
DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SINDH

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ABSTRACT:

This research paper investigates and introduces the idea of development discourse and women empowerment questions in Sindh. Based on the investigation and analysis of the writings by Sindhi intelligentsia in the Sindhi print media and book publications that present the discourse of development, progress, prosperity, and social change in Sindh, in this study paper we engage with and call attention to the question of women empowerment. By integrating women empowerment and rights in this paper, we aim to set the research agenda and draw attention to gender and development theory and practice. In a way, this paper takes up and supports the gender-sensitive research approach to development discourse, public policy, and planning in Pakistan. It prioritizes gender and women's empowerment framework in research, teaching, and development practice.

Keywords: Development, Women empowerment, Discourse, Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts (WEMC) and Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the notion and approaches to understand development are shifted in theory and practice. Informed by the multiple and interdisciplinary academic research frameworks, the concept of 'development' has moved and transformed into diverse theoretical and empirical research-based discourses, especially within social sciences and humanities. For instance, the meta-narrative and paradigm of modernization and development, which had gained currency and immediacy in the post-war era in the framework of decolonization and new nation-building projects, is critiqued and shifted to new conceptual directions. As a result, many theories,

approaches, and interpretive models and practices have replaced the post-war unilinear modernization-oriented development and progress model (Eisenstadt, 1999, 2000).

The phenomenal growth of development theory is mainly a post-Second World War phenomenon, although the ideas of development and progress appear in an incipient form even in early sociology and anthropology (Dube 1992). And, in classical anthropology, evolutionary progress has been a dominant concept. During the last five decades after the 1970s, development theory has taken several sharp turns. In the first phase, development essentially meant economic development, and economists focused their attention exclusively on economic growth. In the second phase, the relationship between economic development and social change was more intensely realized and emphasized. The third phase was born out of a strong reaction to the inadequate development and modernization paradigms and responded positively to a more successful praxis of development. The third shifting mode of development thinking paid attention to the dilemma of superordinate and subordinate relations and dependency between the so-called First World and Third World countries. In the World System and dependency theory (Wallerstein 2004), it was argued that the neo-colonial and neo-imperial nations had diminished Third World countries' autonomy. Critically, the question of unequal development was conceived with unequal distribution of power. In this context, Lewellen Ted. C (1992) discusses three new trends throughout the 1980s and 1990s which contributed to the development of political anthropology as a social anthropology specialization. He informs that perhaps the most critical development was the emergence of distinctly feminist anthropology. The two crucial theoretical schools developed within feminist anthropology included analyzing the cultural construction of gender and Marxist analysis of gender stratification (Scott, 1986). Further, in the new millennium and in the context of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and international development work, we notice the new analytical and critical developments in the literature on gender and development that address the gender/women rights question. (see specifically on the idea of why gender is important in development Esmero 2007, and Momsen)

Shifting development discourse generated the multifaceted and intersectional notions and public policy practices of human

development, participatory development, community development, poverty, good governance, gender development, and women's empowerment and human rights (see on women's economic and social rights Symington et al, 2015). In a way, new theoretical orientations to development discourse articulated the broader aspects and interpretive strands in diverse sociocultural, political, economic, national, regional, and local settings. Viewed from the perspective of shifting theory and practice of development (Nelson & Wright, 1995; Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004), this paper investigates and locates the question of women empowerment in the development discourse of Sindh enacted by the socio-politically progressive intelligentsia. In post-partition, independent Pakistan, the dominant development discourse in Sindh's context has been provincial autonomy, political, linguistic, cultural, and economic rights, and equal distribution of resources. mega dam/canal construction projects on Indus river, water scarcity, and illegal allotment of lands and refugee settlement in the province. This paper examines and incorporates the question and voice of women/gender in Sindh's development discourse, especially in the print media and related socio-political literature produced by the Sindhi progressive civil society. In the paper, we argue that the dominant development discourse in Sindh is mainly built on the macro level issues, which consist of unequal resource distribution between the federation/center and province, and the provincial autonomy.

