

**WOMEN OF
PAKISTAN:
STRUGGLING
AGAINST
VIOLENCE**

Diary 2002

**STOP
KILLING**
in the name of
HONOUR

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A Research, Resources &
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Another year, another theme! This year the Uks annual desk diary focuses on Violence against Women, an issue that we feel needs to be exposed and documented more carefully as an important step towards gender equality. This approach will also help increase public awareness of this crucial, but often neglected, issue.

Uks diary examines the issue of violence against women through coverage. It was a very difficult task to select unbiased, non-sensational material on a topic that often receives irresponsible treatment by our press. But we did manage to find many examples when the press has actually been supportive to women who fell victim to acts of violence, especially domestic violence. During our research we also realized that although the press has continued to give some responsible coverage to issues of violence against women, in earlier years, it only covered domestic violence occasionally. The scenario began to change slowly with UN's declaration of Women Decade in 1975.

After the declaration, the world and to some extent the Pakistani media started to focus more on issues pertaining to women's development. Until then, violence was not included in the mainstream agenda. By 1985, when Nairobi's Forward Looking Strategies, were formulated, women around the globe had come to identify gender violence as one of the major obstacles to all three -- equality, peace and development -- of the goals towards women's development in the past decade.

In the 1980s--a time when women around the world were trying to highlight the problem of violence in order to help devise ways to improve women's status--women in Pakistan were facing overwhelming challenges. After three decades of fairly liberal and favourable governments, there was a comeback of state-sponsored Islamization in the form of discriminatory laws against women. The Hudood Ordinances [1979] and Law of Evidence [1981] pushed women against the wall. For the first time in Pakistan's history, women were liable to receive punishments of lashes and stoning to death. Jails slowly filled with women charged with adultery, even if they were the victims of rape. Violence against women increased. As a result of state-sponsored discrimination, and propagation of Chaddar and Chardewari policies, women were discouraged to enter the public sphere. Cases of harassment increased, including acid attacks on women in educational institutions, an attempt to make women retreat to

the safety of the four walls of their homes. This diary, with its reproduction of this passion, will give you a glimpse of that groundbreaking era.

With the restoration of democracy in 1988, and international pressure on subsequent governments, the issue of violence against women has made it in almost all official and non-official Pakistani policy documents. It now stands fourth out of the twelve key areas for women's development, identified by the government.

This year's diary recognizes the fact that women of Pakistan have come a long way since the dark days of the 1980s. Though still victims of violence in our society, they are also familiar with various faces of violence and are prepared to raise their voices against the acts and the perpetrators. This has not been easy. Religious, traditional and cultural backlash are the biggest impediment for women to fight suppression. The press, by and large, has become increasingly responsive and responsible. Today, we find a number of publications, mostly from the English press, but some Urdu publications as well, leading to better understanding issues of violence against women. The ever-increasing incidents of Karo kari, Seha Kari or so-called "Honour Killing" are now reported regularly in the press. There is a growing awareness that all the cases of stove-burning are not accidents. Uks does acknowledge the role of the press in the shaping of public opinion on women's issues including violence, but would like to comment that the area that still lacks media sensitivity and sensitization is reporting on women-related crime stories, particularly sex-crimes.

Today, the women of Pakistan, hundreds of thousands of whom are victims of domestic or other violence, need more support than ever before. A lot can be achieved with the help of non-government organizations -- national and international-- that are actively working on the issue. However, the steps being taken by the present government for gender equity and equality, though commendable, are not enough. More commitment is required to curb violence against women at all levels. A more fearless approach is needed.

Can we begin with the repeal of the discriminatory laws?

Wishing you a Happy New Year,

Tasneem Ahmar

1947

The most gruesome accounts of marauding invaders in all mythologies and chronicles put together will not, I believe, compare with the blood-curdling horrors of this historic year. Tale after tale, each more hair-raising than the last, would take a whole lifetime to retell. Uprooted from Lahore, I had rehabilitated myself at Dehradun for a while, but later went to Delhi for work and a place to live in. On my return journey, I could not get a wink of sleep on the train. The pitch-black darkness of the night was like a sign of the times. So piercing were the sighs of the winds carried and echoed it seemed we were back in mourning over this Watershed of History. The trees loomed larger and larger like sentinels of sorrow. There were patches of stark aridity in between like the mounds of massive graves. The words of Waris Shah, "How'll the dead and departed meet again?" surged back and forth through my mind. I thought, a great poet like him alone could bewail the loss a Heer once had to bear. But who could lament the plight of millions of Heers today? I could think of no one greater than Waris Shah to chant my invocation to. In the moving train, my trembling fingers moved on to describe the pangs I went through-

