

Violence Against Women in Pakistan : Current realities and strategies for change

A thesis submitted by

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For my father, who has been instrumental in teaching me what it means to be human and who helped make possible my education at EPU.

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Introduction

Women in Pakistan live in a world, which is structured by strict religious, family and tribal customs. They are subjected to discrimination and violence on a daily basis. Pakistan's interpretation of Islam views women as needing protection that ultimately results in their oppression physically, mentally and emotionally. Women in Pakistan are facing various forms of violence, discrimination and inequality in almost every aspect of life. Violence against women in many fields is often not conceived as a violation of human rights but rather as a normal aspect of lives of Pakistani people. They live in an atmosphere of fear, and their lives are guaranteed in exchange for obedience to social norms and traditions. Because of this fear and sense of being inferior, imposed by the traditional thoughts of a male dominated society, women are suffering immensely especially in their homes. The most abusive forms of violence being faced by women take place in their homes.

Lack of education and economic opportunities for women restrict the potential of women to think about their due rights. Furthermore, poverty and religious extremism are also roadblocks in the way of Pakistani women becoming progressive and independent. Women in Pakistan are highly connected with the honour of men. Men normally control their movements and behaviour whether he is a father, husband or brother. The women of Pakistan will have to go a long way before they are able to get their rights in Pakistan.

Unless the traditional thoughts regarding women as inferior, or as personal property are changed, it might be difficult for women to get any sort of freedom from this atmosphere of fear. Pakistan cannot become a prosperous country in the world unless the half of the population consisting of women is given equal opportunities to take part in this process of development.

In recent years, because of feminist activism and the media, women are becoming more vocal and active in demanding their rights, given by constitution and religion. Although the government of Pakistan is trying to enact legislation that would guarantee the protection of women's rights to some extent but still much more needs to be done.

The purpose of writing this thesis is to analyse the different forms of abuse to the human rights of women in Pakistani society. It is also all to understand what kinds of social, psychological, cultural and economic problems women are facing. This paper will explore how far women's rights organizations have been able to influence the lives of millions of women in Pakistan. The paper will address what the governmental response is towards gender-based violence in

which women are the main victims. This thesis will be an attempt to suggest some effective measures to be taken by people working with the government, institutions and organizations of Pakistan in order to improve the overall situation

Besides the above, this thesis will also be an attempt to express my personal feelings and perceptions towards the high incidence of human rights violations against women in Pakistan as well. Being a Pakistani man who spent all his life in a traditional society, I always felt that women in my country are considered as subordinate or inferior, compared with men in every aspect of life. From my home to educational institutions, I have been witnessing a systematic exclusion and separation of women. Stories of honour killings, bride burning, acid throwing, rape, etc which often cover the lines of national newspapers compelled me to use my pen against these inhuman and violent practices against women in the name of religion, customs and traditions. Therefore, I will make an effort to explore this burning issue according to a perspective of a Pakistani male. Because, as a student of peace studies, I strongly believe that it is my moral duty to write or criticize those societal setups which are root causes of gender inequality, injustice and discrimination resulting in a form of cultural, structural and direct violence against women, because peace is not merely an absence of war or violence. Rather, it represents a fair and equitable social situation. It is an attempt to make the human condition better.

In the first chapter, the various definitions of gender based violence will be discussed. The questions explored in this chapter will include why women are the prime victims of this violence. Violation against women will be analyzed according to the perspective of peace studies. Furthermore, women's rights will be discussed in the light of John Galtung's theory of violence that emphasizes the

interconnections between direct, structural and cultural violence. The first chapter will also highlight the importance of human rights of women under international agreements and declarations and what kinds of rights women are guaranteed under these declarations. Similarly, women's rights will be discussed in the light of Islamic teachings. How in Islam, women's rights are guaranteed and protected. This chapter will further help in exploring whether Pakistani society can be considered an Islamic society or not.

The second chapter of this thesis will highlight the different approaches to violence against women in Pakistan. It will explore several forms of violence currently being faced by the women in Pakistan. In this chapter, direct violence such as honour killings, bride burning, acid throwing, wife beating, etc will be discussed. This paper will address why the society of Pakistan is so brutal that these inhuman violations of basic human rights have become a normal routine for people. Furthermore, the structural causes of this gender-based violation against women will also be analyzed, as well as the question of how cultural violence provides a basis for direct and structural violence against women.

After this, the third chapter of this thesis will describe how women's rights organizations are addressing this gender-based violence in spite of strenuous opposition from traditional and religious sectors of the society. The questions which will be discussed in this chapter will include; what is the governmental response towards the abuses and violation of the human rights of women and what has the government done so far towards making legislation effective against these abuses and violence.

In chapter four, the possible measures and strategies for change will be illustrated which the government and people of Pakistan should take into consideration in order to control the high incidence of gender based violence in the country. What will be possible steps that may eradicate the fear and danger of violence towards women?

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

1.1: Gender-based violence

Before analyzing the gender-based violence in Pakistan, it is important to understand the definitions of violence and gender-based violence. According to Galles and Straus (1975), "Violence is an act carried out with the intention of perceived intention of physically hurting another person" (p.5). It can also be defined as the exercise of power in order to impose one's will on a person or to have one's will with a thing. When this violence comes in the circle of gender relations, it becomes a pervasive and prevalent problem worldwide, touching all aspects of women's lives, from the home to the workplace (Schular, 1992).

The definition of gender-based violence was discussed in detail at the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development (APWLD) in 1990 and participants concluded that the definition of gender-based violence is "any act involving use of force or coercion with intent of perpetuating or promoting hierarchical gender relations" (Schular, 1992,p.2). As women who are overwhelmingly victimized because of being women and because of their sex, the term gender-based violence is often used for the violence against women worldwide. According to UNESCO (1999), violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are force into a subordinate position compared with men.

The United Nations General Assembly defines violence against women as:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (Symonides & Volodin, 2002, p. 33)

This definition was concluded at the occasion of Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993 and also the UN General Assembly passed resolution 48/104 on 20 December 1993, which binds member states to eliminate violence against women (Symonides & Volodin, 2002).

Tomaseveski(1993) highlights violence against women as:

Violence against women includes any act, omission or conduct by means of which physical, sexual or mental suffering is inflicted, directly or indirectly through deceit, seduction, threat harassment. Coercion or any other means on any woman with the purpose or effect of intimidating, punishing or humiliating her or of denying her human dignity, sexual self-determination, physical, mental or moral integrity or of undermining the security of her person, her self-respect or her personality or of diminishing her physical or mental capacities (p. 91)

Here the question arises regarding the definition of domestic violence. According to Seager, "domestic violence is a leading cause of injury and death to women worldwide. It is often ignored or even condoned by the state on the grounds that is a 'private' matter" (1997, p.26). She further explores domestic violence as a tool of power used to sustain particular sexual, family and household structures and to keep women subordinate to them. Here it is important to notice that common perception of domestic violence is that it is the violence inflicted by a husband on wife. However, according to Yasmeen Hassan a women's rights activist from Pakistan, " for many women in developing countries like Pakistan, family life involves a complex set of power relations with

many different people (men as well as women) who may take part in the abuse of women in the home" (1995, p.25). This is the case of Pakistan where there are also many women who poison their husbands. There are women (mothers-in-law) who are also the perpetrators of bride burnings to some extent in many parts of the world especially in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Therefore, it can be said that it is not only a war between the masculine and the feminine sex, but also a war between family members in which women are mostly victims because of their subordinate and inferior position.

1.2: Violence against women and peace studies

As violence against women is a major topic to be discussed in peace studies, so it is necessary to have an idea about how violence against women can be seen according to peace studies. From the perspective of peace studies, I see peace as requiring justice and equality; without these there can be no peace. According to Galtung¹ (1996), injustice is 'structural violence.' Positive peace has no injustice; it is socially just. Negative peace allows injustices as long as there is not physical violence. It denies women being treated with their human dignity. Human dignity makes all people equal - men and women; children and adults; Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and atheists; Black, White and Hispanic.

As a peace student, I believe that true peace is positive peace². It is the ultimate goal. Human beings must have a just world that has neither physical

¹ Johan Galtung (born [October 24, 1930](#), in [Oslo, Norway](#)) is a Norwegian professor, founder and co-director of [TRANSCEND](#) - A Peace and Development Network for Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means. He is seen as the pioneer of [peace and conflict research](#) and founded the [International Peace Research Institute](#) (PRIO) in [Oslo](#).

² Positive peace refers to the additional absence of structural and cultural violence

violence nor structural violence/social injustice. Peace requires justice for all people. Without justice and equality, violence will occur whether it is violence against women or general violence.

According to Galtung (1996), gender inequality itself in all its forms is the outcome of the interconnection of direct, structural and cultural violence. If direct violence expresses itself directly by causing actors to inflict damaging or painful acts of violence on others, then structural violence, which can be viewed as indirect violence, expresses itself through social structures which deny some people opportunities whilst at the same time rewarding others who are situated on the other side of the structure. Those who hold power in society perpetuate structural violence and they use that power to oppress and exploit the powerless. Therefore, this unequal power distribution results in unequal life opportunities. At last, cultural violence draws a line around all aspects of structural and direct violence. All of these three forms reinforce and perpetuate each other in such a vicious circle, which is rejected or deviated from the dictates of moral or divine law. Gender inequality itself is the preservation of social and cultural violent patterns that restrict women's choices, opportunities development and participation in social life.

According to Galtung (1996), direct violence is defined in person, social and world spaces and it is intended by individuals acting singly or inside collectivities. Structural violence is unintended and built into person, social and world spaces and cultural violence serves to legitimize direct and structural violence, motivating actors to commit direct violence and can be intended or unintended. It is important to mention here that, similar to the direct violence,

structural violence also kills people but does so slowly, by depriving people of basic necessities.

A patriarchal society like Pakistani society is a clear manifestation of this kind of circle, having, showing or indicative of intense often vicious ill will. This is a circle, which is interconnected by cultural, structural and direct violence.

Galtung (1996) highlights patriarchy as:

An institutionalization of male dominance in vertical structures, with very high correlations between position and gender, legitimized by the culture and often emerging as direct violence with males as subjects and females as objects (p.40)

When people in any society do not acknowledge or fail to perceive the patriarchy, it can easily be explained as cultural violence. According to Galtung (1996), the peaceful refusal to admit the patriarchal setup leads to parity or gender equality. It can be said that unless gender equality is pursued, patriarchy will remain strong in society, which will obviously result in forms of male dominance and ensuing violence against women.

1.3: Human rights of women

Before going into further details of violence against women in Pakistan, it is necessary to mention the important aspect of women's human rights, guaranteed by international agreements and declarations under UN and other

international bodies. It also becomes essential to highlight the importance of human rights of women according to teachings of Islam.