INCLUSION OF WOMEN'S QUESTION IN THE DOMINANT DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

This paper takes conceptual inspiration and deploys the Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts (WEMC) research framework¹ to understand and theorize development theory and practice (The Research Programme Consortium on 'Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts: Gender, 2007). WEMC research framework centrally engages with and brings to the fore the women's views and experiences of empowerment and disempowerment. Informed by the feminist research sensitivity approach, the WEMC framework calls

¹ WEMC, a five-country international research study project was implemented from 2006 to 2011 that included Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, China, and Turkey. In Pakistan, it was mainly implemented in Sindh and Punjab province by The Aga Khan University, Karachi, and Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Center, Lahore respectively. I was part of the research team in the Sindh province from 2006-2008.

attention to women empowerment question to integrate into the social change and development programs. Thinking through the feminist-oriented WEMC research framework builds on the inclusion of women's empowerment and emancipation in development discourse. WEMC accords primary importance to the principles of democracy, social and gender justice at micro, meso, and macro levels in its broader conceptual framework. In the WEMC framework that centrally accords importance to the transformation of women's lives, the concept of democracy and its underlying link with development is not merely reduced to popular framing of election activity. Instead, WEMC brings out the concept of 'democratization from inside out' that emphasizes women's autonomy and agency. For instance, WEMC conceptual approach understands that when a woman exercises her right to marry, right to choose, and freedom of expression, it amounts to enhancing her agency and leading to democratization and social justice.

Moreover, the WEMC framework critically calls into question the gendered structures, 'control mechanisms and sources of obstruction' that disempower women in society. In this sense, it is argued that the inclusion of women's question of socio-political and economic empowerment should make an essential analytical and methodological category to the development discourse theory and practice. And by integrating the women empowerment question, it offers conceptual space for social development and progress and contributes to the democratization of dominant discourses.

RESEARCH AGENDA: INTEGRATING GENDER/WOMEN QUESTION IN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE.

In the WEMC participatory research study project, I (the first author of this paper) remained part of the WEMC-AKU research team² in Khairpur and Karachi districts in Sindh. The main research focus and agenda of the WEMC study was to work with the male and female

² The WEMC-AKU team worked in Sindh province in Pakistan under Kausar S Khan, the principal investigator of the project at the Community Health Sciences Department, The Aga Khan University, Karachi. The WEMC-AKU team in Sindh worked in rural areas in District Khairpur in Sindh, and I conducted the component of 'development discourse in Sindh' in Sindhi media and literature under the advice and guidance of Kausar S Khan. The idea of this research component to engage with the development discourse in Sindh was conceived by Kausar S Khan.

community groups to explore and understand the question of women empowerment/disempowerment. Following the practice and transformative-oriented research approach, during the WEMC AKU project I contributed freelance articles that also included the issues of women empowerment and development. In the research process, Kausar S Khan, the WEMC AKU team's principal investigator, conceived and suggested the idea to engage with Sindh's development discourse and how it contributes (or doesn't) to the women empowerment question. Kausar S Khan also suggested the research idea and agenda to investigate women empowerment in Sindhi fiction and short story literature. The research idea to investigate development discourse in Sindh aimed to examine the link (if any) between the WEMC framework of women empowerment and development in the socio-political context of Sindh. In the research methodology and process, a review of Sindhi newspaper articles and a round table discussion with a group of writers, intellectuals, development practitioners, academics, and journalists were conducted to understand the development discourse in Sindh. The following section brings to light the broader historical context of Sindh that set the tone for the dominant development discourse and helps to understand the exclusion of women's question at the cost of macro politics, i.e., the center-province subordination relations. At this moment, we also point out that we don't aim to elude the significance of macro public policy and politics that centrally determine and underlie Sindh's dominant discourse in the post-colonial Pakistani state's political scenario. We understand that in the post-colonial Pakistani nation-state project the ethno-national identity rights and provincial political economic autonomy question occupies a central position and Sindh's dominant development discourse cannot be analyzed in isolation without taking into account the macro state politics

SINDH CONTEXT

Sindh is the southern province of Pakistan. In the pre-partition British colonial India, Sindh remained part of the Bombay presidency and gained a separate provincial status in 1936. In 1937, the first Sindh legislative Assembly came into existence and eventually in 1940s Sindh's provincial chapter of All India Muslim League had passed a resolution for the creation of Pakistan. In British colonial Sindh, the linguistic, cultural, and religious composition of Sindh mainly

