pakistani women can be divided in three broad segments by their values, beliefs and practices, namely i) traditional, ii) modern and iii)Islamist. Of course, all three categories are rooted in the common ground of the national/ regional cultures, languages and religion. In the same family, the mother may be traditional in her life style, while the daughter may be modern and the daughter-in –law may be Islamist. The point is that these ideological-cultural categories do not separate women by space, status or education or occupation. Yet they separate them by ideology, interests and symbols. Following are brief descriptions of each type.

Traditional

She is a woman of customary beliefs and behaviour, for whom domesticity and family are the locus of her life, yet she is not without material aspirations. She subscribes to a mixture of religious precepts, values, customs and folk beliefs of her sect and clan in her personal life. She is observant but pragmatic and worldly in outlook. She has her share of responsibilities in fields or workshops, as a part of the household economy, and increasingly takes on remunerative jobs outside the home (Weiss 2002). Yet she has little presence in the public space. She could be a college graduate and employed professional or an illiterate stay- at- home. She could be of any class. In the Diaspora, she may be compelled to work in factories or stores to support her immigrant father or husband, or she may stay at home to raise a family. What distinguishes her is her modest, conventional but self-assured comportment. She is religious in her personal beliefs but not assertive or demonstrative about them. Religious practices are woven into her daily life, but she is not ideological about it. She has very little presence in the public space and discourses. Only a small minority of traditional women wear a veil or cover their face, though most dress modestly.

An overwhelming majority of Pakistani women, both at home and in the Diaspora, are traditional. Yet their traditionalism is not static. It changes with changing times.

Modern

A modern woman has a liberal, secular and relatively individualistic outlook. She combines her domestic and family commitments with desires of a job, career or public participation (Hafeez 1981). Her values and beliefs combine liberal traditions of religion with contemporary popular ideologies. She is not irreligious but usually

not demonstratively religious. She could be observant in her personal life, yet conducts her life with little religious symbolism.. She assumes a fair degree of personal freedom and entertains notions of equality of men and women. She is present in the public space and shows some degree of independence. She could volunteer in a community organization, participate in politics or hold a job. Yet she is devoted to family, while holding ambitions of occupational and material advancement. She is modern but not necessarily Western. She dons a shawl (duppatta) as an upper body cover and may occasionally draw it over her head. Yet she does not wear the head scarf (Hijab) or face veil (Niqab).

Islamist

To this category belong women who have modelled their lives according to the ideologies of Islamic revivalism. Such a woman imbibes puritanical values and beliefs. She observes Purdah, wearing Burqa, Niqab, or Hijab, and follows Islamic obligations. She not only follows Islamic precepts but also would like to see an Islamic way of life for the community at large. For her, Islam is a liberating creed for the contemporary times.

An Islamist woman negotiates the public space on her own terms. She may be a member of the Islamic students association at the school or college or a participant in women's *Dars* (the *Quran* reading circle). She may take a job and participate in public affairs, while wearing a Niqab or Hijab. There are many Islamists who are members of the national parliament. They take part in parliamentary discussions, lead parades, appear on television, always clad in a Niqab. Islamists are not home – bound. They are in the public space, shopping, working, politicking or sermonizing. Some fringe groups may be extremists and militant in their views, but they are not in the mainstream of Islamists I am talking about.

These born–again Muslims could be usually college- educated women of middle and upper class bearings or those from the working class or rural backgrounds who initially found their ideology through student organizations and Islamic groups in schools, colleges and *madrassahs*. From these beginnings, they build communities, circles and associations of like-minded women. Islamists emerged in large numbers in 1980s and now form a distinct segment of women.

Emergence of the Three Cultural Segments

The process of cultural tripartition of Pakistani women courses back and forth between the home country and the Diaspora. The two sites are interconnected, each influencing the other in a circular way. International events and global forces also affect both. Yet the differentiation of the three models began slowly at home and gained momentum as the state and society evolved through successive stages of economic and political development. It was carried from the homeland to the Diaspora, though many practices forged in the Diaspora feed back into the communities at home.

The differentiation between the traditional and modern life styles has a long history. It began with the British rule in India and accelerated after Independence (1947), which itself was an expression of Muslim nationalism and the national aspirations for development. For women, the development meant stepping out of the home to pursue education, employment and public life. Gradually the momentum for modern life built up, propelled by rising expectations and economic compulsions. An increasing proportion of young women enrolled in schools and colleges, particularly in cities, and many adopted modern values and practices.