The modern history of discussions regarding the human rights of women in the world started in 1945 after the establishment of United Nations Organization (UNO). The UN charter, 1945, is the first international document that declares the principle of equal rights for men and women. In 1976, The UN Women's Decade started. During this decade, much research was done about women's rights and many feminist groups emerged throughout the world, demanding equality and a violence free world. During this decade, the General Assembly created the Voluntary Fund for UN Women's Decade (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Education Institute for Female Development (INSTRAW). In 1979 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly. Article 15 of this convention clearly states that state parties shall accord to women equality with men before law. According to Article 16, State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating with marriage and family relations and shall ensure on a basis of equality of men and women. According to this article women have the same right to enter into marriage with their free and full consent (Marjorie, 2001). In 1993, during the UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna for the first time, women's rights were clearly acknowledged as human rights as well. Women were recognized as a well-organized human rights constituency. One hundred and seventy one participant states in this conference were called to recognize the importance of elimination of violence against women in public and

private life. Also, in this conference, it was accepted that women's human rights are indivisible and universal (Bunch & Reilly, 1994).

A declaration on the elimination of violence against women was proclaimed by the general assembly of the United Nations on 20th December, 1993 in resolution 48/104. According to its article 3, women are entitled to the equal enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, and civil or any other field. These rights include the rights to life, equality, liberty, protection, equal protection under law, the right to be free from all forms of discrimination, and the right to the highest standards attainable of physical and mental health. Similarly, under this declaration, women were given the right not to be subjected to torture or other inhuman treatment. Also, under this declaration, it is obligatory for states that they should condemn violence against women and should not invoke any custom, tradition and religious practice which cause violence against women (Marjorie, 2001). However, this declaration is not legally binding for states; it functions mainly as a recommendation document unlike the international conventions or treaties.

1.4: Women's Human Rights and Islam

After viewing the human rights of women, given under international declarations of states, it is also necessary here to highlight the human rights of women according to Islamic teachings because Pakistani people claim their society as an Islamic society. Islam admits the rights of women. Islam does not impose restrictions or restrains to the freedom and privileges of women (Ahmad,

1992). The rights of women are present vividly and resolutely in the teachings of Islam. Holy prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) ordered in his last sermon "Treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers"(qtd in Engineer, 1992, p.23).

In Ibn Hanbal³³, The Prophet also said, "Whosoever has a daughter and he does not bury her alive, does not insult her, and does not favour his son over her; God will enter him into Paradise" (qtd in Engineer, p.23). In another saying he expressed, "Whosoever supports two daughters till they mature, he and I will come in the Day of Judgment as this, and he pointed with his two fingers held together" (qtd in Engineer, p.24). These statements showed that the holy prophet Muhammad (PBHU) focused on the improvement of the status of women in Islam.

A woman is equally important to man as a member of society. In front of God, there are the same standards of punishments and rewards for women and men. The Holy Quran says, " Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him will We give a new life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the their actions" (16:97⁴⁴).

Unfortunately, many historians and religious scholars try to downgrade the status of woman by saying that women are inferior; they claim that it is because of Eve that Adam committed the first mistake of eating the forbidden fruit. However, women, according to the Quran, are not to be blamed for Adam's first

³³ Name of a religious book of Muslims, consisting of sayings of Holy Prophet Muhammad(PBHU)

⁴⁴ Chapter no 16 and verse no 97 of Holy Quran, religious book of Muslims

mistake. Both were jointly wrong in their disobedience to God, both repented, and both were forgiven (2:36).

Similarly, according to Islamic shariah (Islamic laws), women cannot be forced to marry anyone against their will (Engineer, 1992). The women's free consent to a marriage proposal is indispensable and the man must agree to pay a specified amount of money which is *mahr*⁵ to the women with whom he is going to marry (Jilanee, 2004). The following example clearly illustrates this right, "Ibn Abbas⁶ reported that a girl came to the Messenger of God, Muhammad (PBUH) and she reported that her father had forced her to marry without her consent. The Messenger of God gave her the choice between accepting the marriage and invalidating it" (qtd in Engineer, 1992). About the treatment of women, the Holy Quran clearly says, "consort with them in kindness, for if you hate them it may happen that you hate a thing wherein God has placed much good" (4: 19). Islam gives rights of inheritance to women. The following verse of the Holy Quran explains this right clearly. "To the men a share of what parents and kinsmen leave, and to the women a share of what parents and kinsmen leave, whether it be little or much, a share apportioned" (4:7). Likewise, according to Islam, women have same rights as men have. The slightest difference is that, being physically strong, man is supposed to work for the nourishment of his family.

The Quran thus states: "And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them, and men are a degree above them"(2:228). From this verse of holy Quran, many narrow-minded religious scholars try to prove that man is

⁵ Arabic word for dowry given by Husband to wife

⁶ A companion of Holy Prophet Muhammad(PBUH)

superior to woman. Here the Holy Quran, however, is speaking only in terms of protection. It implies no superiority or advantage before the law. This does not mean the husband has dictatorship over his wife (Engineer, 1992). Similarly, the Holy Quran calls both spouses as each other "garment"(2:187). The Holy Quran also gives the right for separation to a wife if she fears her cruel husband (4:128).

Also, according to Quran, if a person launches a bad charge against a chaste woman and he does not support this charge by four male witnesses, he will be punished (24:4). The unfortunate fact is that here the Quran did not say a victim of rape must provide four male witnesses for a rape to be proven, but people have interpreted these verses in just such a way in recent history.

The Quran further says:

O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and from it its mate and from them both have spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty toward Allah in Whom you claim (your rights) of one another, and towards the wombs (that bore you). Lo! Allah has been a Watcher over you (4:1)

Also in this verse, gender equality is obvious. "I shall not lose sight of the labor of any of you who labors in My way, be it man or woman; each of you is equal to the other" (3:195).

Since men and women both came from the same essence, they are equal in their humanity. Women cannot be by nature evil (as some religions believe) or else men would be evil also. Similarly, neither gender can be superior because it would be a contradiction of equality. Men and women are regarded as equal,

keeping in view their different nature and particular disposition. A woman's rights and responsibilities are equal to those of a man yet not alike. Their roles are different yet this does not imply that one is inferior to the other (Unis, 2004).

In Ibn-Hanbal, the Holy Prophet clearly said, "The most perfect believers are the best in conduct and best of you are those who are best to their wives" (qtd in Engineer, 1992, p.29). In a true Islamic society, women enjoy their rights. They are safe from the domestic violence in their homes. They have same right and duty to obtain education as men have. In Sahih Bukhari⁷, the Holy prophet said, 'it is compulsory for women and men to get education" (qtd in Engineer, 1992, p.29).

Islam also gives the right to work, to earn money if women need it or want it. According to Holy Quran "Men have a share of what they earn and women have a share of what they earn" (4:32). Similarly women enjoy having rights to property in Islam, "Men have a share of what their parents and relatives leave behind, and women have a share of what their parents and relatives leave behind, whether the estate be small or large – a legal share"(4:7).

These statements of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBHU) and Holy Quran clearly show how Islam determines the status of women in society. The problem starts when people misinterpret the teachings of Islam according to their own wishes. Scholars such as Engineer (1992), Hekmat (1998) and Barlas (2002) highlight that throughout the history of Islam, male historians and religious scholars wrote about the teachings of Islam and they kept their gender- biased

⁷ A religious book of Muslims consisting of sayings of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

approach in their work. Similarly, different cultural and traditional practices have been incorporated in the teachings of Islam, which have spoiled the true teachings of Islam.

After analysing the rights given by Islam, it will be difficult to consider Pakistani society as an Islamic society where traditional and social norms put strict obstacles in the way of progress for women. A society that denies women their due rights, and behaves towards them in an undignified and blameworthy manner can be an example of a traditional tribal structure, but cannot be viewed as Islamic.

Chapter 2: Forms of violence against women in Pakistan

2.1: Cultural and structural violence

Violence against women is a worldwide problem because it includes half of the humanity. Women all over the world face multiple forms of violence just because of being women. There are many cultural and structural causes which provide sound basis for the continual perpetuation of violence against women all over the world. According to Harvey and Gow (1994), "History of violence against women is tied to the history of women being viewed as property and a gender role assigned to be subservient to men" (p.36). Pakistani society is a true example of manifesting this violence where there are deep-seated beliefs based on culture and traditions, norms and social institutions that legitimize and therefore perpetuate violence against women. Women are considered as personal properties of men and men control every aspect of lives of women including their behaviour and movements. Men have the right to make decisions, and women have to follow their decisions in family, tribe, community and society (Hassan, 1995). In many areas, like in North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, rural Sindh and rural Punjab, women are not even considered human beings. Rather, they are viewed as 'personal property' with which to barter and trade. For instance, in rural areas, where traditional customs are followed, girls and women continue to be traded to settle debts or conflicts (Shaheed, 1990). Women come to be discussed in law in the same terms as material objects and possessions. This is normally reflected in Pakistan's rape laws, which treat the offence as one of theft of a male's private property, with no consideration for the woman's rights (Shaheed, 1990).

Shaheed (1990) further explores the conditions of women living in rural areas of Baluchistan where most of women have to bear the double burden of

domestic and work outside the home mainly in fields. Many men in these rural areas completely consider women as subordinates, mere servants for doing work in the home. Normally, a father in rural areas of Pakistan thinks that there is no benefit to give education to my daughter, because she will have to wash dishes after marriage. Men strongly believe that the actual duty of women is to work inside the home not outside.

According to the International Planned Parenthood Federation (2000), gender-based violence is defined as physical, psychological and economic abuse of a woman by her partner or by another person within home or family. Physical violence includes physical torture ranging from beating to extreme forms of violence such as burning and murdering of woman. Psychological violence normally includes verbal aggression, humiliation, deprivation of freedom and rights, etc. Whereas, in economic violence, the man does not permit woman to work so that he might have full control over the income of family. In Pakistani society, working women are not liked or respected by most people and many men prefer not to marry them. Women are normally considered subordinates to men, because of economic interdependence. In short, workingwomen are not considered good-charactered human beings; because, to some extent, workingwomen have become free from the dependence of males and they have become able to make decisions for themselves (Hassan, 1995). According to Jilani (1998), women are not considered as trustworthy and normally they are not included in the process of decision-making at family, community or tribe level. The reason behind this is this that many men strongly believe that women have less consciousness as compared to men. It is a normal in Pakistan for a husband to beat his wife, for a brother to beat his sister, and for father to beat his

daughter, because of very minor issues, such as coming home late after the college, cooking poorly, or going out of home without permission.

Unfortunately, it is the traditional set-up of Pakistani society, whereby a man is believed to be the responsible person for the nourishment of the family, in economic terms. Due to this cultural belief, men try for jobs, and women, who are dependent on men, try to marry that man who has a job and economic stability. On the other hand, in Western societies, women and men both work and contribute towards the betterment of family and society (Hassan, 1995). This is also an important reason for the backwardness of Pakistani economy, where half of the population does not work and remains dependent on the working half of the population. Many women also think like this: ' Why should we work outside home, it is not our duty. Rather, God has made man for this purpose.'