consisted of the Sindhi Muslims and Sindhi Hindus/Nanakpanthi Sikhs and scheduled castes. Sindhi Muslims that also included a landed class largely inhabited the rural areas and the Hindus represented the urban, merchant and trading communities. In Sindh's popular and dominant cultural national identity discourse, the image of Sindh is represented to hold the view of shared, syncretic Sufi culture. In the popular Sindhi cultural identity discourse, both the Sindhi Muslims and Hindu/Nanakpanthi Sikhs represent the shared Sufi culture and thus Sindh reproduces the image of the land of Sufis. In post-partition Pakistan, Sindh's ethnonational cultural identity continued and further recreated and reinforced the Sufi Muslim peaceful and pluralist image of Sindh. And, in the cultural politics of Sindh in post-independence Pakistan, Sindhi nationalism has continually used the subversive and counterculture Sufi Muslim identity to challenge the state official Islamist ideology. In Sindh's popular progressive cultural narrative enacted by Sindhi civil society, Sufism represents the tolerant and peaceful identity of Islam, and in this way— it is claimed — Sindh's Sufi identity counters the extremist religiosity in Pakistan.

In Pakistan's newly independent state, Sindh province has experienced different sociocultural, demographic, political, and economic changes and challenges. For instance, during the partition, a big size of Sindhi Hindu population was displaced and moved to India that created a demographic shift in terms of vacuum and development of trade and middle class. The partition changed and affected socio-political dynamics in Sindh. The Sindhi Hindus formed a vibrant urban merchant class in the Sindh society (see Sindhi Hindus displacement Fazila Yacoobali Zamindar 2011). The partition transformed the demography, economy, culture, and politics in Sindh in post-independence Pakistan. Initially, during India and Pakistan's partition, migration and the exchange of population were not in the plan and under the leadership discussion. The partition came up with many unintended consequences, border violence, and displacement of Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh populations from both sides of the border. In the partition, the millions of people from both sides were forcibly and violently displaced. The women on both sides of the border, especially on the Punjab side were raped, kidnapped, and killed. In the case of Sindh, the mass violence, rape, and murders didn't happen during partition. In the popular Sindhi Sufi cultural identity discourse, the

partition non-violence in Sindh owes credit to Sindh's harmonious and peaceful Sufi shared culture. The Muslim migrants from India came to newly independent Pakistan, and large size of the migrant population came to settle in Sindh province, especially in Karachi and Hyderabad. The evacuee properties and lands were allocated to the new Muslim migrants during and after the partition. In 1952, the irrigated land adjacent to the Kotri Barrage was handed over to non-civilian and civil bureaucracy (Palejo 2008). In 1947, when the Muslim migrants from India started to settle in the towns of Sindh, the then Sindh provincial government played a significant role in facilitating and settle them. The settlement of the new Muslim migrants was a serious humanitarian problem which the Sindh government tackled wholeheartedly. Barrister Zamir Ghumro (2008), in his opinion article in Sindhi daily *Kawish* has noted that "the prime minister and the bureaucracy representing the Central government manhandled the national [political] and economic rights of Sindh that created a conflicting situation between the Sindhi and Urdu speaking populations. They [Muslim migrants] forcibly started taking share in the political and economic fields". Secondly, One Unit's³ political imposition and experience fueled frustration and anger among the people of Sindh province against the ruling establishment and bureaucracy of West Pakistan. In 1954, One Unit was imposed on Sindh against its will, and the irrigated lands were allotted to non-civilian and civil bureaucracy (Palejo 2008). On October 14, 1954, the Center introduced the One Unit scheme to confront East Pakistan's numerical majority. Under the plan, Sindh, Balochistan, Pakhtunkhwa, and the Punjab, which had been distinct cultural and geographic entities for centuries, were merged into West Pakistan (see Zulfiqar Shah 2008).

During One Unit's imposition, the Sindhi writers and intellectuals expressed their resistance in the forms of literature and poetry. The legacy of political expression and discourse in the forms of

³ One Unit administrative system (1954-70) headed by West Pakistan (Punjab) was established and imposed on the provinces and thereby reducing their provincial autonomous status. One Unit was a political move by the ruling establishment of West Pakistan to create parity and curtail the Bengali resistance movement in East Pakistan, the part of Pakistan and later in 1971 became an independent Bangladesh state.

literature and poetry in One Unit's era has a special significance in the intellectual resistance memory and heritage in Sindh. In recent decades, especially after the 1990s, the main shift in Sindhi political discourse on socio-political and economic issues has gained an appearance in Sindhi print media and electronic media after 2003 i.e., in the form of Sindhi TV channels and online newspapers. In this sense, the Sindhi print and electronic media are important actors to mediate Sindh's political and cultural identity expression and discourse. After the 1990s, the Sindhi newspapers introduced new trends in the conventional print media and drew readership in urban and rural areas and are turned into a politically generative public forum. The Sindhi print media became the vibrant and accessible source of information, opinion, and discourse generation. The newspapers in the Sindhi print media have created a public space and socio-political consciousness among the masses. In recent years due to the advent of digital and online newspapers and TV channels, the young and old generations of writers, anchors and intellectuals find Sindhi media a vibrant space to express their intellectual, political, and cultural identity.