In the early years of Pakistan, young girls could be seen riding bicycles in Lahore, Karachi or Rawalpindi. The Burqa evolved from an all enveloping coverall in the 1940s and early 1950s to a two piece fitted garment worn over clothes with a thin face veil by the late 1950s and by the late 1960s it disappeared altogether for all practical purposes.[2] Even the traditional beliefs and practices evolved to incorporate ambitions of material well being, relaxing marriage customs to allow a prospective couple to see each other as well as promoting mobility for studies, jobs, travel and migration. This cracking of the casing of tradition laid the ground for the emigration of labour to Britain and the sojourn of workers in Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia in the 50s and 60s. Thus began the trickle that built up the Diaspora.

Initially, mostly men went abroad in search of fortunes leaving their families behind, thus linking the 'foreign' with the home. Gradually this trickle swelled into a stream, sweeping families along with men. By the end of the decade of the 1960s, the contours of the traditional and modern femininity had been well etched into Pakistan's cultural landscape and transposed in the Diaspora.

Through a period of populist socialism in Pakistan, the first half of the decade of the 1970s witnessed the emergence of Islamists as a distinct segment in Pakistani society, popularly known as *Jamaatis*, named after the political party of Maulana Maudoodi, *Jama'at-e-Islami* (Islamic Party). Islamic discourse has always been a current in Pakistan. Its foundations were laid by the Pakistan movement but consolidated in the Objectives Resolution of 1949.Being unsuccessful in electoral politics, *Jama'at-e-Islami* and its student wing, *Islami Jamiat-e-Tulaba* (Islamic students organization), invested their energies on educational and welfare institutions, steadily cultivating a crop of indoctrinated youth schooled in Islamic ideologies and disdainful of what they called 'immoral Westernism'. They demanded an Islamic state and a society based on Islamic moral order. Yesterday's students became today's professionals bringing with them their Islamist ideologies in workplaces and civil society; thus building up communities of Islamists in all sectors of society. Gradually other groups also emerged promoting Islamic ways of life, prominent among them are *Tableeghi Jamaat* (Missionary society), *Jamiat –Ulema-e-Islam* (Party of Islamic scholars) and in the 1990s militant and even Jihadist groups based in *madrassahs* (Islamic seminaries).

By the second half of the 1970s, Islamic ideologies were in ascendance, rising on the wave of popular disenchantment with Bhutto's authoritarian ways and socialist

rhetoric. The military coup of General Zia (1977) came in the wake of a popular agitation for Nizam-e-Mustafa (the Prophet's social order).Islamization of the society became the slogan of the military government of General Zia. Thus began the era of Islamism in Pakistan that is now deeply entrenched in the state and society, across years of elected governments of (1988-98) and later another round of guided democracy under the military rule of General Musharraf (1998- 2008).

Although Islamic provisions are by now incorporated in the constitution and the civil as well as criminal laws of the country, yet there are always demands for further Islamization of the society. Mullahs, Islamic parties and militants continually agitate for the enactment of more *Sharia* laws of their preferences. There is always a version of Islamic order that is to the right of what prevails.[3] For our purposes, the point is that Islamists as a political force and as a social segment are now an integral part of Pakistani society.

The cultural differentiation of the society into three segments is reflected in the parallel division of women's norms, values and behaviours. This division is observable in the subtle differences among the three types of women in their dress, work, participation in the public space, gender relations, identity and ideology. These are the sites of cultural differentiation among Pakistani women.

Interestingly, the simple act of wearing a shawl (*Duppatta*) has become a symbol of women's identity and ideology. A traditional woman may wear it loosely over her head leaving strands of hair visible, a modern woman may not even put a *Duppatta* over the head but merely drapes it around her shoulders, while an Islamist may tightly bind it around the head and upper body, almost like a *Hijab*. The politics of head covering plays out on the television. In periods of Islam-inclined governments, General Zia and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's rules, women news casters wore their *Dupattas* (shawls) over their heads, while in the periods of Benazir Bhutto and General Musharraf's rule[4] *Dupattas* came down on the shoulders.

It is obvious that the three models of women's ideas and behaviours are part of the broader ideological divisions in Pakistani society. Yet each of these models has been also evolving in parallel with the social and economic changes that the Pakistani society has been undergoing. Furthermore the three models are not walled off from each other, but each is affected by the changes of others. How does this dynamics plays out? Let us examine this question.