Hassan (1995) further explains that few women outside of the larger cities have any hope of financial independence. Although in big cities, women face less economic problems, they are still dependent on males. Thus, when men give them food, home, clothes, they spend their lives according to the orders and will of their men, whether he is a father, brother or husband. It will be difficult for women to think independently, unless they get economic independence. How will they get this? It remains a challenge in this patriarchal society, where most women working in public offices are harassed in different ways by their male colleagues. Less income, more work, lack of proper transport and health facilities, and abusive behaviour from people are some major problems being faced by the workingwomen in Pakistan.

In Pakistan women have strict limitations regarding their thinking and movements. When she wears any dress, she will keep the perceptions of her close male relatives such as brother, husbands and fathers in view. Excluding

some educated and urbanized families, almost every woman in Pakistan goes outside the home with the permission of man. She will get education according to the dictations and decisions of her male family members. She cannot marry without the consent of her male family members (Shaheed, 1990, Hassan, 1995).

According to Bunch and Reilly (1994),

“Violence against women narrows women's options in almost every sphere of life, public and private at home, in school, in workplace and in most community spaces. It limits their choices directly by destroying their health, disrupting their lives and constricting the scope of their activity and indirectly by eroding their self-esteem and self-confidence. In all of these ways Violence hinders women's full participation in society, including participation in the full spectrum of development (p.491)

Heise, Ellsberg and Gottemoeller(1992) highlight:

Violence about women is not about sex, it is not about conflict. It is about control. It is an extension of the ideology that gives men the right to control women's behaviour, their mobility, their access to material resources and their labour, both productive and reproductive (p.2)

Almost all societies are patriarchal and women's subordination is essentially universal (Margaret, 1992). Pakistani society is a society where a man is the head of family with complete decision making powers, and the woman normally obeys the orders of the man, because the man is giving her basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothes. In other words, in society, the woman is dependent upon the man in order to survive physically, socially and economically. The traditional and religious schools of thoughts, where women has no choice but to accept the orders of man have developed Pakistani society.

Davis (1983) highlights that women's economic opportunities are largely restricted by the economic standings of their husbands and their fathers. Women's views of their work possibilities are limited by others' expectations and by tradition (Margaret, 1992). In Pakistan, there is a traditional set-up, whereby a man is believed to be the responsible person for the nourishment of the family, in

economic terms. Normally men make decisions and women have to follow these decisions even about their own lives. Normally, male relatives of woman decide how the woman has to spend her life.

In most societies, different values are transmitted to boys and girls from an early age. Girls are reared to be docile, obedient, and nice. In many places, they are brought up to believe that their role is to serve men, to sacrifice their own needs for the good of the man and for the well being of family (Bard, 1974). In Pakistan, girls are told to be subservient to their male relatives. Since their childhood, their movements are monitored, controlled and restricted so that she might not do anything insulting or dishonouring against the honour of family or male relatives. The maintenance of family honour is also another serious problem to be faced by women. To maintain the centuries old traditions of honour and dignity regarding women's limitations within the home sphere, families limit women's mobility, place restrictions on their behaviour and activities, and permit them only limited access of education, so that they do not act contrary to their family's and society's values. According to Human rights lawyer Hina Jilani (1998, p.143), "women's right to liberty in Pakistan is restricted in the name of modesty, protection and prevention of immoral activity...all this is done in the name of social morality". This kind of behaviour, apparently tending towards protection of women, finally results in form of oppression of even basic human rights of women.

It is unfortunate that in Pakistan and in many other Muslim countries, the linking of women with men's honour is a problematic issue. People in Pakistan think that this is against our honour that women should have freedom and rights like western women enjoy. They will not let her work outside the home, go outside the home, and play outside the home, whereas men do not have such limitations.

It should be remembered that “women grow through their families not outside them” (Margaret, 1992:52). From their families, if they feel a sense of insecurity, then what can be expected from the society, as family is one of the basic social institutions in society?

Women in Pakistan face the threat of multiple forms of violence, including sexual violence by family members and strangers, domestic abuse, including spousal murder by family members, being burned alive, having acid thrown on them, being beaten and threatened; and ritual honor killings. The most serious form of violence faced by women is violence in the home.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan:

The extreme forms it takes included driving a woman to suicide or engineering an 'accident' (frequently the bursting of a kitchen stove) to cause her death, usually when the husband felt that the dower or other gifts he had expected from his in-laws in consequence of the marriage were not forthcoming, or/and he wanted to marry again, or he expected an inheritance from the death of his wife (2003, p. 12).

Despite the surprising levels of intra-family violence against women, it is still widespread belief that this violence is a “family matter” that does not require adequate governmental intervention.

Forced marriage of young girls continues to occur and, while slavery is illegal in Pakistan, girls and women continue to be used to settle debts or conflicts. Law enforcement agencies and police are always reluctant to take actions against the powerful tribes who follow different kinds of inhuman traditions in order to dehumanize women such as honour killing, blood money (in which a woman is paid as compensation for murder), bride buying, forced marriages, etc. Tribal leaders run tribal councils which is a parallel judicial system in Pakistan. These tribal councils are of main supporter and promoter of honour killings.

Women in Pakistan are also the victims of different kinds of religious and traditional structures that keep women's positions inferior and dependent on men. Religion sometimes too views women's traditional behaviour as a part of a sacred and natural structure that should be maintained. In this regard, if any woman asks questions about their status or about their actions to increase egalitarianism, they are considered as being suspect or even anti-religion (Margaret, 1992). In Pakistan religion has a strong influence on the people of rural areas. Poverty and ignorance allow religious dogma to be accepted without question. Illiteracy, ignorance, superstition, fatalism and blind faith in clergy (religious leaders) are great allies in the maintenance of the status quo, providing a sound basis for an extreme form of patriarchal society. It is unfortunate that women in Pakistan are the major victims of this religious and traditional narrow-mindedness. Cultural manifestations and distortions of the Holy Quran in many Islamic countries have also produced very domestic roles of women. In Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan where societies are ultra-conservative, women are defined as dangerous and destructive if not under the control of their husbands (Barlas, 2002).

All along, the women's movement in Pakistan has found the obscurantist religious leaders to be its main opponents (Patel, 1993). Religious scholars, generally known as 'Ulemas,' say that women who demand their rights are following the agenda of the 'West,' which is to secularize the Islamic society of Pakistan. For them, struggle for women's rights is against Islam. Surprisingly, these religious scholars will not say anything about rising corruption, the lack of law and order, illegal smuggling and drugs, sectarian violence, which are other serious problems to be encountered in Pakistan. They consistently oppose any legislation that might bring any freedom, power and betterment for women.

Similarly, “with respect to women, religion tends to sustain and even promote their social and economic subordination” (Margaret, 1992, p.53). This is why in Pakistan, women in these days are in front of the direct opposition of religious sections, even in form of direct physical violence sometimes. In North West Frontier Province of Pakistan, where the provincial government is being led by a religious alliance Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal⁸(MMA), there is only a 2 percent quota allocated for women in public sector employment (Gohar, 2005). In many remote areas of North West Frontier Province, women are discouraged to go to school especially if the course in school is about modern knowledge. Besides this, in the province of NWFP women are threatened with dire consequences by Islamic militants if they do not cover their heads and observe the "Islamic dress code" in school, colleges and public spaces (Bari, 2007). Recently, girls' schools in this province have become targets of bomb and gun attacks by Islamic militants (North West Frontier Timeline, 2006). Even in newly passed Frontier act in this province, section 20 of the 1991 act, which was an amendment in constitution of Pakistan in which rights of women are protected, has not been included by the provincial government (Rehman, 2003).

According to UNESCO (2001), there are 163,000 primary schools in Pakistan, of which merely 40,000 cater to girls. Of these, 15,000 are in Punjab Province, 13,000 in Sind, 8,000 in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and 4,000 in Baluchistan. Similarly, out of a total 14,000 lower secondary schools and 10,000 higher secondary schools, 5,000 and 3,000 respectively are for girls.

⁸ It is an alliance of religious organizations, holding powers in two provinces of Pakistan, nearby Afghan border.

Hassan (1995) explains that the reason behind this inequality in educational setup of Pakistan is that Pakistani society is primarily a male dominated society and education is the best way in order to bring a revolution against existing societal setups, women are discouraged especially in rural areas to get education. According to a Feudal lord in rural Sindh, "if our women get education, they will forget their culture" (qtd. in Hassan, 1995, p.23). The meaning of culture in front of these feudal lords is a complete subjugation (Hassan, 1995). These feudal lords, having immense influence and resources, become the part of decision-making body of Pakistan and then they formulate those kinds of policies, which suit their interests too.

It should be remembered that the general population of Pakistan, which is more than 150 million people and has 70 percent illiteracy, with the women's literacy rate less than men, is being discussed here. Only 28.5 percent of women in Pakistan (above the age of 15) were literate in 2002 (Mustafa, 2005). The definition of a literate person in Pakistan is one who can read or write his or her name. However, the conditions of women in urban areas are better than those of the rural women. For instance, in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad, which is the capital of Pakistan, almost every girl goes to school or college for an education. Women can be seen in parks, markets, public places walking alone and working. In the urbanized environments, education is more accessible than in remote areas of Pakistan.

Similarly, parts of the judiciary are strongly convinced that any interference in the patriarchal structure of society will result in disruption of the society and therefore, it is their duty to guard against such upheaval. According to Justice

Sbihuddin of Sindh High Court, "When we deal any case particularly related with honour killing, we have to keep the public perception in view too" (Hassan, 1995, p. 45). In Pakistan, courts can either choose to reflect the existing and broadly accepted social norms and values in their decision or they can use the law as an instrument of change. There are many examples concerning the biased attitude of judiciary. According to Amnesty International (1999), the Lahore high court of Punjab province reduced the life imprisonment of two men who killed their own sister because of marrying a man of her choice. The court said that in Pakistani society nobody forgives a person who marries his sister or daughter without the consent of parents or near relatives.

In this kind of scenario where from politicians to judges women are viewed as inferior, it can be easily analyzed how the women would be living their lives. Fear, lack of security and justice, oppressive policies are all structures established by this patriarchal society which keep the position of women as subordinate to their men. As senior leader of the ruling political party, Mushahid Hussain rightly expressed while discussing violence against women, "These are a feature of Pakistan feudal society, they are not part of any government policy or a consequence of any law...it is a long standing problem in a feudal society that unfortunately happens to be male-dominated and also in certain part male chauvinist" (Amnesty International, 1999, p.38). Struggling for women's rights is also a struggle against these structures, which means a resistance against the existing societal setup too. All these factors are interconnected. One change in one factor will determine the change in the entire setup ultimately and the male dominated society is currently not willing to face this challenge. But despite these

hindrances, women in Pakistan are making their progress. At least, this word "women's rights" exists in national print or electronic media.