In this respect, Sindhi print media (now online newspapers in the age of new digital media) present an essential arena for engaging with discourse research and investigating social and development issues. In this context, this paper recognizes the importance of Sindhi media and related writings and publications of Sindhi writers and civil society and attempts to investigate development discourse in Sindh. In this paper, we argue that in the recent decade, Sindhi writers have contributed to highlighting the sociopolitical issues and are the important social actors and intellectual agents in creating both the dominant and competing discourses in the culture, society, economy, and politics in Pakistan. In this view, in this paper, we attempt to examine the issue and question of women empowerment in Sindh's development discourse produced by the Sindhi civil society in Sindhi media and publications.

STUDY OBJECT AND METHOD

Primarily, the paper investigates and brings out the dominant development discourse in Sindh by looking at mainstream Sindhi writers, intellectuals, and development practitioners. The central idea presupposes the women/gender rights dimension of development. It

aims to understand the formation of development discourse and how it addresses and incorporates women empowerment questions in Sindhi society. In this paper, we investigate and understand Sindhi's development discourse and contemporary writings of Sindhi writers that highlight the issues of development and change. In the investigation and analysis, the selected articles of the three books and newspaper articles written by mainstream writers and development practitioners have been included. The articles of three books included in the analysis are (1) *Prosperous Sindh-Poor people* by Mushtaq Rajpar (2) *Development of Sindh: hurdles and way forward* by Naseer Memon (3) *Dynamics of change and future of Sindh* by Jami Chandio. Three newspaper articles selected from Daily Kawish written after the February-2008 Election are also included in the analysis. The two writers of the newspaper articles are Barrister Zamir Ghumro and Sahar Gul Bhatti. In addition, the data and analysis of a Round Table Discussion (RTD) have been incorporated. The RTD was conducted under the WEMC study project with the mainstream writers, development practitioners, academics, and media persons in Hyderabad. In the paper, we followed the qualitative data analysis method by investigating and sorting out key themes that informed the development related discourse, texts, themes, ideas, arguments, and categories. In the data analysis of articles and books in the paper, we investigated the key issues that inform the writers' views of development. Based on the key issues addressed by the writers under study, we synthesized them under thematic categories i.e., issue and idea of resource distribution, political autonomy, budget allocation, poverty, center-province power dynamics. In this way, we developed an argument that the Sindh's dominant development discourse largely tends to highlight the macro political, economic policy issues i.e., the provincial autonomy and center-province dichotomy rooted into postcolonial Pakistani state's macro structural issues.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

As indicated in the preceding discussion, the primary aim of the paper is to investigate and understand the 'development discourse in Sindh' produced by Sindhi intelligentsia in relation to women empowerment. It is centered on the questions: Does it (Sindh's development discourse) address the issue of women empowerment and rights? And, in that case, how does it integrate or incorporate women's

empowerment issues? We also posed these questions in the RTD before the participants. Our primary concern and object were to address how and to what extent the issue of women empowerment is reflected in the development discourse of Sindh. In this respect, this paper calls attention to reflect on the inclusion of gender/women empowerment questions in development practice i.e., in the policy programs, community development and school/university teaching.

DOMINANT DISCOURSE: RESOURCE POLITICS AND PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY

The development discourse in Sindh presents the dominant and broader aspects of development: poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, social and economic backwardness, law and order situation, and the rule of law and human/women rights. These are the key issues that find space in the daily news items, editorials, and opinion articles in the Sindhi media and book publications. The growing body of the work on the development of Sindh revolves around the macro policy discourse rooted in equal distribution of resources among provinces and the right to ownership over resources (Abidi, 2013; Memon & Idris, 2019).