*From the depths of your grave,
Waris Shah,
Add a new page to your saga of love
Once when a daughter of Punjab wept
Your pen unleashed a million cries,
A million daughters weep today, their eyes turned
To you, Waris Shah.*

The Revenue Stamp-An Autobiography, Amrita Pritam 1994

Editorials

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Of late, reports about crimes against women have been on the rise. It is not just the high incidence of such crimes, which is shocking, equally deplorable is the gruesome and perverse nature of the violence to which women are being subjected. For instance, the grisly Nawabpur drama of 1984 was re-enacted in a village in Bahawalpur district on wednesday when a mother and her daughter were stripped and dragged through the marketplace by some men as an act of revenge against the male members of the victims' family. Similar episodes have been reported from time to time from different villages in Punjab. Moreover, the number of rape cases-another serious crime against women-has risen phenomenally all over the country. According to the ministry of women's development nearly 1500 women in Pakistan are raped every year. Many believe this to be an under estimate. The number of women who are murdered on account of domestic/property/dowry disputes has not even been catalogued. What is more, the reports of violence against women generally do not take into account domestic violence and emotional, psychological and economic abuse which many men inflict on their wives. Under the law of the land these are not even cognizable offences.

The only thing positive to have emerged of late in this field is the growing awareness of the gravity of this problem. Thanks to women and human rights activists and the documents adopted at the international conferences on women, it is now being recognized generally that women have an equal claim to physical safety, psychological/emotional security and protection from all manner of abuses and torture. Moreover, they are not chattels of the men folk in their families to be wantonly attacked, abused and publicly disgraced to avenge the wrongs that may have been committed by their male relatives. Although the need for organized efforts to eliminate violence against women is now internationally recognized, not much has been done in Pakistan in this regard. The Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing Conference in 1995 calls on governments to enact or reinforce penal sanctions in national legislation to redress the wrongs done to women. It is a pity that our government has not yet taken any tangible step to provide greater protection to women.

The first measure that needs to be taken is in the field of lawmaking. It has been recommended by different bodies, such as the Commission of Inquiry for Women headed by Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid and the National Plan of Action prepared by the ministry of women's development, that laws should be drawn up defining violence against women and prescribing punishment for their violation. There is also a need to do away with discriminatory laws that provide scope for sexual abuse and harassment of women by the police and are a blatant violation of the fundamental rights of women. The importance of revising and updating many of the relevant laws cannot be over-emphasized. True, this society does not have an enviable record of effective implementation of laws. But it is equally plain that in the area of violence against women the problem is more inadequacy of the existing laws. Implementation must of course continue to be insisted upon as gaps and deficiencies in legislation are filled.

At the same time, there is need to create greater awareness among the people of the various forms of violence which the Inquiry Commission of Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid listed as domestic violence: stove burning, sexual harassment, custodial violence, child sexual abuse, trafficking in women, forced sterilization, marital rape and harmful customs. The audio-visual and print media should be used effectively to disseminate information about this aspect of the matter. It is also important that women are made aware of their own rights and the method of redressing the wrongs that are committed against them. Although NGOs and CBOs have important role to play in this regard, the government's own responsibility is of key importance. Not only must it unequivocally condemn violence against women in all forms, it must also resist pressures to adopt policies that put a premium in religious bigotry and obscurantism. Needless to point out, if that happens, violence against women will increase, as seems to be happening already. The government must have the courage to condemn acts of violence against women and should ensure that no reported incident of this kind goes uninvestigated and no culprit unpunished. Those perpetrating any crime against women should receive appropriate, and in case of heinous offence, even deterrent punishment.

Dawn, 16 October 1998

WOMEN IN DANGER

A tragic drama of death was played out in the Lahore law office of Ms. Asma Jehangir, the renowned human rights activist. Armed relatives of a young woman seeking divorce went past a police guard posted outside the office and shot her dead. Ms. Jehangir was not in the office, and a bullet aimed at her sister, Hina, fortunately missed. In a belated reaction, the police guard killed the assailant. His accomplices escaped, as usual, taking with them a female lawyer as hostage.