2.2: Direct violence

Because of deep-seated cultural and traditional practices and inadequate responses of society and government, in Pakistan women are the victims of direct violence and in most cases, they are killed mercilessly in the name of honour, customs, and compensation of crimes or bringing insufficient dowry. It can be said that when a husband kills his female relative because of suspicion or any other reason, it is direct violence. When the majority of men follow the same practice of killing women, it is structural violence, which is embedded in patriarchal setup of society and when society does not give adequate attention towards this inhuman practice, it can be said to be a manifestation of cultural violence, which is legitimizing structural and direct violence. It is unfortunate that Pakistani society is not reacting against this vicious circle of violence to a considerable extent because of ignorance and an overall gender-based biased approach, ranging from government institutions to mass population. Violence against women in Pakistan not only brings physical injuries to women but also puts psychological impacts on their power of thinking and behaving. This violence leaves a deep-seated trauma which with no proper healing. Further it brings miseries to woman, especially in cases of rape when the victim of rape has to provide four male witnesses in order to prove rape. Society and courts consider women as responsible for adultery and in some cases, women are killed by their relatives because she has lost her honour after being raped.

2.2.1: Honour Killings

Honour killing is one of the worst forms of violence against women. It is an extreme form of direct physical violence, which is marked by great suffering. In recent years, Pakistan has been criticized because of the dramatic rise in the incidence of honor killings in the country. Here it will be important to know about the definitions and actual causes behind inhuman killings of woman in the name of honour.

The meaning of honour killings is the "unlawful killing of a woman for her actual or perceived morally or mentally unclean and impure behavior" (Hassan, 1999, p.23). Sheri & Bob Stritof (2006) described honour killings as murders by families on family members who are believed to have brought shame on the honour and name of family. According to the free dictionary by Farlex, honour killing is an act in which a male member of the family kills a female relative for tarnishing the family image (2007).

Honour killings can also be described as extra-judicial punishment of a female relative for assumed sexual and marriage offences. These offences, which are considered as a misdeed or insult, include sexual faithlessness, marrying without the will of parents or having a relationship that the family considers to be inappropriate and rebelling against the tribal and social matrimonial customs. These acts of killing women are justified on the basis that the offence has brought dishonor and shame to family or tribe (Amnesty International, 1999).

Generally Pakistan is viewed as an Islamic country. Therefore, it is important to know the Islamic point of view regarding honour killing. This will also clarify whether honour killings are occurring due to religion or traditional customs. There is no concept of honour killing in Islam (Kutty, 2000). Ignorant people, holding outworn or traditional views ideas or principles try to prove to be just, right or reasonable with this act according to Islam. But the reality is this that it is totally against the true spirit of Islam (Fadel, 2004). Ahmad (1992) highlighted that according to Islam; no one can be killed for adultery unless there are four male witnesses of the act of adultery. The Quran also makes clear: "Do not kill a soul which Allah has made sacred except through the due process of law" (6:151). Furthermore, to make it clear, honour killings are forbidden by Islam. Honor killing is murder and must be punished accordingly (Al-Munaqabah, 2004). Islam keeps every soul in a particular position of high regard. Islam does not allow people to take the law into their own hands because this would lead to complete social disorder and lawlessness.

As discussed before, honour killing has no real basis in religion but is cheered and favoured by traditions and misinterpretation of religion. Hekmat(1998) explained that unfortunately, most religions of the world developed in patriarchal cultures, which were male centered, male dominated, and gave men a sort of complete authority to interpret the texts and assume proprietary rights in some cases over the lives of women.

According to Amnesty international (1999), in a tribal setting an honour killing is not considered as crime. Rather, it is viewed as a legitimate act. In many cases, tribal council approves honour killings. In many cases, man has approval

and sympathizes of his family and community as well because he kills a "bad" woman.

Amnesty International (1999) further highlights that in recent years the "honour killing industry" has been developed by the people of Pakistan mainly in rural areas. This is a new trend troubling the lives of women. In these fake killings, men accuse their wives, sisters and daughters of having "bad" relations with wealthy men. Then the woman is declared as *kari*-a bad woman- who brings shame and dishonour to family and is killed. The *Karo* (suspected lover) is pressed to give compensation to the woman's family and then he is pardoned. This is because of *Qiyat* and *Diyat* laws, part of controversial Hudood⁹⁹ ordinance enforced by former President Zia-ul-Haq, which permits murders to be compensated for by the murderer involved. It means the murderer gives money to the victim's family to forgive him. And this inhuman tradition provides many opportunities to make money for tribesmen, policemen and tribal mediators.

Here the question comes about the origin of honour killings. In the northwest frontier province and in Baluchistan province, roots of honour killings can be found. Here in these parts of the country, women are normally considered as commodities (Mayell, 2002). At the time of marriage, the bride's father asks the groom to pay a certain amount of money. In other words he sells his daughter. She is sold based on her socio-economic status, age, and beauty. Then, her husband becomes the owner of her body and life. If someone damages this commodity, his owner has a right of compensation. If a husband kills his wife

⁹⁹ A controversial law, passed during 1980s by president Zia-ul-Haq in which in order to prove adultery, four male witnesses are required.

for alleged sexual behaviour and the 'alleged lover' runs away, which normally happens in the majority of cases, the alleged lover has to pay compensation to the husband. Often, the dead woman's alleged lover gives his own sister to the husband as a part of compensation (Amnesty International, 1999). This is the greediness and brutality of this male dominated society, which reflects in these traditions of honour. Women are sold and bought as commodities in this regard.

There are many reasons for the increasing incidents of honour killings. Because of the involvement of Pakistan in Afghan war that has been going on since 1979, almost in every part of the country, illegal weapons are easily available. This has influenced the behaviour of people as well. Now, people in Pakistan are generally brutal and aggressive in their actions and thoughts (Khan 2001). Poverty, unemployment and lack of economic prosperity further strengthen this aggressiveness. Tribalization of society is also an important factor in this concern. People show indifference towards honour killings, viewing it as a tribal custom (Khan, 2001). Newspapers are full of miserable stories of honour killings, showing bias and considering women as responsible for this, because newspapers are also being influenced by the male-dominated society.

Expressing a desire to choose a marriage partner in a society where the majority of marriages are arranged by parents is considered a major act of defiance. With these actions, people bring shame to their family. Frequently, fathers bring charges of *zina*-sex without marriage-against their daughters who have married of their own choice. Some men try to bring private justice in the name of honour killings (Human Rights Watch, 2004). In Pakistan, marriages are traditionally arranged, and in many cases, forced marriages as well. Normally

parents select partners for their children, and in many cases even without their will and consent. Women for example, seeking to make their own decision about whom they will marry, can be accused of undermining family honour. Surprisingly, according to the decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, an eighteen-year-old Pakistani girl can marry a man of her own choice (Mooraj, 2004). However, law enforcement agencies are corrupt and people do not care about the decision of court. Marriage without the consent of parents or relatives is viewed as a serious act against the honour of the family.

In some cases, murders are committed for other motives and dressed up as honour killings. Seeking divorce, bringing fewer dowries, or avoiding giving property shares to women, men kill women and colour these killings as honour killings. They kill women and then accuse that "my wife, sister or daughter was a bad woman" (Amnesty International, 1999). Some men camouflage their murder by killing a woman of their own family. They then say that they killed the woman and the person who had been murdered because they were bad and having illicit sexual relations. By projecting murder as honour killing, the murderer has chances to escape from the death penalty. The desire to obtain land may also be a lie behind some fake honour killings. If a woman owns land; her brother may kill her to get land, declaring her as "bad" woman. Also, raped women are killed because they have lost their "honour" and brought "dishonour" upon the family. As four male witnesses have to be present, in many cases rape is not proven in court, and people think that the victim had consensual sex (Najam, 2006). The lure of monetary gain appears to have motivated many men to accuse their mothers, wives or female relatives of dishonouring their families. They kill them in order to extract compensation from the alleged *karo*, or lover, who escaped from

the killing (Najam, 2006). The painful aspect of this behaviour is that women who are suspected are rarely given any chance to defend themselves.

In many cases, women or their honour are given as compensation. In 2002, in southern Punjab, the famous incident of Mukhtarah Mhai happened in which the tribal council raped her in front of the village. The reason was that there were suspicions that her brother had illicit sexual relations with a girl from another tribe. Her brother was 12 years old. She was raped and then forced to walk nude from the place where the tribal council was being held to her house (Human Rights Watch Report, 2004).

Young women are sometimes given in marriage to hostile families as compensation for a relative's crime in a practise called "swara" in Pashtun populated areas of NWFP, and "vanni" in the Punjab. According to this custom, women are paid in form of forced marriages to the rival party as a part of compensation of crimes, done by their male relatives (Ebrahim, 2007).

According to the annual report of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan(2003),

Swara is a virtual death penalty for young women who become victims of the tradition. Even in cases where they are not physically killed, the humiliation and misery they face, sometimes for an entire lifetime, is a terrible punishment. It is made all the worse by the fact that the women concerned are of course not guilty of any crime (p.56)

Even seeking divorce from an abusive husband, which is a right of a woman as defined by Islam, is considered to be against the honour of the family.

One of the most well known honour killings in recent years occurred in April 1999 when Samia Sarwar, a young married woman was killed by her family openly in the office of her lawyer who was also a human rights activist. She was killed mercilessly because she was seeking divorce from her husband, who was torturing her physically. For her own family, seeking divorce was considered against their family's honour, so her own driver killed her in front of her mother. The most unfortunate side of this event is that when lawyers and human rights organization agitated against this killing, the members of parliament and religious leaders threatened them. Not a single political leader condemned this brutal act of killing (Saxakali, 1999).

According to human rights commission of Pakistan (2006) about 248 women were killed in Pakistan from 1st January to 30th December 2006 on the name of honour. 27 cases were because of *karo-kari*^{10 10} mainly in rural Sindh where this practice is common. In 49 cases, brothers were behind killings whereas in 76 cases, husbands were responsible. There has been fluctuation among the numbers of incidents of honour killings. In 1998, the total cases of honour killings were 286 and numbers of victims were 329 and out of these cases, police registered 201 cases and only 34 accused persons were arrested. Similarly, in 1999, 278 cases, in 2000, 293 cases, in 2001, 204 cases and in 2002, 273 cases were reported by human rights commission of Pakistan.

It should be remembered that several charitable organization such as Edhi foundation, Ansar Burni trust and many women rights organizations contain data showing varying figures of honour killings in the country.

^{10 1} Local name for traditional custom in which Honour killings are justified.

2.2.2: Dowry system

Dowry system is another form of social and traditional practices whose consequences result direct violence of women. There is hardly any family in Pakistan in which this dowry system is not followed. Not a single day passes without dowry deaths and torture of women. Newspapers are full of stories of torture of women who bring insufficient dowry. Unable to bear the torture, some brides are forced to commit suicide and some are burnt alive under the cover of stove deaths, which is also called bride burning in which women are burnt alive after being covered with kerosene oil (Veena, 2002).

In Pakistan, dowry practice is very common in arranged marriages and in rural areas as it is widely recognized as a traditional and compulsory ritual of marriage. Apparently, dowry is an amount of money or valuable things given by the bride`s family to the groom at the time of their marriage. Dowry can also be termed as a "marriage portion, which is money or property, which a bride contributes to the couple's joint holdings" (Veena, p.4). Dowry is defined as "movable or immovable property that the bride's father or guardian gives to the bridegroom, his parents, or his relatives as a condition to the marriage and often under duress, coercion, or pressure" (Nangia, 1997, p.637).