Dynamics of the Tripartition of Femininity

Whether traditional, modern or Islamists, Pakistani women, by and large, have a lot in common as members of the same society. Their sub-cultures grow out of common roots. The pervasive societal trends weave through each sub-culture, producing some structural similarities but cultivating variations of meanings and symbols. Two such societal trends particularly weave through each of the three models. One is the increasing religiosity, particularly after 1977, and the second is

the advancement of the material culture and the spread of new technologies. The three types of women embrace both of these trends though they invest them with different meanings and functions.

Pakistani society has witnessed a surge in religiosity in the last 25 years for both men and women. A common manifestation of religiosity is the upsurge in observing the Islamic prescriptions of prayers, fasting and Hajj. Mosques are full of young men, not just the old men as in the past, and on Fridays women also. The obligatory fasting in the month of Ramadan is more widely observed than in the 1950s and 60s.The Quran reading circles (*Khatam-i-Quran*) and sermons (*Dars*), nightly meditations and visits to saints tombs have proliferated.[5] Television and radio devote many hours everyday to Islamic programmes.[6] All in all, there is strikingly more piety and religious observance in everyday life. Women who have been generally more attuned to the religious beliefs are now observant and pietistic in their daily life. Yet there are some subtle differences among them.

Traditional women are marginally more observant, particularly young women, but their behaviour essentially remains ritualistic and limited to personal piety. Even among poor and working class women, who have been historically more devoted to saints and spiritual healing, a conservative and puritanical (*Deobandi*) strain of religious behaviour has taken hold after the Islamisation of the1980s.[7] Practices such as holding group prayers in the middle of a family party, *Khatam-i-Qurans* on regular basis, visiting saints tombs and other rituals of respective sects have become a regular feature of life. Yet the traditional women keep these practices to themselves. They do not make them the central theme of their daily life.

Modern women have been unexpectedly affected by the wave of religiosity. They have particularly taken to attending *Darses*, sometimes organizing such gatherings at their homes or sometimes in five–star hotels, supporting religious charities and pursuing spiritual quest through Hajj, Umra prayers and other rituals of their respective sector spiritual order. Like the traditional women their religiosity is personal and liberal. Benazir Bhutto typified a modern Pakistani woman. She carried prayer beads, consulted seers for her personal and political decisions, yet led a modern life living comfortably in London, Dubai and New York.

A typical Pakistani woman of modern inclinations is not secular or indifferent to religion. Her faith has been also awakened by the international events that target Islam and Islamic societies. She finds comfort in her identity as a Muslim though is exasperated by the militancy or zeal of fundamentalists.

Islamist women have drawn further strength from the religiosity beginning in the 1970s. They find in it a vindication of their beliefs and the promise of the forthcoming Islamic social order. They are assertive of their identity and ideology in the public space. Wearing *Hijab* or *Niqab* (small number), Islamist young women have a noticeable presence in offices, schools and universities. They are the vanguard of the Islamic movement. They are not only observant of religious

obligations in their personal life, but also are enthusiastic about expressing it in the public sphere, particularly among other Muslims.

In the Diaspora, Islamists express their religiosity in various ways, by taking pains to eat only *Halal* food, seeking accommodations for their beliefs in the mainstream institutions. Their religiosity is communal and not just personal, expressed in Muslim women's associations and informal networks. They emulate the western community practices by organizing Bazaars and fund raising dinners at mosques, forming study circles (*Halqas*) and guidance networks. Yet they are attached to the puritanical and revivalist strains of their respective sects. These are expressions of Muslim feminism. Modernity is accommodated in the Islamic discourse through chaperoned meetings of prospective mates and Islamic match making web sites, for example. These are practices that are almost non-existent in homelands of Pakistan, Egypt, Somalia etc.

The second socio-cultural trend that has swept Pakistan is the material culture outpacing the non-material beliefs, values and moral order. New consumer products and modern technologies spread very rapidly, but the norms and moral precepts that regulate their use lag behind. For example, motor bikes, TV, air travel, hamburgers, Coca Cola and recently cell phones have been extensively diffused in Pakistan, spreading in all classes and subcultures within the parameters of affordability. A similar embracing of the modern materialism is evident among Islamists in the Diaspora. What brings income, convenience and prestige is readily adopted by almost everybody, Islamist being no exception.