The tragic incident reflects a number of ills afflicting our society. Primarily it is yet another demonstration of the law and order crisis and the breakdown of state authority. More specifically, it exposes again the continuing failure of the police to preempt and prevent crime. The luckless woman had taken refuge in Dastak, and her relatives were exerting pressure on her not to press ahead with the divorce proceedings. Her life was known to be in danger. Yet, when the time came, the police could not save her.

Even after the incident, the police guard could not prevent the accomplices from escaping. In fact, according to new reports it was the private security agency, which responded to the emergency call and gave chase, though unsuccessfully. The police, as usual, arrived when there were only corpses to be carted and paper work to be done.

The incident also highlights the helplessness of women who suffer domestic abuse and, driven to desperation, finally seek shelter under the law. While social pressures and the lengthy legal procedure are tremendous deterrents against such "adventurism," tragedies like the present one further discourage oppressed women from invoking rights guaranteed to them not only by the law of the land but also by the injunctions of Islam.

Finally, the incident shows how potentially vulnerable Ms. Asma Jehangir is to any misguided zealot. The hazardous nature of her profession and the preferred area of interest make her an irritant for some obscurantist groups. Threats are known to have been made against her person. Hence the police guard outside her office. Yet, as elsewhere, when the crunch came the so-called security arrangements were found woefully wanting.

Coming in the wake of yet another "killing" of the notorious outlaw Riaz Basra, this unfortunate incident highlights how utterly unprofessional and unequal to the daunting challenge the security agency are. It should also remind the rulers that their daily dose of vows to crush lawlessness with the proverbial-but invisible- iron hand would not solve the problems at hand. As always, the inescapable conclusion is that the justice system needs drastic reforms, a brick by brick rebuilding. Everyday brings new reminders that the government's penchant for short cuts has not delivered, and will not deliver. But there are still no signs of waking up.

The News, 8 April 1999



MOVE AGAINST HONOUR KILLING

The government's decision to treat honour killings as a crime and bring the offenders to justice is a long overdue step considering the fact that there has been an alarming increase in the number and frequency of this heinous crime in the past few years. Only last week, family members of a woman from the tribal areas arrived in Karachi to kill the man she had married against the wishes of her family and take her back along with her infant child, who were then buried alive in their village. As in such cases, the reason was family honour or tribal tradition or perhaps both. No one involved in these cold-blooded murders has been arrested so far. This kind of killing is a crying national shame – one that repudiates our claim to being wedded to civilized norms and values.

Now that a decision has been taken to move against this cruel and primitive practice, the best course to follow is to adopt a two-track approach, requiring, on one hand, an awareness campaign to be launched highlighting the sheer inhumanity of the practice of honour killing or 'karo-kari' on suspicion of infidelity, and, on the other hand, bring all perpetrators of such killings to justice. All efforts should be made to arrest and give exemplary punishment to the offenders under the law of the land. The authorities still have to act in the case of Samia Sarwar, who was killed by a hired assassin in Lahore last year on the instructions of her parents for demanding a divorce and thereby supposedly offending against their notions of family honour.

The present apathy towards the savage practice of honour killing and karo-kari is expected to change with the set of social reforms the government plans to introduce within this month. However, success can be achieved only if resolute steps are taken to activate the enforcement machinery and to motivate the people to report all cases of killing in the name of honour or tribal tradition. At present, such incidents are usually ignored by government officials, especially in rural or tribal areas, where some culprits are either powerful and well connected or simply manage to bribe their way out of trouble. The real test of the government's intent to root out the savage practice would thus lie in eliminating all possible escape routes for the offenders.

The Dawn, 14 March 2000

HONOUR KILLINGS

The local as well as the national dailies are highlighting the dreadful and shocking stories of killing of women. These killings are by hanging, burning and other cutthroat methods in a highly barbarous manner. Such crimes are often committed by their relatives i.e. husbands, fathers and brothers. The female population of our country is living under constant threat of their lives from their male counterparts. The women are not safe even in their homes while their male family members are on job. They remain in constant fear for their lives or other assaults from the trespassers or intruders.

In this land of the pure, the women are killed on various pretexts, sometimes in karo-kari, the outdated tradition of tribal feuds or on the basis of baseless allegations of adultery, etc. The killers often escape from the clutches of the law. This state of affairs is quite dangerous as the relatives of the victim hold this in high esteem for their family prestige.

This matter should be taken up on merit when the killer is apprehended, as on various occasions the cases were completed by police as were presented by the public. Sometimes a family estate or money becomes the cause of killing, which is always covered with other allegations.