Here the question arises about what Islam says about the dowry system. As in Pakistan, ignorant people try to justify everything according to the teachings of Islam in order to avoid opposition or rejection. Therefore, it is also necessary to know the Islamic point of view concerning dowry.

This practice of dowry does in fact violate Islamic Law. "In Islam it is the man who pays the *mahr* to the woman. Rather, dowry is the right of the woman" (qtd in Engineer, p. 110). The following verses in the Qur'an prove that it is the man who is obligated to pay the *mahr* to the woman, unless the woman chooses not to take it. Holy Quran highlights: "And give women their dower as a free gift, but if they themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment and with wholesome result" (4:4). According to Islam, groom has to give *mahr* to bride. And this dower money must be paid or fixed before to marriage. It is completely up to a bride to determine the amount. This *mahr* is what is given purely for love, not for any return. It is a right of bride and the husband can enjoy it only if the wife permits it, not otherwise (Engineer, 1992).

In the current situation in Pakistan the bride is forced to pay a negotiated amount to the groom unless the man chooses not to take it. Many people try to justify the practice of the dowry system according to Islam because the holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH), on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter Hazrat^{11 11} Fatima, gave some things related to daily work in home to his daughter to give her husband. But the reality is that he gave things such as a small cup, a small carpet for offering prayers, and the like, and these things were given as gift (Khan, 1998). Not a single follower or companion of the Holy Prophet ever asked their wives to bring a dowry. There is not a single order or statement from the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) regarding the concept of dowry in any of the holy books of Islam.

^{11 11}Arabic word used for showing respect

The myths in society consistently portray women as economically and emotionally dependent on men as "mother, wives, sisters, and daughters". From the moment she is born, a woman in Pakistan is considered a burden and "an extra mouth to feed" (Pardee, 1996, p. 496).

Also, there are very narrowly defined roles of men and women, and women are considered an economic liability. Men are considered an asset to the family because they can perform physical work, and are expected to care for their aging parents, thus providing economic security to the family. On the other hand, women are expected from birth to be subservient to their husbands. The woman's family sees her as an economic burden for whom they have to give up tremendous resources and material wealth (Pardee, 1996).

Dowry practice is not only practiced in rural areas. Rather, it is normal part of marriage everywhere in Pakistan. Educated people in urban areas say that they give gifts to their daughters at marriage time rather than dowry. It should be understood that there is a difference between a gift and a dowry. A gift is considered something that a person gives to another person voluntarily, and normally people who like or love each other give gifts at marriages. But if greediness and desire of becoming rich replace love and mutual respect, this gift becomes dowry (Veena, 2002). It is basically the exercise of power by husband and his family in order to impose their will on a bride. Now, the bride must give a dowry or the marriage will not take place. This is has to do with the personality of the groom, marked by an urgent and often unscrupulous desire for possession of material things.

Now, what is the philosophy behind this greediness that leads to forcing a bride to bring more and more dowry? Normally in Pakistan, the mother and father of the groom think like this: 'we have invested very much on the education and nourishment of our son, and now if our son marries his wife will benefit from the money that he will earn through his job. So, we will ask the bride to bring a dowry in order to balance our investment in our son.' For them, marriage is a kind of business in which they sell and buy their children in the name of customs and traditions. Hekmat (1998) highlighted that the main irony of all this dowry system is this that one woman (the mother-in-law) is forcing another woman (the daughter-in-law) to bring sufficient dowry or be ready to face the consequences. Furthermore, all mothers-in-law have been daughters-in-law once in their lives, but still they have the same prejudicial approach towards their own gender because of social pressure, illiteracy, lack of awareness, and other factors.

Dowry is a social evil and many people are compelled to give or to take a dowry. In Pakistan, it is common to ask oneself, 'What will people say or think?' Therefore, in order to maintain their presumed honour in front of society, generally people are not ready to give up the dowry system. Some grooms also justify taking a dowry with arguments that they did not want to take dowry but did not want to see their parents angry. Ironically, in rich families, a new trend is also being promoted, that brides try to bring more and more dowry in order to impress the groom's family psychologically. Basically, in Pakistan in recent years, a new culture of trying to impress others with wealth has been flourishing because of increasing of the huge rich-poor gap. So, the display of wealth in marriages, including expensive dresses, expensive cars, houses, heavy dowry, or jewelry are all related to this culture of trying to impress others. Lack of economic

opportunities breeds poverty and poverty promotes frustration, and people who burn their wives alive are mostly frustrated. An intolerant society encourages negative behaviors among its citizens and this behavior reflects in the systematic abuses of women rights in the name of cultural customs and traditions. It will be difficult for a person who lives outside Pakistan to understand the inhuman treatment of women after marriage in their homes without participant observation.

Similarly, in order to maintain their "honor" in the family, community or tribe, parents give a dowry to their daughters. It is unfortunate that for this purpose many poor people take loans or borrow money. Many banks, such as Habib Bank, Women Bank, and the National Bank of Pakistan, give short-term loans to poor people for this purpose. Normally it takes many years for them to pay back this borrowed money. Until then, all the family members of the bride suffer continuously.

If asked from them why they did like this, parents would say 'we wanted our daughter to be happy in her husband's home that is why we gave a dowry even if we had to borrow money.' So, it can be said that the main philosophy behind parents giving a dowry to their daughters is to make sure that they would be happy or treated well in the husband's home. In Pakistan, women are not usually given any property share. Commonly, after the death of their father, brothers do not give a share to their own sister and claim that the share has been given in the form of a dowry. Unfortunately, the bridegroom and his family have greater bargaining power and usually they determine the dowry rules. In many cases, before marriage a list consisting of things to be brought by bride is given to bride's family. This list is made with the mutual consultation of the future

mother-in-law of bride. If the bride's family does not fulfill the required demands of the groom's family then in many cases marriage does not take place. The whole system of dowry is based on the concept that men own their wives (Pardee, 1996). Pakistani society essentially views a woman as being owned by her father and brothers before marriage and her husband after marriage. Similarly, according to Pakistani law, "Husbands are the legal guardians of women" (Pakistan Legal Decisions Booklet, 1971, p.129). Now, whatsoever, parents of bride and groom decide regarding dowry and whatsoever are the demands of groom's family, the bride will have to comply because of family and societal pressure and traditional customs.

2.2.3: Bride burning

Bride burning is a form of inhuman domestic violence within the walls of the home. "In bride burning, it is alleged that a husband or the family of the husband douses the man's wife with kerosene or gasoline oil and sets the woman alight, leading to death by burning her alive" (Barlas, 2002,p.76). This is one of the most severe abuses of human rights. In addition, Bride burning is often described as a kitchen accident or suicide attempts (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

There are several reasons for bride burning but the major reason includes the failure of the wife's family to provide a large enough dowry. Here the question arises, why do husbands decide to go for this inhuman option and burn their wives alive? Generally, husbands who participate in these crimes believe that burning their wife is a good way to remove her without evidence and may be

labeled a suicide. This may provide for an opportunity to marry again and thus receive a larger dowry (Human Rights Watch, 2003). It is actually the greediness of the husband and his relatives that incites them to kill the wife in this way. And a surprising element in these kitchen accidents or stove deaths is that many more daughters-in-law die than any other female member of the family, like the sister or mother of the groom. The bride burning is not only against women's rights but it is a serious crime against humanity as well. Unfortunately, this is being practiced in Pakistan, which is known as an Islamic country.

2.2.4: Acid throwing

Acid throwing is another abuse inflicted on women. The purpose behind this is to "teach them a lesson". In many instances, men throw acids on women because she did not bring sufficient amount of dowry. But in many cases, besides dowry there are many other reasons behind acid throwing on women. Men who had proposed a woman for marriage and if the woman rejected his proposal; then, they in many cases as a revenge, throw acid on the woman's face and body to make pain and suffering certain and sure forever on the victim because she "dishonored" him by refusing his proposal (Burney, 2005).

In some cases, religious fundamentalists throw acids at women who are complete strangers to them, standing or sitting at public places, because they felt the women were too modern and westernized and furthermore, anti-Islam. Even if all the women had done is wear jeans instead of the Pakistani dress. In front of these religious fundamentalists, acid throwing can also be a kind of available punishment for those women whose living styles are not according to their

version of Islam. It is estimated that on average, a woman suffers an acid attack every week in Pakistan (Burney, 2005).

Nearly 280 women were killed and 750 were injured in 2002 from acid attacks. Despite protests of Human rights activists against open sale of acid, it is still easily available (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Also, according to human rights commission of Pakistan (2006), at least 42 cases of acid throwing had been reported in 2004 and the unfortunate side was that only in four cases, the accused were arrested. Human rights organization also indicate that every year, almost 400 women all over the country become the victim of acid attacks mainly by their husbands and family members and sadly, in past ten years, more than 1500 cases of acid attacks were registered in police stations and courts. It should be remembered that many cases go unreported as well.

2.2.5: The direct violence of the state representatives

Some times, people from law enforcement agencies, viewing themselves above the law, use their authority and power in the wrong way because while exercising their power in this way, they do not have fear of being arrested or punished. These kinds of structures within government law enforcement agencies sometimes cause direct physical violence against women. In recent years, many incidents have come on surface of society disclosing an ugly face of deep-seated attitude of male dominated society. Recently, a famous case highlighted the worst conditions of women of Pakistan in front of world. This was the rape case of Dr. Shazia Khalid. She was allegedly raped by an army

captain in Baluchistan and then forced to leave the country along with her husband (New York Times, 2005).

In some cases, police arrest the female relatives of alleged criminals in order to investigate the crime in their own way. They torture them to put psychological pressure on the family of alleged criminal. On December 25, 1988, Saima Anjum, 16, was arrested by policemen who took her to the police station and tried to get her to admit to a theft. They told her that her fiancé was a smuggler and that she was involved with him. She was raped by four policemen in the police station. After that, she confessed to the theft. Saima was in the Karachi Central Jail for almost six months before human rights attorneys took up her case, and it was almost two years after that before she was released on bail. No charge has ever been registered against the police officials (Human rights watch, 1992).

According to Amnesty International (1999), Human Rights Watch (2003), and Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2003), women are raped even in police station and many incidents go unreported. Also in some cases, the police tortures women from opposition political parties, allegedly by the orders of government of ruling party. Kursheed Begum, the wife of a low-level Pakistan People's Party (PPP) activist who had been imprisoned on charges of being involved in a Karachi bomb blast, was allegedly kidnapped and raped in police custody on November 19, 1991. Despite her complain, no charges were filed against the officers (Human rights watch, 1992).

In another incident, Veena Hayaat, a personal friend of PPP leader Benazir Bhutto, reportedly was beaten and gang-raped in her home by five men acting on orders from local government officials in November 1990. She charged that the President's son-in-law, Irfanullah Marwat, home advisor to the chief minister of Sindh, was behind the incident. An inquiry commission was established which completed its inquiry on December 24, 1991, and found Murwat innocent of all charges and case was closed (Human rights watch, 1992).