Yes, there are some symbolic differences. Traditional women, like men, look upon material goods as items of prestige that elevate their social status.[8] For the modern women, they are symbols of progress and social advancement. Their proliferation in the society is a source of pride for them, affirming their modernity. Islamists accept them as the fulfillment of God's blessing to the believers, not unlike Weber's thesis of Protestantism and the rise of capitalism Yet they have some reservations about the social message that these goods convey. For them, TV is a medium of spreading Islamic knowledge, but it is also a source of subversion of the Islamic values and purveyor of obscenity and vulgarity.[9] Islamists argue about the virtues of Islamic banking and ills of the interest based economy, yet not many have resisted opportunities to make money, advance socially or work or study in Western counties. Material interests outweigh their scruples[10] What is more striking that on matters of social ills, such as corruption, disregard of citizenship responsibilities, rule of law etc Islamists are not much different than other two cultural segments, despite their claims of moral uprightness.

Overall, the three segments of Pakistani women both at home and in the Diaspora have remained rooted in the evolving national culture, in form and structure, though differing in the meanings and functions that they associate with its institutions. Their sub-cultures have evolved by continually borrowing beliefs and practices from each other.

At this juncture, the question that arises is why has this tripartition of the culture and femininity occurred? What factors underlie it?

Social Bases of the Tripartition

In periods of rapid social change, the segmentation of society is inevitable, because different groups change in different ways resulting in wide variations of beliefs and practices. One type of segmentation has been long recognised, namely between groups that continue to stick close to the traditional ways and those who adopt new, albeit modern, modes of living, This is the well-known division of the traditional and modern.

As a society goes through the successive stages of economic development, its stock of roles expands and correspondingly new norms and values emerge, ushering a process of modernization. Yet the traditions do not roll over. They play an active part in determining the direction and pace of social change.[11] This interplay of the tradition and modernity results in drawing a fissure through the social structure dividing it broadly in groups of relatively more modern versus more traditional value-orientations. This dialectic is well known and extensively discussed in the literature.[12] I can add little to what is already known.

It is the Islamic resurgence that rounds off the process of tripartition, which is a peculiar factor in the segmentation of Pakistani society and femininity. Our discussion of the reasons for the tripartition will largely focus on this factor. With this clarification, let us turn to the reasons for tripartition. They can be viewed in terms of both the structure and agency of the division.

1) Pakistan has undergone a striking structural change. Its per capita income in constant terms has increased 2.6 times since 1960. It is now a semi-industrialised country, the share of industry in the GDP increasing from 8% in 1949-50 to 25% in 2001. The share of agriculture in its GDP has dropped from 53% in 1949-50 to 25% in 2001, despite the "Green Revolution" of the 1970s.Male literacy (10years and older) has increased from 16% to 65% and female literacy increased from less than 5% to 40% between 1960s and 2004-05.Despite remaining one of the low-income countries, Pakistan has undergone considerable development. Material changes are striking. In 2005, there were estimated 18 million cell phones and their number was increasing rapidly including millions of illegal connections held by cell phone owners. Of course, Pakistan could have done better on Human Development indicators and reduced the poverty gap, yet it has made some steady progress. The point of these figures is that development has been deliberately promoted in Pakistan and with it not only a modern segment has emerged, but also the traditional groups have evolved by adopting at least the new material culture.

2) Islam has always been at the core of Pakistan's national culture and ideology. Yet a distinct Islamic segment crystallized in the 1970s. As communities of shared creed, Islamic groups first emerged in colleges, universities, political parties and of course in *madrassahs*. The strategy for Islamisation has been based on politically 'capturing' (lately the extremists are not hesitant to use force) the government and using its authority to Islamise the society. Thus political Islam fostered a social segment. It was consolidated in the Islamic rule of General Zia with his project of Islamising the society through laws and programmes.

3) The vanguard of the Islamic segment among women was the members of the Islamic student organizations in colleges and universities, with the female students of *madrassahs* serving as the foot soldiers. These women have carved out a social niche in professions, workplaces and communities, bringing their beliefs and life style, including *Hijab* and *Niqab*, in the public space. This process has gradually gained momentum to the point that now an Islamic woman is an identifiable part of the social structure. It may be noted that the formation of Islamic segment among women in Pakistan parallels what has happened in Egypt, Malaysia and other Islamic countries. It is a part of the global Islamic movement.