It has also been observed that the woman of tribal areas or having a feudal background cannot take a chance to marry the man of her own choice. Widows or divorcees of those families are not spared and are hacked down for their likes or dislikes. This unjust attitude towards the weaker sex does not end here, but the victims are chased to the sanctuaries also.

It is high time for the elements of the society such as writers, intellectuals and religious scholars to raise the voice against these killings whether for family honour or on other pretexts. Injustice and barbarism against the womenfolk is quite contrary to the rights that have been granted by our religion.

The Frontier Post, 9 July, 2000

WOMEN'S DAY

As elsewhere in the world, this year's International Women's Day, theme 'Women and Peace' has been observed in Pakistan as well, marked by countrywide rallies, meetings, lectures and symposia at which the participants highlighted the growing level of violence and discrimination against women. The statistical data on the range and level of discrimination is simply mind-boggling. It has been calculated that two-thirds of around half a billion people living in poverty in South Asia are women. Areas where women have traditionally encountered discrimination include education, healthcare and legal rights. Pakistan ranks 116th in the world in adult literacy, but literacy among women is lower even than that, amounting to 46 per cent of that among men. Women are also being denied proper healthcare, adequate nutrition and equality of opportunity. On an average, the per capita share of GDP among women is less than one-third that of men. Although the present government has fixed a 20 per cent job quota for women in all government departments, the initiative will take a long time in making an impact on the overall female employment scene. Another area of concern is the growing frequency and level of domestic violence to which women have come to be routinely subjected. Unlike the rest of the world, both developed and developing, where women on an average enjoy a greater life expectancy, that of women in Pakistan is shorter than that of men. The stresses of family life to which women are subjected have spawned a host of physical and mental health problems. For instance, a recent study shows that married women tend to suffer from depression more often than married men or unmarried women, which again bucks the global average. Further, domestic violence has taken its toll. It is believed by mental health experts that exploitation and harassment of women lead to low self-esteem and depression, with adverse impact on the family as a unit. Social customs and laws continue to discriminate against women.

While observing such days raises the general level of awareness of the problems encountered by women, they do not make a tangible impact on the actual situation on the ground. Such tokenism is not going to make the problem (or rather myriad problems) go away. There is a need for a multi-pronged strategy to address each facet of the issues involved. Instead of pursuing a

piecemeal approach, the government should adopt an integrated strategy to tackle the problem in its entirety.

The Nation, 10 March, 2001

EDITORIAL

Between gunfire and continued acts of violence against women, the nation celebrates 'Women's Day'. And how do we go about celebrating the day . . . we hold rallies, conferences and hope that change would follow suit. Amid the dozens of causes pushed to centre-stage, the Human Rights issue stood out the most, followed by representative seats for women in the forthcoming local bodies elections.

As always, promises were made, proposals forwarded, with ample media coverage playing its respective role, slowly diverting its focus as the day came to an end. Nothing new, to say the least, for the same repeats itself year after year, as the muffled voice of a woman, rises and ebbs, with the winds of change breezing by, to a new horizon, oblivious of the plight of children in Lyari, of the coastal women folk in Rehri, young abducted girls in Punjab, amongst those millions out there hoping that change would someday come their way.

It is wished that the focus of attention moves further into the small villages, with health and education being prime concern. Let there be doctors and teachers sent to various tehsils for a one-month period in connection with 'Women's Day'. Let there be a strict check on men who sloth, while the household women toil and earn, supporting both husband and children. Let's begin on a smaller note, covering ground as we move on . . . for we can all make a difference in our own little way. Let's not wait another year.

Women's Own, March 1998

TIME TO KEEP PROMISES

Despite the assurances that President Musharraf gave to the women of this country, the fact is, there has been little relief in the crimes against women before and after his speeches, condemning the same. Brutal acts of violence against helpless women continue to take place all too often, with a brazen impunity, unabated, and undeterred.