These cases are famous cases because; urban and educated women were victims who had dared to speak out against this inhuman treatment of police. In rural areas of Pakistan, where there is no strong influence and approach of media, what can be the possible situation of women in front of law enforcement agencies?

These examples are given just to tell that women are also the victims of direct violence whose perpetrators are often state agencies. The reason behind this that in every agency such as police, security forces, intelligence agencies, gender based bias exists among males. As women are connected with the honour of men in Pakistan so government machinery is used to dishonour its opponents by dishonouring their women. A police officer who may be torturing a woman from the criminal's family will never bear his female family members to be tortured by some one. Corruption, less education and weak moral and religious values among law enforcement agencies in particular and society in general further deepen the gender-based bias. However, these incidents are not occurring on daily basis.

Chapter 3: Responses to violence

While there is a high incidence of violence against women, there are also many women's rights organization and governmental departments who are struggling strenuously against this menace.

3.1: Women's Rights Activism

The struggle for women's rights starts from the 1935 government of India act (British India). According to this act, all women were given the right to vote and seats had been reserved for women in legislative councils. In 1937, Central Legislative Council of British India passed the Muslim Personal Law, according to this law; Muslim women were given rights of inheritance of property, especially after the death of their parents (Walid, 1997).

After these political incentives, Muslim women were lucky to have a moderate and open-minded leader. It was the Quaid-i-Azam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan who encouraged women to come out of their homes and work for the cause of Pakistan by addressing public meetings and taking part in protests and rallies. He once categorically expressed while meeting with a delegation of women workers:

No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you; we are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live (qtd in Walid, 1997, p.23)

In Ali Jinnah's charismatic personality Muslim women of India saw a light of hope. They came out of their homes and took part in politics practically. They had to face tear gas and even jails in this process. Separate women sections of the Muslim League were set up and the national women's guard was established (Mumtaz&Shahid, 1988).

The Quaid-i-Azam's sister, Fatima Jinnah and the wife of the first prime minister, Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan, played a prominent role during this period, standing shoulder to shoulder with their men and encouraging other women to follow the path which they has set for (Mumtaz&Shahid,1988). In the early days of Pakistan these women were mainly wives, sisters or daughters of prominent men or politicians. Most of them had acquired education from modern institutions and were elected as members of parliament or enjoyed leading positions in political parties.

These women also helped other women during the hard times after the partition of India in 1947 and worked strenuously for feeding, clothing, giving shelter and caring for the millions of refugees who had arrived in Pakistan. The prominent name in this regard was Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan who formed the women's voluntary service. She was joined by hundreds of women volunteers who provided first aid to the refugees, and distributing food and relief goods among them. Begum Rana was also the leading figure in establishing the All Pakistan Women's Association, popularly known as APWA, which emerged as the first women' s welfare organization in the country, setting up hundreds of schools, medical centers, and industrial homes to help the deprived and the destitute. These women activists also mobilized massive support, which resulted in renewal of 1937 Muslim Personal Law into Muslim personal law of shari'a in

1948. They also succeeded in order to convince government to include a charter of women's rights in the 1956 constitution (Mumtaz&Shahid, 1988).

In 1961, Muslim family law was passed covering marriage and divorce. This is a law, which is still widely regarded by the women of Pakistan as a serious attempt to bring equality and empowerment to women (Khan, 2001).

The Constitution of 1973 in several articles guarantees gender equality. For example, article 25 says: "all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of law" and article 27 states: "there will be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone" (Khan, 2001, p.55). In article 28, it is clearly written that "steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life" (Khan, p.56).

When General Ziaul Haq took over power in 1977, he imposed a strict military rule. He decided to introduce the Islamic system into the country. The main reason behind introducing "Islamic" system was to gain the support of religious parties for his military dictatorship and for "Jihad" in Afghanistan against Soviet Union. The infamous Hudood Ordinance was enforced officially to prevent adultery but unfortunately, jails became full of such women who even faced the extreme sentence of stoning to death if charges of adultery were proved against them. Since the ordinance did not discriminate between rape and adultery, rape victims found themselves in an abnormal situation in which they had to put the burden on their shoulders of providing proof of rape. They had to face the punishments of whipping and stoning merely for being victims, because it was very difficult to provide four male witnesses to prove rape, which was a condition in this controversial ordinance (Mumtaz&Shahid, 1988).

Interestingly, Holy Quran does not mention any punishment for rape. Hudood ordinance was basically aimed at the punishment of *Zina* which means sex outside wedlock in which four males are to be presented. This does not cover the rape which is *Zina-bil-Jabr*, a forced sex. But what happens, that in both of cases, there should have been four pious males as witnesses (Hassan, 1995). When the victims of rape had been unable to fulfill this impracticable condition, courts often view women committing adultery.

During this period, some other laws were also passed to reduce the status of women. At that time, there was no democratic government in Pakistan and General Ziaul Haq had a complete power to enforce any law. The law of evidence was passed. According to this, the testimony of two women would be considered equal to that of one man, while the law of *qisas* and *diyat* provided that blood money for a female victim of murder would be half compared to that of a man. Similarly, according to this law, paying blood money could compensate murders (Hassan, 1995).

The Women's Action Forum was formed in 1981 to respond to the implementation of the Hudood ordinance and to strengthen women's position in society generally. But it should be remembered that the women in the forum were from elite families and they perceived many of the laws proposed by the Zia government as threat to their civil liberty and status as well (Mumtaz&Shahid, 1988).

When Benazir Bhutto was elected as the Muslim world's first woman prime minister, women from all social classes rejoiced. This was the time they had been

waiting for. At that time, they thought that only woman Prime Minister could solve women's problem and would bring equality and freedom for women. But soon their hopes collapsed. The Hudood Ordinance and other discriminatory laws continued to remain in statute books, women continued to be in jails on charges of adultery. Because of strong religious opposition and being a member of a feudal family, she could not give adequate attention towards women's rights.

Because of these oppressive laws, women rights activism increased in the country. Now today, diverse groups including the Women's Action Forum, the All-Pakistan Women's Association, the Pakistan Women Lawyers' Association, and the Business and Professional Women's Association, are supporting small-scale projects throughout the country focusing on women's empowerment. They have been involved in such activities as providing legal aid to women who were victims of violence, opposing the gendered segregation of universities, and condemning the growing incidents of violence against women (Hassan, 1995).

Since the start of 1990s, the women's movement has been focusing on three main goals in Pakistan: securing women's political representation in the National, provincial and local assemblies; working to raise women's consciousness, particularly about family planning; and countering suppression of women's rights by raising public awareness (Hassan, 1995).

3.2: Government's policy towards violence against women

Some people argue that violence against women is culturally acceptable. Nevertheless, violence against women in all its manifestation is criminal act

(Schuler, 1992, p.56). It has resulted in death, physical incapacitation and mental derangement of women. The UN has condemned violence against women. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Women was proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/104 on 20 December 1993 (Symonides&Volodin, 2002). Pakistan has signed on this Declaration but in reality women could not get any relief (Hassan, 1995). Because in rural areas, illiterate and poor people do not know about women rights even about the existence of UN itself. In addition, for them, the statement of their tribal leader is the final declaration. These tribal and illiterate people give votes to their tribal leaders who become members of national assembly. Then, they become the part of decision-making body of Pakistan. How can it be expected from them to make laws against their own traditions and tribal power?

Now the question arises: what is the government of Pakistan doing in order to improve the socio-economic conditions of women of Pakistan? It does criticise the traditional practises and customs that dehumanise women. Because of the increasing awareness among the world community regarding women rights abuses in Pakistan, the government is taking some serious steps to improve the conditions of women rights.

The government of Pakistan has a special ministry for women development, which was established in 1979. Whilst the Ministry of Women's Development promotes gender equality and upholds the status of women in Pakistan at the Federal level, Women's Development Departments (WDD) also exist at the local government level. The functions of the Ministry mainly include ensuring that women's needs are represented sufficiently in public policy by

different government bodies and agencies. Ministry is also a platform for the promotion and undertaking of projects that provide special facilities for women. It also ensures equality in education and employment and full participation of women in all spheres of social welfare. Right now, this ministry of women is the main platform through which women's rights organizations get governmental funds (International Labour Organization, 2004).

In 1994 the Government of Pakistan set up a "Commission of Inquiry for Women", headed by a Supreme Court judge and consisting of human rights lawyers, Islamic scholars and legislators to review the existing laws that perpetuate discrimination against women and prevent them attaining equality vis-à-vis men. The recommendations of the Commission were not given adequate attention by the government for a long period because women rights were never considered as serious issue to be handled by the government (Yasmin, 2002).

According to national guidelines in Pakistan (1997), the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women was adopted as a working document in August 1998 by the President of Pakistan. Emphasis was put on eradication of poverty of women, health, education, violence against women and economic, political and social empowerment of women. In July 2000, the Chief Executive of Pakistan General Mussarraf initiated National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), an independent department. The main purpose behind this development was to make comprehensive strategies to end the domestic violence and abuse against women, and to direct government to implement these strategies for long-term purposes (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

Between September 2001 and August 2004, a social audit was undertaken with the help of the Ministry of Women's Development of Pakistan and was funded by UK Department of Development. The main purpose of this project was to raise awareness among people about abuse against women, to promote the community-based strategies to eliminate abuse against women, and to collect related data on women rights (economic, educational opportunities, literacy rates, health facilities, etc.). A household survey of 23,000 women from all Pakistani districts, was completed in April 2003, and was presented to the Ministry of Women Development in August 2004. With the help of this comprehensive survey, the government will be able to focus on the betterment of women rights in education and health sector (Social audit of abuse against women, 2004).

In 2004, with the help of UNDP and government of Norway, the Women's Political School (WPS) project, has been designed Pakistani government to sustain the gains of the Women's Political Participation Project (W3P) which was pioneering effort to train and nurture over 36,000 newly elected women councillors at the district and union council levels. This project is mainly aimed at enhancing awareness among senior and mid-level officials related with power and development at all levels of governance about the relationship between gender and their work (UNDP, 2005).

Generally, the government says that the conditions of Pakistani women are better than in many other countries and it views violence against women as a global problem. Pakistan's minister for women's affairs, Nilofer Bakhtiar says that struggle for women's rights is increasing and strengthening. According to her, "we

have a strong policy and programme here which the government is putting across very successfully to combat violence against women"(qtd in Ahmed, 2007).

According to Zubaida Jalal, former federal minister of women development,

The Federal Ministry and Provincial Departments are being assisted by Advisory Boards comprising representatives of women organizations on all policy and administrative Issues. Other steps include reform and revision of laws discriminatory against women, reservation of 30% seats for women in national/provincial legislatures and 50% representation at the grass roots representative bodies besides increasing the quota for women candidates in public sector employment (2004)

The following statement highlights the steps taken by government towards women's participation in decision-making bodies of Pakistan. The government of Pakistan makes policies to protect women rights but the problem is that law enforcement agencies such as judiciary and police do not follow these policies wholeheartedly. For example, according to Pakistan laws, "maximum punishment for stripping a woman of her clothes and exposing her to the public view is execution or life imprisonment but in reality not a single person has been given this punishment since 1984" (Patel, 2003, p. 67). The main reasons behind this are corruption, feudal political system, gender discrimination and male dominated society.