4) During time of rapid social change, the need for a new ideology and vision of life is precipitated. Modernization per se does not offer inspiring ideals, though it promises material progress and comfortable living. These structural conditions prepare the ground for the emergence of new ideologies. Up to the 1970s, socialism was an inspiring ideology that attracted the emerging urban-middle classes in Pakistan. It was a strong alternative to the orthodox Islamic beliefs. People's disillusionment with Bhutto's populist but authoritarian socialism left the field open for the fledgling Islamic movement in the late 1970s. The Afghan Jihad of the1980s and rising frustration with the plight of Muslims in many parts of the world further strengthened Islamists' claims for as an alternative vision of life. All in all, the Islamic way of life came to be an alternative vision to the materialism of modernity. Thus large number of youth began to be drawn to Islamic ideologies in search of a purpose and meaning to their life. The international events of the1990s and 2000s have further legitimized the discourse of Islamists. The Islamic social vision has carved another fissure in the cultural system of Pakistan. Islamic femininity is an expression of this division.

5) The Diaspora recreates the cultural segments of the homeland, but it is also influenced by the global Islamic revivalism. The Pakistani Diaspora has spawned a strong Islamic segment with blueprints brought from home and borrowed from the Muslim co-migrants from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India and Somalia etc. Yet this has not been a one- way transfer. The Diaspora has contributed culturally and materially to the strengthening of the Islamic segment in Pakistan. Pakistani workers and their families' sojourn in Saudi

Arabia and the Gulf states has infused them with puritanical beliefs and practices. For example, *Niqab* and *Hijab* are two practices that have been introduced in Pakistan from the Diaspora. *Burqa* has been the conventional way for women to cover themselves in Pakistan. *Niqab* that has eyes peering through the face veil is a new addition to the repertoire of women's dress in public. It came from the Middle East and North America. Yet the Islamic cultural segment should not be confused with extremists and Jihadists who are a small and fringe group.

All in all, tripartition of femininity recapitulates the cultural segmentation that Pakistani society has under gone both at home and in the Diaspora. It is a dynamic process that emerges from economic development and social change. It encapsulates social ideologies by which people align their life styles and give meaning to their life.

The cultural segmentation has given rise to parallel national narratives and an erosion of the national consensus. Pakistan is a divided country, culturally and ideologically. A conscious policy effort needs to be made to build a common ground of mutual tolerance and peaceful public decision-making. The current insurrection by extremists and Taliban is a symptom of the breakdown of peaceful processes of negotiating diverse discourses and bridging cultural divides. The cultural segmentation is not going to disappear overnight. The policy thrust should be towards channelling differences into orderly modes of resolving ideological differences by building democratic institutions.

Notes

[1] For a detailed analysis of socio-cultural change in Pakistan see Qadeer 2006

[2] A brief history of the evolution of *Burqa* is given in Qadeer 1999.

[3] The incident of women students of the seminary, *Jamia Hafsa*, occupying the public children's library and demanding the enforcement of *Sharia* is an example of the unending agenda for the Islamisation. See Farooq 2007.

[4] Conservatism of General Zia and Nawaz Sharif's governments is affirmed by Rashid, 2006, pp134-140,147-152.

[5] The rising tide of religiosity can be witnessed in the recent popularity of the practice of *Aitkaff*, weeklong meditation in the month of Ramadan. Thousands sit in *Aitkaff* during Ramadan, An A*tikaff* city was set up by a religious leader in Lahore in 2003. In the 1960s and even 70s, relatively few, usually old men and women, sat for *Aitkaf*. The News 2003

[6] On the one hand religious groups rail against television for spreading 'western vulgarity', on the other their leaders regularly appear on TV engaging in discussions and offering hours of sermons and recitations. See Yusuf 2007

[7] Rashid 2006, p.250

[8] In newly prospering rural households, refrigerators or TV sets occupy pride of the place in living rooms even if those cannot be used for lack of electricity in villages. Modern appliances are prestige goods.

[9] The provincial government of the NWFP in 2002-07, led by Islamic parties, banned hoardings and advertisements that show women's faces or bodies. This policy was a part of its campaign to eliminate obscenity and vulgarity from the society.

[10] Islamists migrate to the Western countries as often as modernists in pursuit of careers and good living. Yet they rationalize their migration as an act of bringing the message of Islam to the West.

[11] Traditions do not 'pass away' with modernization, but act as a conduit to selectively diffuse new technologies, mores and values. Modernization and tradition are not always antagonistic. Modernization of the Third world is a process of blending traditions with modern elements, See Khalaf 2001.

[12] There is an extensive literature on modernization and cultural change. See for example Etzioni and Etzioni-Halevy 1973, Gusfield 1973, Hobswam and Ranger 1983, Castells 1997.

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