In the wake of these promises made to women, there's yet to be seen any positive step that curtails this cycle of vicious violence. Consider this: Between May and June 2001, in the space of less than a month, some of the reported acts of violence- the unreported far outnumber these-against women include:

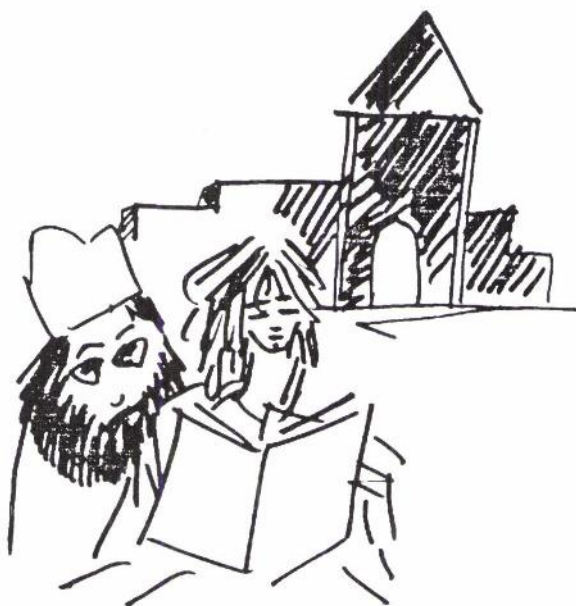
- A man cuts off his wife's nose with a sharp knife on the suspicion of 'dishonour.' He attempts to kill her but the neighbours intervene to save her life.
- A man, along with five companions, slashes the throat of his wife, her forty-year-old sister and her mother on suspicion of adultery.
- A newly wed woman is poisoned to death by her husband and mother-in-law over a dowry issue.
- Two women are gunned down on allegations of karo-kari.
- A young woman is raped, strangled and burnt alive.
- A young woman, suspected of adultery, is first shot in both legs by her husband; while he and his uncle dig her grave, her family is made to stand by as she cries out in pain. Her sister married into the same family, is standing nearby but is not even allowed to give her a glass of water. As the victim's baby starts wailing, the woman drags herself to feed and soothe the baby-for almost 45 minutes, still in pain herself. Her husband snatches the child away once the grave is ready, pumps more bullets in her and pushes her in. Suspicion:adultery.

Such ruthless acts of murder and mutilation against women reflect our cultural attitudes and psyche that have promoted and continue to encourage abuse. To date, records for those arrested for committing such crimes against women have been dismally low and even when there has been some action, there has been a high rate of acquittal, owing to faulty investigation, religious and political clout and 'insufficient evidence.'

So, what would it take to convince any Pakistani woman that the President means more than mere rhetoric? To begin with, ensure that the culprits are arrested, stringent laws are framed and promulgated to try the murderers, and declare such acts as murder, punishable with as harsh a law as any murder is.

Next month, we celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day- what better time to make good promises than this...

SHE, July 2001



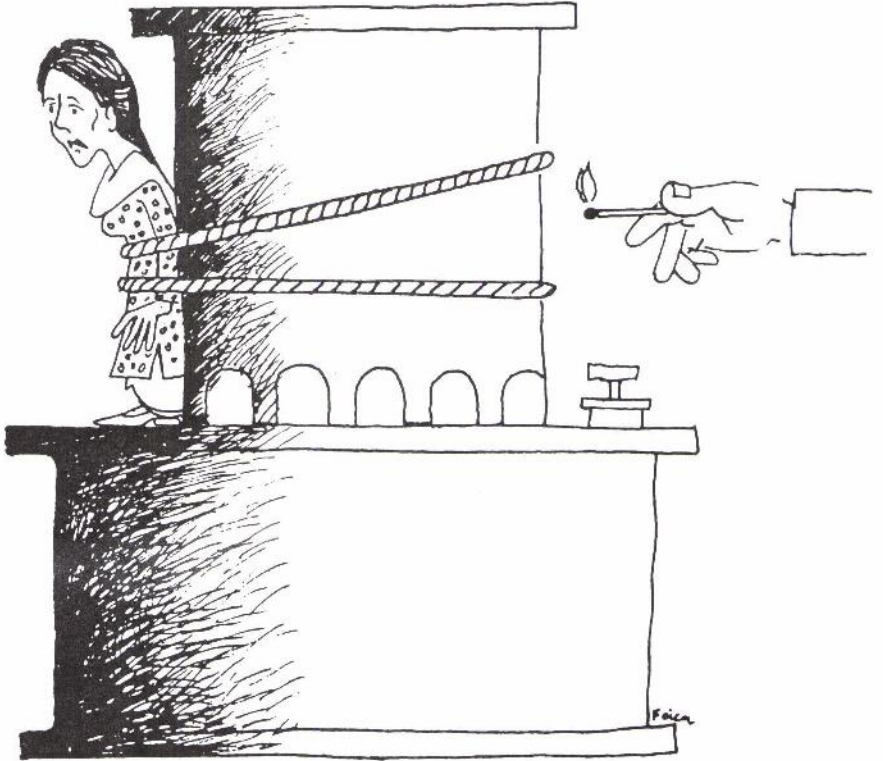
خواتین کے ساتھ ظلم و زیادتی کے بڑھتے ہوئے واقعات

