

## **Break the Silence: Pakistani Women Facing Violence**

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### **Abstract**

Women have always been treated as second grade citizen in Pakistan. Pakistan is considered the 3rd unsafe country for women to live. Pakistani women are facing problems in their private and public life. Violence is the most thriving issue for the women in Pakistan. The main reason of the wide spread violence is poverty and ignorance. Social structure is not supporting woman although gender ratio of population is more than half. This paper is an attempt to explore the causes and types of violence in Pakistan. It also deals with the effects of violence in society. State has introduced a number of legislations but the common woman in Pakistan is conscious about her rights. The state of Pakistan is not progressed without the help of other gender. State and women both have to take the task to eradicate the issue of violence.

**Keywords:** Sati, Jauhar, Karo Kari, Watta Satta.

### **Introduction**

The history of violence against women is not new. It began with the patriarchal discourse of Indian society. Women were the victims of many social evil like child marriage, Purdah, Jauhar, niyayoga and sati etc. This region has a long legacy of violence which is still continued in India and Pakistan. In Pakistan women are facing violence in form of forced marriage, sexual assault on work place, domestic violence and honor killing. It is the most venerable problem which has social, emotional, psychological and physical consequences. The term, "Violence" means a behavior in which someone try to damage, kill or hurt others by physical force. According to the recent statics one out three women faced domestic violence in their relationship globally. 69% of the women are reported to the victim of physical assault by their partners during their life time. Every woman is betrayed by her partner after every 15 second even in United States of America. The factories behind this social evil vary from region to region but women facing violence is common everywhere in the world. It is need of the time to investigate the issue of violence within Pakistani context and determine some remedies to coup with it socially (Davis, Women and Violence, 1994). Pakistan is an agrarian state where the concept of personal ownership is very much common. Women are also considered personal properties in Pakistan. So, it is right of the owner to decide the age of marriage of his female child. Forced marriages are very common in interior Sind, Baluchistan and Punjab.

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## **Sexual Assault and Harassment:**

### **Domestic Violence:**

Violence means a forceful behavior and act which hurts or kill. Violence includes any form of physical, psychological, emotional and sexual torture by any family member and a person outside the family. Domestic violence is a private matter of every family in Pakistan and did not attention to consider it as a crime and pursues for the legislation. According to a survey report which was published in 2008, 70% women are facing domestic violence in Pakistan. In Domestic violence women are facing abuse, rape, acid attacks, honor killing and sometimes women are murdered by the female family member in form of stove burst in the kitchen. Women are facing violence in Pakistan due to cultural norms and religious restrictions. Family is solely responsible for the victims of these cases of violence. There are certain reasons of this act of domestic violence like childhood perception of this violence as children see their parents to indulge into violence. The desire to dominate and control, revenge, male ego and suppressed females (Crowell & Burgess, 1996). In Pakistan verbal and physiological violence never comes in the categories of torture and violence. In Pakistan 70% of women are experiencing abuses on daily bases. Sometimes women commit suicides which are normally disclosed in form of sudden accidents. Many cases of torture are not reported in hospitals. Those which were reported not handled properly. Women survives in sexual abuse, harassment, torture and other acts of domestic violence. The most fatal is honor killing. Various statistics indicate this curve violence against women of Pakistan. In the province of Sind only annually 300 cases are reported. According to human rights commission reports, 5000 (annually) women in Pakistan are the victim of this honor killing. If this figure is correct then 25% women are killed on the name of honor every year in Pakistan. Women became kari without any justification and killed publically in result of her crime of adultery. 50% of the karo kari women are killed by their father, husband and other male members of her family. The kari woman is dressed in bridal, applied hina to her hands. Early in the morning she is dragged to the bank of river where she is hack to death with an axe. In some areas woman is taken to the top of the hill and her neck is broken. If a woman is abducted by the landowner and she comes back then her male member killed her. Before killing her, they cropped her hair, cut off her nose and ears, break her teeth with the handle of axe and pour a liquid disinfectant her throat. A dishonored woman becomes kari and she could not live (Choudhary, Domestic Violence and Islamic Tradition, 213)

### **Forced Marriage:**

Child marriage is arranged by the parents or guardian of a female child is forced marriage. These marriages even arranged before the age of a marriage for girls. According to a survey 24% of Pakistan girls are married under age and the highest ration of these girls belong to the province of Sind. This reality of a girl as a piece of property and a commodity is reflected through many customs in Pakistan. She can be

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offered as a compensation of murder or damage of a property. She has no idea when and to whom she is going to marry. Often she is given to the higher bidder who pays some agreed money to her male guardian. In Sind this custom is called Pait involves in settling the fate of a woman unborn child. In Punjab, this tradition is known as Chatti means settling disputes by giving compensation is very common. Watta Satta is another form of transaction in which a man can acquired wife offering a woman that belongs to him- a sister or daughter in exchange. (Bari, Women in Pakistan, 2000)