It can be said that at the governmental level, there are policies to end gender based violence and discrimination but they are not implemented properly because almost all politicians are either religious lords or feudal lords who give more importance to their tribal and religious narrow approaches rather than

towards universal rights for women. In reality, women are still facing immense problems especially the rape victims. There is no institutional infrastructure in Pakistan to help rape victims, no trauma center or legal aid bodies. That is why the current situation compels rape victims to place confidence in media and non-governmental organization to secure justice (Ahmed, 2007).

Recently, President General Musharraf issued a new ordinance to provide for the release, on bail, of women languishing in prisons on various charges, except those on trial for murder or acts of terrorism. This ordinance will benefit 1,300 women (The news, 2006). This is a new ray of hope, and it seems the government is now serious about softening its image to the international community regarding the conditions of women's rights in Pakistan. But recent opposition of the women's rights bill in the National assembly by the Islamic parties demonstrated that more struggle has to be done by the women of Pakistan in order to break the chains of oppression (Mooraj, 2006). The Islamic parties opposed and criticized this bill categorically. According to their perception, the bill was anti-Islam in its contents.

This bill normally known as the "women protection bill" was passed in December, 2006 after staunch opposition from religious parties. According to this bill, if four pious male witnesses are not found, a judge has powers to use other standards such as DNA tests or other medical way for rape to be proven. But hard-line Islamists oppose this development. According to Dr. Farid Ahmad Paracha, a member of the national assembly, " it is important to keep four male witnesses rule as it is because it is a God-given law and no court can amend God-Given laws"(Montero, 2006). These religious leaders try to connect women

protection bill with already prevailing anti-American sentiments. According to United Action Front, an alliance of Islamic parties, this bill was "brought under the direction of the United States and implemented by their representatives in Pakistan, General Musharraf (Washington Times, 2006).

If any Pakistani government paid adequate concentration and took suitable action against the violence against women in the country, the issue would never need to be highlighted in the western media to this extent. Where are the women and their families supposed to go when their own government agencies refuse to help them and instead further threaten their safety? If the veil of culture, society and religion is lifted, the real issue will be obviously a blatant sexism and a refusal to recognize women as equal human beings deserving of equality, human rights and justice. Government claims the issue of women's rights represents an image problem; moreover, abuses of human rights of women are not just an image problem but constitute crimes against humanity.

Chapter 4: Strategies for change

After analyzing the different forms of violence against women and responses to this violence, it is necessary to discuss what should be possible strategies in order to counter the threats faced by women because of direct, structural and cultural violence? Will women of Pakistan remain in this orbit of fear if nothing is changed? There are many steps, which the Pakistani government and the people of Pakistan may take with regard to controlling the violence.

4.1: Education

With the help of education, woman can improve their socio-economic status. Women should have equal access to education in all disciplines and at all levels. Knowledge gives awareness, and it is knowledge, which is essential to sensible decision-making in all areas of endeavour. Government machinery, non-governmental organizations, and progressive political parties should focus on the education of women if they want to enhance the status of women in Pakistan. There should be an education revolution in Pakistan. Everyone has a part to play -- the government, political parties, religious groups, all elements of civil society and individuals. Changing patterns of people's perception regarding women's education requires the utmost effort on the political, cultural and social fronts. The entire society will have to be restructured on new foundations. Although some well-educated women have been entering government, politics, and business, and their numbers are increasing, they still have some distance to go. There is an urgent need of increase in the number of primary schools for girls and government must ensure that every girl in the country goes to school. Education in primary schools should be free.

Education brings political, economic, social, cultural, religious, and environmental consciousness and prosperity. In order to educate women, many steps can be taken. First of all, there should be a campaign for the awareness regarding need of women's education. For this purpose, the media can be an influential and effective tool. In television, radio, and newspapers, a campaign can easily be launched for the need of women's education by governmental and non-governmental organizations. Advertisements about women's education can be placed on public transports, and in public places. The government can provide

funding to already existing women's institutes. But for this purpose, the sincerity of government and people is needed.

As, in Pakistan, being a traditional Islamic country, separation of men and women exists at every level. Government should establish more educational institutions for women specifically related to law and medical science. This will give relief to those parents who do not wish their daughters to get education among males. Besides this, more women lawyers and doctors can work for the women in legal and health sector and women can trust them.

As Pakistan is a poor country, women are the poorest of the poor. There should be a reasonable and affordable fees adjusted for poverty-ridden women, especially in rural areas of Pakistan. The government and non-governmental organizations, which are working for the betterment of women's rights, should employ all tools and techniques to draw the attention of rural-based, conventional families so that they will be able to enroll their girls in formal education. This is a very important task to break the centuries-old, traditional beliefs regarding the status of women. Urban women who can at least read newspapers, know of the existence of human rights in this world, but women living in rural areas who cannot read newspapers do not know about the existence of human rights.

Neighbouring countries of Pakistan, India and China, are entering into the world of developed countries. In order to maintain regional status quo, Pakistan will have to boost its economic growth. Therefore, any kind of force pushing women away from education is totally unacceptable, especially for the

underdeveloped country like Pakistan. In order to drag the country out of extreme poverty and backwardness, equal opportunities for both men and women must be arranged in almost every sector of society. Similarly, if religious leaders have any solid criticism against the contents of educational syllabus, then at provincial level, with mutual consultation, government can reorganize the syllabus.

Education is the actual bedrock on which the structure of a progressive society can be established. Only with the help of education and awareness this change will come. There should be an increase in educational budget for women. Also, at community or town level, a committee can be established to be responsible for educating women. If not advanced formal education, then at least, women should be taught to read and write. Otherwise, in the rural areas of Pakistan, where almost every one is illiterate and nobody knows about the existence of human rights of women or about the UN and its declarations, nothing will change. For them, what the head of tribal council says is the declaration. These people give votes to their tribal leader, who then becomes a member of the national assembly and thus a part of the decision-making body of the country. How can it be expected from him to end honour killings, when he himself is a great supporter and promoter of this practice?

4.2: Role of government

Here, the role of government comes in and the responsibility of women representatives in national assembly of Pakistan is tested. What they can do for the eradication of torture and unlawful killings of women? First of all, the government should reform the police department. The police department is one of the most corrupt departments in the country. It is very common to say that 'if you want to be a rich man in one or two years, you should join police force.' The

government should make it clear to police department that deterring women from reporting acts of violence will not be tolerated. An adequate number of women police officers should be recruited and trained. The government of Pakistan has taken some steps in this regard and there are some women police stations in different cities of Pakistan. There is urgent need of increasing their numbers and powers. Their investigative techniques should be improved in order to ensure that women victims of violence are not subjected to further humiliation.

If Pakistani police become honest and sincere, not only concerning problems related to women rights, this will solve many social diseases, such as violations against women, corruption, smuggling, violence in general?, and more. It is a triumph for women nowadays that they now can serve in the police, the armed forces, and the traffic police, but still, gender discrimination persists.

In order to minimize the high incidence of violence against women, non-governmental organizations can play an important and effective role. It is necessary for them to focus on rights based programmes. This includes establishing crisis shelters, community mobilization, counseling, providing legal aid, advocacy, working with men and boys and research and publications regarding violence against women.

Similarly, at state level, the government of Pakistan should focus towards the improvement of judicial and police departments. Family courts and women's courts can be established primarily dealing with cases of women. It is essential for government to establish more women police stations in the country which could address the issues related with violence against women. Also, there should be police counseling cells in police stations in general. Government of Pakistan

should also establish a social welfare board which would be able to provide necessary funds for counseling cells and shelter homes.

With political will and determination, the government of Pakistan should make laws against the torture and unjust killing of women. They should also make it clear that everyone is equal before law, irrespective of gender, age, social status, and racial or ethnic origin. The government should review existing laws, including the *Hudood* law and the *qisas* and *diyat* law. It is not possible for female-raped victim to provide four male witnesses in court in order to prove that rape has been committed. The government can make a law, establishing a team of medical doctors who will be honest and good in character, including two male doctors and two female doctors, to check the raped victim and to testify whether or not the victim has been raped. This will be an adequate step towards the protection of women under Pakistani laws.

With mutual consultation of religious scholars, lawyers, lawmakers, and women rights activists, the problem of the Hudood law can be solved. What is needed are political will and determination, and the sincerity of religious scholars and women rights activists to conduct an open discussion among different sections of society.

Besides this, laws found to be discriminatory against women or to hamper legal redress should be removed or suitably amended, and the judicial system, which is unfair for women, should also be reformed. There should be courses, trainings, and workshops for all law enforcement officers and the judicial staff must be thoroughly familiarized with the laws protecting women. Again, for this

educational standard of country has to be increased immediately, because the police and law enforcement officers live in the same Pakistan in which millions of poor and illiterate people also live.

Simultaneously, women lawyers can also play a major role. In recent years, the number of women studying law is increasing. This is a good trend and will have significant effects on judicial system, because cases related to women problems can be handled by women lawyers in an atmosphere of trust, respect and protection.

Struggle for women rights will be less effective unless the judiciary is independent and give decision without gender bias approach. Similarly, it will be difficult for women to change the discriminatory laws unless parliament is sovereign and political parties are working adequately. Pakistan is a country, where democracy could not be flourished because of illiteracy, feudalism and corruption, etc. In order to change the public opinions and perceptions regarding women's rights and violence against women, it is essential for NGOs working for women's rights to have links to the grassroots of society. They will have to be partner with civil society, such as press clubs, the high court bar association and also with the politicians.

There is an urgent need to develop an effective institutional response towards the cases of violence in the country. In this regard a concrete suggestion to the government will be to establish a dedicated committee consisting of members who would be well informed to the issues of violence against women.

This committee should have an attached court, police, laboratory with facility of DNA testing, legal experts and shelter (Bari, 2005).

The government of Pakistan will have to take some serious steps to control the violence caused by the practice of dowry system. In this regard, new legislation should be made and enforced strictly so that a husband that demands a dowry exceeding a certain amount will face the legal punishment. As it is a deep-seated practice in society, it will take long time if government decides to end this dowry practice all at once. However, governments can make laws to determine a certain amount for dowry, acceptable and affordable for everyone. For this purpose, government of Pakistan should reinforce the 1976 law of restricting the expenses for the dowry to 50,000 rupees in marriages (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2003). This law was passed in 1976 by National assembly but it was never implemented. Implementation of this law would be a sincere attempt to provide relief to millions of poor women and would discourage the culture of displaying wealth by rich people. Gradually, governmental machinery can be used to change the thoughts and behaviours of people towards dowry system.

Similarly, the government of Pakistan should try to maintain its writ over all of Pakistan. People who commit honour killings should be punished because killing a woman, just as any other human being, is in no way justifiable religiously nor according to UN declarations on human rights.