گزشتہ دنوں کورکمانڈر اور اولپنڈی لیفٹینینٹ جنرل جمشید گلزار کیانی نے شوہر کے ہاتھوں جلائی جانے والی خاتون کی عیادت کے دوران سختی سے ہدایت کی تھی کہ آئینہ اگر آتشزدگی کا نشانہ بننے والی کوئی بھی خاتون ہسپتال لائی جائے تو متعلقہ ڈسٹرک مجسٹریٹ از خود تمام واقعات کی انکوائری کرے اور جلنے والی خاتون کا بیان ریکارڈ کیا جائے لیکن اس کے بعد راولپنڈی اور اسلام آباد کے ہسپتالوں میں آتشزدگی کا نشانہ بننے والی ایک درجن سے زائد خواتین ہلاک ہو چکی ہیں اور انتظامیہ کے رویے میں کوئی خاطر خواہ تبدیلی نہیں آئی جبکہ ان دنوں فتح جنگ سے تعلق رکھنے والی خاتون شاہ جہاں زندگی اور موت کی کشمکش میں مبتلا ہے اور انتظامیہ نے کورکمانڈر کے احکامات کی دھجیاں بکھیرتے ہوئے اس کا بیان تک نہ ریکارڈ کیا۔ اسی طرح نامعلوم افراد کے ہاتھوں گینگ ریپ کا نشانہ بننے کے بعد جلا کے آئی نائن اسلام آباد کی کچی آبادی سے ملحقہ سڑک پر پھینکی جانے والی لڑکی کو اسلام آباد پولیس کی ملی بھگت سے رات کے اندھیرے میں پھر ہسپتال سے غائب کر دیا گیا۔ ایک اور لرزہ خیز واردات میں پاکستان کمپیوٹر بیورو کے پروگرام کی اہلیہ شہناز بی بی کو گلے میں پھندا ڈال کر قتل کر دیا گیا اور اسکی لاش ہسپتال لے جانے پر ورنٹا نے پوسٹ مارٹم نہ کرانے کا این اوسی حاصل کر لیا لیکن پروگریسو ویمن ایسوسی ایشن کی سرپرست شہناز بخاری کے احتجاج پر انتظامیہ نے پوسٹ مارٹم کا حکم دے دیا۔ ادھر ضلع جھنگ کے علاقے موچیوالہ میں غریب محنت کش سلطان احمد سیال کی جواں بیٹی کو رات ایک بجے اٹھا لیا گیا اور رات بھر گینگ ریپ کا نشانہ بنانے کے بعد بے ہوشی کی حالت میں جوار کے کھیتوں میں پھینک دیا گیا لیکن پولیس نے ملزم سجاد عرف بختا ور کہار اور اس کے تین ساتھیوں کے خلاف پرچہ درج نہیں کیا کیونکہ وہ بااثر ہونے کی بنا پر پہلے بھی ایسی وارداتیں کر چکا ہے۔ ظلم کا نشانہ بننے والی بیٹی کے باپ نے کہا کہ اگر اسے انصاف نہ ملا تو وہ اپنے پورے خاندان سمیت خود سوزی کر لے گا۔

ہم ملک بھر میں خواتین کے خلاف وحشیانہ تشدد کے خلاف بڑھتے ہوئے واقعات پر انتظامیہ اور پولیس کے بے حس پرمی رویے کی شدید مذمت کرتے ہوئے عسکری حکومت کو باور کرانا چاہتے ہیں کہ اگر وہ خواتین کے ساتھ زیادتی اور ان پر ہونے والے تشدد کے واقعات کی روک تھام کرنے میں سنجیدہ ہے تو اس ضمن میں محض انتظامیہ کو احکامات جاری کرنے سے کام نہیں چلے گا بلکہ خصوصی اختیارات کی حامل ٹاسک فورس تشکیل دینی پڑے گی