### **Acid Attacks:**

Acid attacks are most common cases of revenge in south Asia. The highest ratio is recorded in United Kingdom. Mostly the victims are girls and children. Usually the faces, hands and other parts of bodies are damaged or burnt. In some fatal cases the boned of the victims are exposed. Sometimes it causes blindness. Normally this happened in result of dishonoring the husband. According to the reports of human Rights commission the number of cases recorded every years are in between 400-to750. Few reasons which identified are rejection, dowry and religious ideas. (United Nations, 2000)

### **Dowry:**

This curse still exists in many societies of the world. In Pakistan many women died immediately after marriage because of this curse. In cases of dowry related killing are stove explosions and bride burnings. Women died mysteriously in the homes and many women who were early pregnant become the victims. This is a kind of deliberate murder sometimes happened due to the violence of mother-in- law and sometimes due to husband. (Mehdi, The Islamization of the Laws in Pakistan, 2013)

### **Abuse:**

In this form of violence, a woman has to face shouting, control patterns, yelling, and insult. 60% of Pakistan women remain under consistent mental torture due to this abuse. Normally it happens due to poverty and joint family system in which female is not able to express her views. Sexual harassment in family and work places which includes intimidation, bullying, coercion, inappropriate promise in exchange of sexual favor. That kind of abuse and exploitation is stigma on the honor of women. (Patel, Socio-Economic-Political Status and Women in Pakistan, 1991)

### **Rape:**

Women are sexually abused in Pakistan. According to the data of human rights watch one rape happens after every two hours in Pakistan. Women are raped by the gang of the boys. In this case rapist belongs to elite class and the case of the rape is not register due to the political influence of the family. The famous case is the case of Mukhtaran Mai in south Punjab. There are certain cases to misogyny in Islamic schools. Street boys are the normal victims of child rape. (Patel, Socio-Economic-Political Status and Women in Pakistan, 1991)

**Effect of violence:**

Women in the world generally and in Pakistan particularly are facing many health hazards due to violence like depression, acute mental illness, phobias, traumas and certain panic attacks. Nearly 15% of Women who are the victim of sexual assaults are suffering with acute depression in comparison with non-assault cases. For drug use 20%, phobias 22%, panic disorder 6% is the chances of increase in violence issues. Those children who face this violence at very young age, they mental health always disturb due to this violence throughout their life. Violence can cause short term and long term problems of preoccupation, fear, emotional disturbance and dismissiveness. The state of Pakistan has not any rehabilitation facilities for those who are the sufferer of violence. (Burney, Crime and Custom Violence against Women in Pakistan, 1999)

**Reasons of Violence:**

**Biological Being:**

In most of the societies of the world woman is biological being. The basic idea of her existence is reproduction. She has to produce generation and train them for the future responsibilities. In this process of reproduction she has to negate herself, her personality, her will and consent. The ideal woman is the woman who looks after her husband and children.

**Patriarchal Divide:**

This world is masculine. Mostly the religions are male- dominated. The early societies were not divided sharply. The division of labor was equally divided between male and female. Their honor and respect were associated with the work they did. When the concept of personal ownership and private property were introduced then women work and her labor did not acknowledge. Male became bread winner and head of the family and tribe. This divide made a woman a property of the male. She is owned by the male like father, husband and so on. Many societies of the world are male dominated and Pakistan is the one of them where male has to decide the destiny of a woman.

**Pervasive system and false values:**

The norms and values in Pakistan are very strong. Although literacy rate is increasing but society is still connected with old trodden customs like child marriage, exchange marriages, matrimonial alliances, Vani and widow re marriage. Women are the source of settlement in Pakistan society. These customs are the outcome of low literacy and feudal infrastructure in Pakistan.

**Gender Relation:**

In patriarchal society like Pakistan all relationship with a woman is connected with power and facility. Woman is the passive being and she is the facilitator. So, she has to behave according to her status. She should not be demanding. She has to

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compromise in case of her family and kids. As it is common saying, “boys will be boys”. But girls would not be girls; they should adopt those ways which are moral. As woman is the sign of family honor. So, she would save the family honor through her deeds.

### **Male Domination:**

Social structure is the main cause of violence on woman. Male are dominant in many social structure of the world. Pakistani society is a male dominated society. Male are the maker of woman fate, they are making legislation. They have the command upon laws. Social structure, social laws, common norms all are dominated by the males. Women are subjugated under male command. They have to request male even for the protection of her basic rights. In this complex system of domination she has to face violence in form of physical and mental torture. Woman is harassed on work places because places normally have male members. In agriculture sector she is harassed by her lord. As factory worker she is exploited by the owner and in home she is blackmailed by her relationship.

### **Social Relation:**

Domestication of human in every society is the essential part of its development. In Pakistan female child receive certain training. First, she is a girl; she has to live with this stigma. She has to wear different clothes; she doesn't allow keeping the company of boys and male. She has to play with girls only. She has to study in girls' education centers. This creates isolation in the life of girl/woman. Her identity as woman is a source of misery for her.