The articles of three books and newspaper articles under analysis in this paper reveal the political dimension of development in Sindh's development discourse at the macro state level. Among the three books under investigation, two books, *Prosperous Sindh Poor people* by Mushtaq Rajpar and *Development of Sindh: hurdles and way forward* by Naseer Memon, respectively highlight the social and economic development of Sindh around the issues of right to ownership over natural and economic resources, unfair distribution of financial and developmental resources in the context of National Finance Commission Award (NFC), exploitation of resources and inequitable budget allocations, provincial autonomy and developmental policy barriers in the federal economic and political structure. Also, it addresses the issues of ill-conceived developmental projects and environmental impacts/exploitation of resources, people-centered development, and the development agendas of Sindh in the context of provincial autonomy and right to ownership over resources. In a way, the primary stream of thought on Sindh's development discourse addresses the macro level poverty and policy issues in relation to the social and economic empowerment of Sindh.

On the issue of resource politics and provincial autonomy, Mushtaq Rajpar's book *Sukari Sindh Dukhara Mano (Prosperous Sindh Poor People)* highlights the economic plight of Sindh province and calls attention to the distribution of financial and natural resources to reduce poverty. Rajpar brings to light the development and policy barriers in the federal economic and political structure of Pakistan. In the article of the book titled 'Sindh Budget and Economic Exploitation of Sindh,' he calls attention to the power and exploitation of economic production and resources by the federal institutions. He believes that the financial crisis is rooted in the highly centralized national economic system. The administrative, financial, political, and economic structure of the state reproduces the centralized system. Rajpar believes that Sindh is not autonomous and empowered in its administrative affairs and political decision-making, including economic affairs. The financial exploitation of Sindh by the Center is highlighted as the main factor of the lack of political empowerment and decision-making. The transfer of political and administrative powers to Sindh is explained to bring about change.

Rajpar presents economic figures that highlight the revenue contributions of the Sindh province in the national income. He explains that Sindh contributes 67% of the total national revenue. But it is under the federal government's heavy debt control, and resources are not expended on the public priorities. He notes that in the budget 2004-05 the large portion of the budget was not allocated for the health and education sector. Rajpar takes up poverty and political instability/law and order situation and utilization of resources in Sindh. He explains that in the total national income/production, Sindh provides 48% Gas, 39% power supply, 62% oil, and 31% coal. The financial value of these natural resources is not indicated in any provincial documents because they are under the Federal government's control. He then identifies and draws attention to the budget allocation and investment in the social sector. In his opinion, Rajpar takes up welfare and social development-oriented economic approach that requires allocation of resources in the social sector instead of defense, administrative expenditures, and debt payment. The issue of equitable distribution of Sindh resources are centrally highlighted in the development discourse of Sindh in the work of Rajpar. He identifies Sindh's marginalization, poverty, economic chaos, tribal conflicts,

honor killings, anti-women attitudes, and other related problems, suggesting that Sindh needs exceptional planning, financial investment, and employment opportunities.

Naseer Memon's writings revolve around people's rights over resources, natural resources, and poverty in rural areas of Sindh. Development in Sindh gives voice to the community's priorities and development agendas. Naseer Memon's ideas highlight the issue of public control over resources as a prerequisite of development. In his community-oriented development approach, Naseer Memon addresses the fisherfolk community's right to ownership in Karachi's two sea islands. In the article titled *Provincial autonomy is meaningless without the right to ownership over resources*, Naseer Memon has discussed provincial autonomy in Pakistan in the light of the right to ownership over resources. His political argument on provincial autonomy calls attention to extraction and unfair distribution of resources and denial of small provinces' political rights. He brings to light the issue of the national question in Pakistan connected to provincial autonomy and ownership over resources. The center-periphery issue is also central to the development discourse of Naseer Memon's writings. In his political-minded development discourse approach, he identifies the dependency of provinces over the Center in which provinces are dependent on the Center in the affairs of resource distribution and decision making.

In our analysis, Jami Chandio's work *Dynamics of change and future of Sindh* also presents the dominant subject of equitable distribution of resources and provincial autonomy in the development discourse of Sindh. Jami Chandio takes a clear political discursive position about provincial autonomy in a multi-national/cultural state like Pakistan. Provincial autonomy and the respective cultural, social, economic, and political rights need to be protected constitutionally. Jami traces the history of political disparities in allocating and providing jobs to Sindhis after the partition in Pakistan. He points out that after partition in the newly independent Pakistani state, Sindhis were excluded from the civil and military bureaucracy. In his politically oriented development discourse in Sindh, Jami identifies that under the One Unit system Sindh was reduced to a colony of the big province's ruling class (the ruling establishment of Punjab province).