جو ایسے واقعات کا فوری طور پر نوٹس لے اور خواتین کو ظلم و زیادتی کا نشانہ بنانے والوں کے مقدمات کی سماعت کے لئے ہر ضلع میں خصوصی عدالتیں قائم کی جائیں جو صرف خواتین پر تشدد کے مقدمات کے لئے مخصوص کر دی جائیں۔ بصورت دیگر حوا کی بیٹیوں پر ڈھائے جانے والے مظالم کا سلسلہ کہیں رکتا دکھائی نہیں دیتا۔

اوصاف 13 ستمبر 2000



یہ انصاف نہیں نا انصافی ہے

گذشتہ چند مہینوں سے اخبارات میں دو مقدمات کا بڑا چرچا ہو رہا ہے۔

لاہور کے ایک بیرسٹر کی بیوی عدالت کے پاس یہ فریاد لے کر گئی کہ دونو جوانوں نے اس کی عزت پر ہاتھ ڈالا ہے۔ اس کے ساتھ انصاف کیا جائے۔

کراچی کی اے طالبہ انصاف کے دروازے پر یہ شکایت لے کر پہنچی کہ چند افراد نے اسے زبردستی اغوا کیا اور اسے زندگی کی سب سے قیمتی متاع سے محروم کر دیا۔

یہ مقدمات اب سماعت کے آخری مراحل میں ہیں اور ممکن ہے کہ جب تک یہ سطور آپ کی نظروں سے گزریں ان کا فیصلہ بھی سنا دیا جائے۔ مجھے ان مقدمات کے حسن و قبح سے کوئی بحث نہیں، ان خواتین کی شکایتیں صحیح ہیں یا غلط اور ان کے ساتھ واقعی ظلم ہوا ہے یا نہیں یہ فیصلہ کرنا عدالت کا کام ہے۔

لیکن ان مقدمات کا ایک پہلو ایسا ہے جس پر میں اظہار خیال کئے بغیر نہیں رہ سکتی اور مجھے یقین ہے کہ ایسا کرتے ہوئے میں اپنی پانچ کروڑ بہنوں کے جذبات کی ترجمانی کروں گی۔

میری اس گزارش کا تعلق صرف اس طریق کار سے ہے جو متعلقہ قانون میں اس قسم کے مقدمات کی سماعت کے لئے تجویز کیا گیا ہے۔ اس طریق کار میں بالآخر تو مظلوم عورت کے لئے دادری کے تمام امکانات موجود ہیں لیکن اس بات کا قطعاً لحاظ نہیں رکھا گیا ہے کہ حصول انصاف کی منزل آنے سے پہلے وہ عورت معاشرے کی نظروں میں کتنا بڑا متاثرین چکتی ہے۔

مندرجہ بالا دو مقدمات ہی کو لے لیجئے، وہ کون سا الزام تھا جو ان مدعی خواتین کے کردار کو مشکوک بنانے کے لئے صفائی کے وکیلوں کی طرف سے ان کی ذات پر نہ لگایا گیا ہو۔ اور ان نجی زندگی کے بارے میں وہ کون سے سوال تھے جو کمرہ عدالت میں بیسیسیوں افراد کی موجودگی میں ان سے نہ پوچھے گئے ہوں۔

اسی پر بس نہیں۔ اخبارات میں بھی معمول کی طرح ان مقدمات کی تفصیلی کاروائی سوال جواب کی شکل میں چھپتی رہی، اور لوگ انہیں بے رحم دلچسپی کے ساتھ پڑھتے رہے۔

اور یہ کوئی پہلی بار نہیں ہے۔ جب بھی کسی عورت کی عصمت لئے کوئی قصہ کسی عدالت میں پیش ہوتا ہے اس کی

سماعت اس انداز میں ہوتی ہے جیسے کسی بینک میں ڈکیتی کا مقدمہ پیش ہوا ہو۔

میرا خیال ہے کہ یہ سارا قصور اس قانون کا ہے جو ہمارے مغربی آقاؤں نے اس ملک میں نافذ کیا اور جس میں مشرق کی معاشرتی اور تہذیبی اقدار اور عورت کی حیثیت کو پیش نظر نہیں رکھا گیا۔ ہم آج بھی اسی قانون کو تھوڑی بہت تبدیلی کے ساتھ سینے سے لگائے ہوئے ہیں اور اس بات پر غور نہیں کرتے کہ ہماری یہ روش نہ صرف ایک ہزار قبا حوں کا سبب بن جاتی ہے بلکہ یہ کسی مظلوم عورت کے ساتھ شدید نا انصافی بھی ہے۔