### **Dominant Masculinity:**

Man is the bread-winner in many societies of the world. He is strong, deceive and courageous by nature while woman is soft, submissive and scared by nature. In Pakistan father convey this message to his boy that he should be bold, aggressive and protector of his family. Boys are demanding in Pakistan even when they are young. They are the custodians of Family. They give orders to the women of their family. Woman, as a wife is his commodity. He can use her as the way he wants. This male hegemony is the create insecurities in women and she has to suffer in every field of her life. (Lorber, Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics, 2010)

### **Language of discrimination:**

Mostly the languages are masculine. The use of “he” and “she” determine the gender role in a society. The more we use gendered language; the gender gap would be widened. Abusive language against woman is a big problem of developing countries like Pakistan. First, discrimination in language and the use of abuse against woman inculcate violence in Pakistani society. The use of such language occurs in relationship like partners, friends and spouse. This abuse and corrosive attitude utilizes for the sexual control and power over partners. There are many mental and

psychological issues concern with language only. It becomes a family trait and continues from generation to generation. This spoils relationship also and children are the effete of this abuse and abusive language in Pakistan. Pakistan is considered the 3rd unsafe country for women where the women are not secure. It is the need of the time to address this issue of violence not only through legislation but awareness and education. In the last 15 years many legislative measure insured the women protection in Pakistan. Women protection bill, women harassment complaints cells and other legislative steps show the state interest to elevate the woman status in Pakistani society (Arain, Women Police Unfurled in Pakistan, 2014). But a lot of work is awaited to do in this regard i.e.

Woman should aware of her rights, responsibilities and limits. She would first empower herself than society will acknowledge her existence. She will get to know the legislatives protection passed by the authorities for the violence. If she encounter with grieve situation she could able to secure her rights. Laws, rules and bills are giving rights to Pakistani women but they even don't know how to get them.

Violence rather domestic violence is not a private matter, it should be public. If a woman gets hurt from anyone mentally or physically she should not hide this. First, family should react on the act of violence and then state authorities would compensate. Women rehabilitation centers and her economic assistance could produce better results. (Mahboob-ul-Haq, Human Development in South Asia, 2000)

Technological advancement may create such data base which register complains of woman violence regularly. This data can help in policy making and policy implementation. Government of Punjab has started a help line with a toll free number# 1043 for the complaints of violence. All complaints are registered and government officials take the advice of head of PCSW.

This need to spread in all provinces of Pakistan so, women could easily get justice.

State must include the issue of violence against women in all form of text books and syllabus from primary to higher level to sanitize the youth about this crime.

Public participation of women in all walks of life can make a big change in male mind-set.

All religious forms propagate the basic human generally and particularly woman's rights, the age of marriage and complete probation of dowry. (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005)

Media campaigns regarding the physical and mental impacts of violence have long lasting impacts upon the public minds. Media is successfully used as the tool of public awareness. Talk shows can easily address this issue of violence. General awareness programmers' about the state laws can spread the message to the common woman of Pakistan.

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The judicial system of Pakistan needs some reforms. It should be woman friendly. More female inspectors should be appointed. So the women can come in the police offices and register their complaints freely. There are certain laws and punishments which address the issue of violence in Pakistan like i.e.

Marriage with coercion----- Section 498-B, PPC (Pakistan Penal Code)

Vanni or Watta Satta-----Section310-A, PPC, Fine and Jail.

Kidnapping Abduction-----Section365-B, PPC, life time jail.

Marriage with Quran----- Section498-C, PPC, Fine and jail.

Physical Torture -----Section337-A, PPC, 2 years jail.

Sexual Harassment-----Section509- PPC, 3years jail &Fine.

Rape-----Section375- PPC, 25 years jail and fine.

Honor Killing-----Section 311-PPC. 6years jail.

Except honor killing all laws and punishments are clear. But system of crime and punishment in Pakistan is not lawful. The court takes long time to take the witness of the people. During inquires the victims are harassed by the criminals. Common women in Pakistan are not aware of all these laws and normally they remain silent in case of violence. More funds would be allotted to Woman development Fund especially for violence.

There are a number of economic reasons this violence. Small industries can give employment to women worker and elevate their economic status which could reduce this torture in Pakistan. (Shirkat Gah Women Resource Centre, 2009)

### **Conclusion**

Any form of violence against women is not justified. Although government of Pakistan is trying to develop its system of gender equality, but social structure is not supportive. Literature on violence suggests that the basic problem is the misguided family values are also a great problem in achieving the goal of non-violence in Pakistan. Mostly female are living in extreme conditions of Purdah. The segregation of places for female like academic institutions, work places, family parks, social gathering and public transportation widen the gulf between male and female. The bold expression of women against violence can take effective action and critical realization towards gender equality can pave a way for better Pakistan.

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