Issues of Sindh and Sindh Assembly's role is the main article by Jami Chandio to understand the dominant development discourse in Sindh. In this article, Jami has presented Sindh's critical issues at the macro/federal/center level, which need to be addressed through the provincial Sindh Assembly. The issues highlighted by Jami are (a) Provincial autonomy (b) Fair distribution of water for irrigation and withdrawal of megaprojects of Kalabagh Dam and Thal Canal (c) Equal distribution of finances based on revenue and income generation by province (NFC award) (d) Equal representation of provinces in all the federal institutions including army, civil bureaucracy and parliament (e) Provincial right to ownership over natural and economic resources (f) Reducing the role of intelligence agencies in the administrative and political affairs of the state machinery and (g) The legislation against the anti-women social custom of Karo-Kari (honor murders of women), policymaking for labor/peasant rights and educational and health issues. The issue of resource politics is also central to the development discourse enacted by Jami Chandio's writings. In this sense, he identifies and stresses the vital need to have an organized economic basis for Sindhi society's development. In his view, Jami thinks that Sindh is prosperous economically, but it is disempowered and powerless in exercising power over resources due to political slavery.

SINDH AGENDA: POST-ELECTION 2008 DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE IN SINDH

In this section, we briefly discuss the daily Kawish articles written after the 2008 General Elections in Pakistan. In the 2008 Elections, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) formed the federal government.

Barrister Zamir Ghumro – an ex civil servant – a law barrister and political analyst, in his article titled' *Sindh Agenda: political autonomy, social justice and economic prosperity*' (April 2008), highlights three issues and agendas which merit attention to locating the development discourse in Sindh. He wants the three plans to be addressed by the PPP government to ensure prosperity for the people of Sindh. In Zamir Ghumro's development thinking, the three issues under the banner of the Sindh Agenda are (1) ensure political autonomy, (2) establish a social justice system (3) reduce economic inequality. Zamir Ghumro's views also present the discourse of

macro politics and policy issues in national/central state politics in Pakistan. He draws attention to the safeguarding of the political rights of Sindh within the federal system. He emphasizes the need that in a new civilian democratic government, Sindh should strengthen its political autonomy. His macro legal and constitutional oriented development thinking draws attention to the transfer of powers from Center to provinces. For instance, he suggests that "the current government must take constitutional, legal and political initiatives to address the issues of Sindh."

In the development discourse enacted by Zamir Ghumhro, the broader concept of social justice in relation to good governance is discussed. Good governance can be ensured when assemblies, ministries, and bureaucracy perform their legal function in his views. His view of social justice considers the idea of equal relations between individuals, groups, minorities, and gender in society. In the capacity of a law practitioner, his development thinking supports the state institutional mechanism. For instance, his development discourse calls attention to reforms in the state institutions such as police, judiciary, and executive. In his support of state institutions and reforms, Zamir Ghumhro opposes informal and alternative tribal modes of dispute resolutions. In his development discourse, which is mainly legal and institutional reform-oriented, he discusses and supports women's protection and eliminates discrimination against them. Overall, his development and reform approach reflect the macro institutional and legal mechanism and public policy issues to ensure economic prosperity, employment opportunities, and political system. His development views support the establishment of mega projects such as Thar Coal and Kety Bandar seaport projects, local industry promotion, and agri-based industry to bring about prosperity.

MESO LEVEL ANALYSIS: THE MANIFESTATION OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND WOMEN'S VOICE

WEMC research framework presents the three levels of analysis, i.e., macro, meso, and micro. I have indicated in the preceding sections that the main object of this paper is to investigate the development discourse in Sindh and how it reflects on the question of women empowerment. Our findings and discussions have captured the central reflections of macro issues in the dominant discourse of development in Sindh that pays much attention to the macro, policy issues, and

politics. The paper's findings suggest that the critical debate that sets the tone of development discourse in Sindh reproduces and revolves around the center-province power relations. As a result, it may be argued that the dominant discourse in Sindh. However, it talks about women's question, is preoccupied with macro politics, policy and planning issues, and provincial, national rights and autonomy. In this sense, the dominant development discourse in Sindh suggests that the political autonomy of provinces, resource distribution, and power relations in the Pakistani state plays a pivotal role in its formulation. It also indicates that the structural social issues such as patriarchy, gender injustice, violence against women, women's disempowerment find less space and secondary priority in the dominant macro-political, economic policy discourses. In this respect, we may argue that the structural social issues in Pakistan that also include the gender/women rights are relegated to the marginal position due largely to the macro political, policy planning debates.