In Pakistan, there is no adequate arrangement for the protection of women who are burnt, tortured and threatened to death. There are few care centres

where these women can take refuge. A state-run women care center in every district or city is an urgent need. The government of Pakistan should establish more institutions and care centres that can provide psychological and physical protection to these women.

The immediate step which must be taken by the government is this that the National Commission on the Status of Women should be made responsible to deal with the issue of violence against women. This commission should be given sufficient legal and financial power. Special courts, a special police force and a medical laboratory should be attached with the commission. The commission should also be given responsibility to monitor shelters and crises centers.

The commission should be mobile. They should go from village to village, town to town to register cases of violence against women on the spot through its special police force. The special courts of the commission should not take more than six months to decide these cases. Speedy justice and all kinds of social, economic, legal and counseling support to the survivor of violence given by the commission will surely prevent such violence. Here again, it is important that people who will work in this commission should not be corrupt and must be trained in gender studies.

4.3: Media

In the contemporary world, the importance of media cannot be denied. If government of Pakistan really aims to create an atmosphere of awareness towards women's rights, media can be used as an influential and effective tool. The government can use media in this regard. Unfortunately, in the media, women are given coverage as actresses, dancing in films, singing and existing as something pleasurable for men. The media shows women as an object for

advertisements. This should be ended as, otherwise, traditional people will think that women's rights signify liberties like the one of models wearing skimpy dresses and having vulgar looks. Pakistani women do not want such liberty. Therefore, the media should be focused on the issues concerning true women's rights and solutions to the problems at hand. The government can use the media to undertake a legal literacy campaign, and to inform men and women of their legal rights. For example, in rural areas, most people listen to the radio; so, the radio can be an influential tool to inform people about the importance of women's rights. Seminars, talks, discussions, and debates of women's rights activists should be given coverage in media.

Press can be an important tool for government as well as for women's rights activists. Half the battle for women's rights is being won or lost in the media. Electronic media today is also extremely important, not only in Pakistan but all over the world. For example, the Internet is one of the new technologies people are using. People who believe in the struggle for women or human rights through nonviolent means have to be attached with the press.

The use of culture can also be an effective way of promoting the rights of women. Changing the mindset is a very difficult endeavour. In Pakistan, it is unfortunate that there is no cinema or good theatre culture because of religious opposition and vulgar artists. For example, in Islamabad, which is capital of Pakistan, there is no cinema or theater. Dramas, films and theatre can be used as an influential tool in order to change the mindset of people to large extent. Media in the modern age is an effective instrument in order to change the minds of people. It is a good trend that despite resistance from religious and tribal factors, the media is highlighting the practice of honour killings. Talk shows,

seminars, documentaries and dramas on television often describe the stories of victims of honour killings. This is why honour killings occur only rarely in modern urban areas, where people are educated and have access to modern sources of information.

Another tool that women's rights organizations and government have not used in Pakistan so far is influencing young people in educational institutions. In universities, colleges, these NGOs can play important role by formulating different kinds of activities such as seminars, rallies, walks and talk shows.

Similarly, there is a need to engage more professional women, for example, in the airline industry, the nursing profession, in education department and women in the film industry. These are all very important spokespeople for the cause of women's rights. Within their circles, they can fight for their rights or at least can make their voices loud for demanding equality and security.

4.4: Role of religious leaders

The role of religious leaders is also important because they have easy access to grass-roots of society. In order to change the conservative approach of religious leaders, there should be workshops' training programmes, and seminars, in which religious scholars should be invited to discuss the problems related to women's rights.

For example, the dowry system is a concerning practice resulting in direct violence in form of bride burning, acid throwing, beatings. In this case, it is the moral and religious obligation of Islamic scholars to give a religious declaration (fatwa) that the practice of dowry is completely against the true spirit of Islam,

and that anyone who practices it will be committing a sinful act. This declaration (fatwa) may contribute significantly towards a change in people's overall perception of the dowry system. Unfortunately, religious scholars have not yet considered this as a serious issue, because most of these religious scholars are male, and they live in the same gender blind and oppressive society of Pakistan. Religious scholars and clerics can play a major role if they really believe the practice of dowry is a serious social problem. As it is completely an anti-Islamic practice, there should be no shame or guilt in speaking against this practice. What is needed in this regard is the willingness and sincerity of people, particularly religious scholars and clerics.

Mosques are both social and religious institutions, where Muslims gather five times a day to offer prayers. These clerics and religious scholars can guide people towards seeing the implications of the practice of the dowry system in society. They already have an organized and well-established venue in the form of mosques and religious schools (*madrassas*). Therefore, these religious leaders can launch an effective campaign against the dowry practice, because people are mostly uneducated, and they are highly influenced by religion. These religious clerics can change the traditional mindset of people, better than women's rights organizations because millions of people are adherents of their ideology. People in Pakistan generally go to mosques five times in a day. At this platform, religious leaders can highlight the human rights of women, given by Islam. This will help them to make their narrow-minded image better in the minds of people as well.

It should be kept in mind that this paper is discussing the rights of women in the context of Pakistani society. Dancing in films, in discos, bars and clubs,

wearing shorter dresses, smoking, drinking, and running in marathons, are not demands made by women. Rather, these activities are used against women's rights. Whenever people see the poster of any movie, they see a half-naked actress, dancing with a man. This kind of freedom and equality do not come in the circle of women's rights. And women do not demand this kind of freedom and rights. Women's rights in Pakistan are mainly related with the right to hold public office as men have, right to work, right to fair wages, right to own property, right to education, right to move independently and rights of religion. Most importantly, women want themselves to be considered human beings as men are. Women demand equal rights such that men enjoy in society. In media, government and women themselves should try to create a positive image of a modern, independent woman.

Poverty, trade and economic issues are very much related to women's rights. Because of poverty and economic dependence on men, women are vulnerable to violence and discrimination. Tackling these issues also helps to tackle women's rights issues. And, tackling gender-based issues will help to tackle poverty-related issues. If half of the population is not working and dependent on the other half, how can Pakistan be a developed country?

Violence against women requires overall restructuring of society in order to be controlled in Pakistan. Unless society is reformed on the basis of Islamic teachings with true spirit and understanding, acknowledging modern changes in the world, it will remain a dream to decrease the incidence of violence against women. Pakistan was established in the name of Islam and people gave countless sacrifices for this noble purpose. It is unfortunate to say that the image

of an "Islamic" country becomes shady when people all over the world read the news of incidents of honour killings or bride burning in Pakistan.

It should be remembered that the Pakistani society has been so entrenched by the dowry practice and the connection of women with the honour of men that it may take a long time to eradicate these threats completely. These suggestions related to religious awareness and the establishments of governmental and non-governmental trusts are some immediate steps that may provide relief to women affected by these threats. Changing perceptions of people towards violence against women is a task that can be done simultaneously. With the help of education, overall economic prosperity and general awareness among people may turn the scenario in near future.

4.5: International community

International organizations such as the UN, Amnesty international, Human Rights Watch, the Red Cross, and the European Union should take serious notice of occurrences of honour killings in Pakistan. They should pressure the government of Pakistan internationally to end the system of tribal councils, which is a parallel system of law in rural Pakistan. It is a positive development that in recent years these international organizations are taking interest in the abuse of women's human rights, especially in the name of honour. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty international reports disclose hidden miseries of women in Pakistan and call for worldwide attention.

Pakistan has signed UN Declaration at Vienna, which calls to recognize the elimination of violence against women in public and private life (Marjorie,

2001). The international community and the UN, who are very active in fighting against terrorists throughout the world, should also pay attention to the terrorism against women in Pakistan, a country which is their closest ally in the war against terrorism. Otherwise, it will expose the double standards of an international community who on one hand criticises other countries for violations of human rights, and the other hand support a military dictatorship with a bad record on human rights in Pakistan.

While the international community may have its influence, it is not only its role and responsibility to look after Pakistani women. This is an important responsibility of the dominant group in Pakistan, the men. If Pakistani men would start talking about women's rights violations and human rights protection, change might start. It would be extremely helpful if progressive men started writing about these issues related with violence against women, viewing them as violations of human rights and give public talks about them also in rural areas. Because change starts from within the home.

Conclusion

Violence against women is a concern of noticeably significant importance at societal and family levels. Domestic or intra-family violence perpetrated by both male and female family members and relatives deserves special attention. Domestic violence is a serious threat to women's basic human rights and physical and psychological well-being. Violence against women is a complex problem which requires coordinated solutions, involving the participation of both the state and civil society. There is a strong and urgent need for mobilizing and adequately utilizing all allied sectors of society for formulating policy and

programmes. These involve the development of community networks in order to provide care and support to people who are victims of violence. These also involve the promotion of non-violent relations in public and private lives of men and women.

Regressive social practices, entrenched deeply in tribal and feudal customs and traditions, coupled with an obscurantist interpretation of religious leaders, are the main hurdles in the way of women, demanding their rights. Changing social attitudes towards women in Pakistani society requires sustained legal and social efforts.

Pakistan cannot become a moderate, progressive and a prosperous Muslim country without strengthening civil society. This requires first and foremost giving men and women equal access to opportunities in life, with particular emphasis on the protection of the rights, safety and well-being of women. If half of the population of Pakistan is spending life marked by strong feelings of fear and insecurity, directly or indirectly, how can Pakistan stand among the prosperous countries of the world? How Pakistan, which was created on the name of Islam, can be a role model for Islamic countries as well.

Only through the education of women and by making them leaders and equal participants in decision-making and in deciding their own future, that Pakistan will ever be free itself from the bonds of illiteracy, inequality and poverty. International declarations and agreements may play an important role to pressure the government of Pakistan to make adequate laws or policies in order to control the violence against women but the ultimate solution lies in the realization of gender equality with men. And both women and men are actors for achieving gender equality. Change can come and must come from both men and women.

To work for a society free from gender based violence is not be possible if Pakistani people do not take into account or address the role of women. Women not only are mothers, daughters, sisters and wives but they are human beings as well. They should not be treated as objects whose existence is defined by their relationship to men. Rather, they should be treated as entities in their own right as human beings having the right to live, work, contribute, earn. Everyone should acknowledge this role or right in Pakistani society from a high official to a common man.

The reality is this that women are as capable as men in any task not involving excessive physical activity. Unless the men of Pakistan do not react against the patriarchal patterns of society, social conditions will remain problematic and further promoting violence against women. Gender inequality between men and women is a product of society's patriarchal attitude and has nothing to do with knowing or thinking powers of women. Violence against women sustains its momentum because of gender inequality.

Illiteracy, ignorance and poverty are very much related with violence against women. Handling one factor will obviously affect other factors. If government of Pakistan seriously and sincerely wants to do something positive towards the betterment of country's record about violence against women, it will have to address concerning issues as well. And unless women do not stand equal to men, side by side in every aspect of society, Pakistan will remain be a country in which women will be living like second class citizens.

It is not bad to be backward in material progress but it is bad to be backward in thoughts. At least, people of Pakistan should not be mentally backward and narrow-minded. If people of Pakistan try to remove this social illness, things may start to change.

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