

M. Ayaz Naseem, *Education and Gendered Citizenship in Pakistan* (HC), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN 978-0-230-61853-4, 2010, 171 pages.

M. Ayaz Naseem's *Education and Gendered Citizenship in Pakistan* attempts to critique the failings of Pakistan's educational sector, notably its inability to accommodate women and the marginalized members of society.

By examining the existing gender inequalities and providing a background to their presence in Pakistani society, the text focuses on the unbalanced gender ratio in Pakistan's schools, arguing that the educational system's current operation not only has failed to attract a substantial number of women, minorities and other marginalized groups, but further disempowers them through the utilization of curricula and texts that serve and maintain the status quo. His study acts as a call to challenge the social conditions that conveniently continue to oppress marginalized populations and relegate women to roles that exist only in the private sphere. Throughout this short text, Naseem emphasizes the importance of understanding the historical, cultural and political factors at play that prohibit this fairly substantial segment of society from receiving a more meaningful education.

Naseem's study concentrates on the relationship between politics, economics, gender and education in a post-colonial setting. He points out that these current complications are rooted in Britain's colonization of the Indian subcontinent. Whilst the British Empire partly justified its involvement in India through the reinvention of the Indian male as misogynistic and often cruel to his female counterpart, Naseem emphasizes that attempts by

the colonial administration to protect women were neither altruistic nor did they even equalize the power relationship between the two genders. He insists that colonial policies towards gender relationship were implemented without proper consideration of the way native societies functioned and, instead, imposed a foreign set of values that proved to be not only futile in some cases, but also destructive. For example, the colonial land administration's policies increased the power of the male elite, thus abetting in the subjugation of women.

Moreover, Naseem reminds the reader that patriarchy—a condition made worse by England's colonization of the Indian subcontinent--has managed to survive in post-colonial Pakistan despite the opportunity for modernization and organic societal progress, which independence presented. He is not quixotic in his analysis of the post-colony. He does not suggest that the post-colony should witness the demise of colonial implementations and its altering affect on societal operations and cultural identities. He even notes that other independent Muslim countries, such as Turkey and Egypt, struggle with the repression of their female population. Naseem pushes for pragmatics, for resistance to come not in the form of rejecting a religio-political agenda that is so intertwined with a traditional identity. Instead, he recognizes that the modern nationalized state and traditional modes of operation should not be considered dichotomous and that strategies for challenging the social order must come through a recognition that both political and cultural identities function simultaneously in the country.

Naseem conducts his research and writes from the position of a Pakistani, male feminist. He describes himself

as coming from an ‘upper-upper-middle-class, predominantly technocrat-professional, urban, educated family’ residing in a patriarchal and regularly non-democratic country. His position as an educated and tolerant individual in Pakistani society has granted him the privilege to compare and analyze a more liberal stance towards women with a dogmatically chauvinistic one. He is not so removed from the majority of Pakistani society to the point where he becomes an outsider imposing alien notions of femininity. He is equipped with an educational background and belongs to the privileged gender--two characteristics that keep him from being a subaltern figure. He is an ‘insider’ with the ability to access information which is made unknown to both the non-Pakistani and the Pakistani subaltern. Obviously, this adds a level of authenticity to this text.

As well, he aligns himself with post-colonial feminist philosophy and, by doing so, dismisses Western feminism as exclusionary, non-representational of a majority of the world’s female population and inclusive only of the Western female experience. Stated clearly in first chapter, he aims to avoid ‘invoking an essentializing and universal notion of woman that characterized certain Western feminist as well as elitist feminist accounts about women in Pakistan.’ As his text endeavors to dismiss the notion of ‘woman,’ his post-colonial feminist stance allows him to view and present women not as homogenous and classifiable, but rather individuals with unique circumstances. In addition, by taking this approach, he contributes to the subversion of an enduring colonial hold on Pakistani female sexuality.

The text is divided into two focuses aimed at dissecting and, subsequently, rejecting the Pakistani concept of ‘woman.’ First, he conducts a re-examination of a unitary

view of state and the literature that is born out of such an orientation. Rather than conceptualizing power and gender, as the aforementioned analyses have done, he is more interested in power and gender relations. Whereas a unitary view of state asks “why” power functions as it does, he is more concerned with “how” it functions. As well, he explores the secular-religious binary in Pakistani society. The second focus is education and how it dictates gender roles and compliments the status quo. By exposing the injustices of educational discourse—chauvinistic policies that render women invisible--he advocates for a societal transformation in which women and other marginalized groups assert equal status in Pakistani society for the sake of the country’s future.

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