However, in the second stream of thought in Sindh's development discourse, the findings inform social change issues at the meso level⁴. In this respect, we can connect Sindh's development discourse to the WEMC framework and the question of women empowerment. In our analysis and discussion, the meso level social analysis is reflected in the writings of Jami Chandio and Naseer Memon. For instance, in the development discourse, Jami Chandio addresses social change in Sindhi society. Jami Chandio rejects the socio-psychological norms that reinforce the social status-quo and impede social change and progress. In one article titled 'Is Sindhi society heading toward suicide,' Jami Chandio argues that the historical complexities and objective conditions, the collective social psychology play a decisive role in shaping the development or decline of nations and societies. He argues that collective social psychology is an essential feature in the process of social progress. Jami Chandio points out the relevance of the social change and development in Sindh

⁴ WEMC framework understands that women's empowerment/disempowerment can be located at meso-level. It is between the macro and micro levels that incorporates both the formal and informal institutions of the society/state. These formal and informal institutions could be the police, judiciary, District Government, Union Council or family, kinship, tribe, clan and other customary practices like the Jirga system.

society in relation to collective social psychology to build a collective consciousness. In this sense, Jami calls attention to the causes of the social and economic backwardness of Sindh, mainly due to the outdated socio-political norms and values. Jami Chandio's political views address the meso level socio-political institutions such as intellectuals, middle class, political parties, and bureaucracy. He strongly believes in the political process in the making of social change. He calls for the political role to address the socio-economic issues of Sindh. Jami Chandio sheds light on the negative role played by both the middle and feudal classes in Sindhi society.

Jami points out that the feudal class's negative role has always been dominating in the political discourse of Sindh instead of identifying the negative role of the middle class in hampering the process of change at various levels. He argues that the negation of politics and political role is an anti-social attitude that hinders social change and development. Moreover, Jami identifies the lack of resistance of Sindhi intellectuals and writers in the context of the societal crisis in Sindhi society. He aspires to the committed and collective role of scholars to address the social crisis. In his view, he projects the idea that Sindhi intellectual class needs to be enriched and trained through philosophical and educational foundations. He emphasizes the need to introduce the subjects of history, science, philosophy, and social sciences to cultivate critical capacity of Sindhi writers. In this way, he points towards the development of critical mass to advance the process of social change in Sindhi society.

In his meso level social change-oriented development discourse, Jami Chandio calls attention to poverty, honor killings of women, and tribal feuds that create social and economic backwardness in Sindh. On the issue of honor killings, Jami Chandio draws attention to the state institutions to secure the citizens' rights. In his meso level social analysis, Jami also condemns the Jirga system's practice that legitimizes the brutal and violent social practices of Karo-Kari and tribal feuds. He equally condemns feudal chiefs' role in promoting and sustaining Karo-Kari and tribal rivalries' inhuman practices through Jirga systems. In this respect, Jami Chandio calls for state institutions and law enforcement agencies' role in eliminating Karo-Kari and tribal feuds' ill practices by maintaining law and order in society.

Likewise, Naseer Memon also points out an active middle class's role to bring about positive social change. He believes that the middle

class can play a role through pro-Sindh parliamentary politics for the development of Sindh. In the article written on the subject of Election and Sindh agenda, Naseer demands civil society members to chart out a document on the Sindh development agenda that could address economy, development, natural resources, and political rights, human rights, and environmental protection.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AT MACRO-LEVEL DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

In the paper, we have mainly noticed that Sindh's development issues reflect the politics of equal resources and provincial autonomy. In the Round Table Discussion with Sindhi civil society, the participants had contemplated the same dominant position. The discursive arguments on the resource politics and development of Sindh were explicitly found in participants' views. In the RTD, one participant pointed out Sindh's suffering in terms of development budget allocation. He believed that Sindh is just like a colony of Center. He stated the development budget allocation disparities between Sindh and Punjab and pointed out that there is no development budget allocated for women in Sindh. Locating the development initiatives introduced in Sindh, he reminded about the development of Sindh in ZA Bhutto's era. He believed that ZAB introduced large-scale development initiatives in Sindh, such as Sindhi lady doctors' appointments, establishment of Chandka Medical College and Peoples Medical College for girls. On the question of women empowerment, Naseer Memon argued in favor of looking into macro changes first instead of micro-changes. He was of the view that macro changes bring about micro changes. In Sindh's context, micro changes are linked with the broader questions and macro-level changes such as budget allocation and decentralization issues. Naseer Memon believed that macro questions like the NFC award, fair distribution, and ownership of resources, and provincial autonomy are the crucial issues to be addressed for the ultimate solution of a subset of questions.

Finally, Sahar Gul Bhatti's views, a progressive writer and anthropologist, merit special attention to understand the development discourse in Sindh. Sahar Gul Bhatti's article titled 'Is only talking about women, not extremism?' (2008) is an essential text to understand women's empowerment perspective in Sindh's development discourse. She wrote this article on International Women Day in Daily Kawish. In the article, Sahar Gul Bhatti problematizes the women's question. She calls critical attention that it needs to be decided and recognized in

the first instance whether the issue of women's rights comes under the human rights domain or the banner of a separate struggle of feminism. She argues that the world in which we live is full of marginalized groups and classes, i.e., the peasants, laborers, bonded labor, etc. Class difference and exploitation are prevalent in which every individual of the society (men, women, and children) experience the same kind of oppression.

Thinking through a critical perspective, she contends that it would be better to fight against class exploitation under the banner of human rights instead of the unwarranted ideology of feminism. She shares her contention that it would be a non-serious dialogue and create unfair social culture. She holds the view that men and women are equal victims of oppression. She argues that men are not the cause of women's low social status but the class inequality. She calls for the development of a collective voice against class inequality. For Sahar Gul Bhatti, feminism in its meaning and essence opens dualism and hegemony because it propagates gender and sexual rights only instead of human rights. To segregate one section of society based on gender and sex, in her views, create breaches in man and woman's relation and bring difficulties for the legitimate women's rights. Sahar Gul Bhatti presents the Marxist intellectual theoretical strand. For her, the segregation of women's rights issue is detrimental to class struggle. She argues that men are not the real enemies of women but the social structures, backward cultural mindset, and backward state mechanism. She thinks that ultra-radical definitions of feminism have made it an extremist ideology.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have investigated the idea of development discourse in Sindh with a specific focus on women empowerment and rights. Conceptually, the paper's primary object is to create a new academic debate within the field of anthropology, gender and development in Pakistan to include and integrate the issues of women in development theory and practice. The paper's findings suggest mainly that in the dominant development discourse of Sindh, the Sindhi civil society is engaged with the macro-level political and economic issues, i.e., the center-province relations, ethnonational politics, provincial autonomy, budget, and economic resource allocations, etc. We recognize that the development discourse by Sindhi intelligentsia under study in this paper takes up the women's rights issue, but it is not on the center stage. For instance, we noticed in the views of one participant in RTD he identified the issue of budget

allocation for women development. And, we also noticed that women's issue especially the honor murders of women in Sindh is discussed by all the writers under analysis. The politics around development brings forth the issues of equal distribution of resources (NFC award), ownership over resources (natural resources, i.e., oil, gas, coal, and water and seaport), and equitable development budget allocation rooted in the economic and political autonomy of the province. We understand and acknowledge the importance of these macro-level political and public policy issues in the context of Sindh and center-province relations in post-colonial Pakistan. On the other hand, we aim and also call attention that in the development discourse the meso level social analysis of gendered social structure, patriarchy, masculinity, tribalism, feudalism, religious conservatism, casteism and class structure need special attention to bring about social justice and sustainable development. Inspired by WEMC research framework's meso level forces and power structures in the form of formal and informal institutions, we argue that for social change and development the meso level structural forces need special attention to be addressed and remedied. In Sindhi society, a critical approach to development is needed that should be sensitive and inclusive to gender rights and women empowerment. We understand that any development discourse, practice and program without integrating women's voices and the agenda of empowerment would seem futile in the end. Therefore, it is suggested that the question of women empowerment and rights must be promoted and incorporated in the development theory and programs including the school, university and related training institutions.

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