کسی عورت کی عصمت اور عزت و آبرو انسانی زندگی کی مانند ہے۔ جس کا ایک دفعہ خون ہو جائے تو پھر اس کی تلافی کسی طور ممکن نہیں ہوتی۔ جان سے جانے والے تو پھر خوش نصیب ہوتے ہیں کہ وہ ہر بندھن سے آزاد ہو جاتے ہیں اور ان کے مقدمے کی بیروی کرنے والوں کے کردار پر کچھ بھی نہیں اچھالا جاتا نہ اس کی اتنی تشہیر ہوتی ہے، بلکہ لوگوں کی ہمدردیاں مقتول کے لواحقین کے ساتھ رہتی ہیں، لیکن جو عورت اپنی عصمت کے خون کی فریاد لے کر عدالت میں پہنچتی ہے اسے اسی دنیا میں رہنا ہوتا ہے، اور بے آبروئی کی تلافی کی کوشش میں مزید رسوائی کا خطرہ الگ لاحق رہتا ہے۔

اس سارے قماشے کی ذمہ داری میں سمجھتی ہوں کہ اس انتہائی ناقص قانون پر ہے جو ہم نے بظاہر مظلوموں کی حق رسی کے لئے اور ظالموں کو کیفر کردار تک پہنچانے کے لئے نافذ کیا ہے لیکن جو طریق کار کی وجہ سے اپنی افادیت کھو بیٹھا ہے۔ پھر یہ بات بھی قابل غور ہے کہ اگر کسی شخص پر غلط الزام لگایا جاتا ہے تو وہ بھی اپنی بریت ثابت کرنے سے پہلے نامناسب تشہیر کی وجہ سے عوام کی نظروں میں واقعی مجرم قرار پا جاتا ہے۔ انصاف کا مقصد دونوں صورتوں میں حاصل نہیں ہوتا۔

انصاف کا تقاضہ صرف اسی صورت میں پورا ہو سکتا ہے جب اس قسم کے مقدمات میں مدعی اور ملزم کی تشہیر کی بجائے صرف مجرم کی سزا کی تشہیر کی جائے اور فیصلے ماہ و سال کی بجائے چند دنوں میں کئے جائیں۔ اگر کوئی کرنا چاہے تو یہ ناممکن بات نہیں ہے۔

THE MACHARWALI SAGA

No one in the entire village of Macharwali, in Sheikhpura district, had a good word for Maqsooda, Kulsoom or their mother Iqbal Bibi. The alleged victims of rape were cursed, abused and called all sorts of names. The villagers, in particular, singled out their mother as a villain. Their grouse was two-fold. Firstly, Iqbal Bibi did not belong to the Jilah biradari. Secondly, she had agreed to marry off her daughters outside the clan. Hence, the family was bound to suffer, and the wise old Macharwals predicted dire consequences for them.

The entire Macharwali episode ended in three hours. Within this period, the victims alleged that their entire family was beaten; the girls were dragged to a house nearby, where they were abused, raped and then hurriedly returned through a taaki, which opened into their house. The victims and their parents recounted the facts as they took place on April 2.

Maqsooda and Kulsoom were to be married on April 4. On April 2, around 9.00 a.m., while the daughters were weaving carpets in their courtyard and Iqbal Bibi was kneading bread, Pir Ghulam Abbas knocked at the door. Pir Ghulam Abbas is (or rather, was) the common pir of Iqbal Bibi and the family of the offenders. He tried to convince Iqbal Bibi to reconsider her decision about her daughters' marriages, and insisted that Maqsooda be married immediately to Rang Ali, the widower. Meanwhile, Rang Ali's relatives, who were waiting outside the ahaata jumped over the wall into the house and opened the front door, allowing the entire clan of 20 men and women to enter. Iqbal Bibi called out to the girls to lock themselves inside, at which she was slapped. During the scuffle, Iqbal Bibi's undergarments were stripped. This brought the daughters out of hiding and the girls threw themselves on their mother, who, according to Maqsooda had fainted. The onslaught was then directed towards the girls. They were beaten and, finally, dragged outside to the haata of a nearby house. Maqsooda and Kulsoom alleged that they were raped and molested. Maqsooda alleges gang rape by three - Rang Ali, Rana and Sarfaraz. Anwar allegedly raped Kulsoom.

On gaining consciousness, Iqbal Bibi ran towards the house of Allah Yar Dariwa. The villagers, according to her, chased her like a hive of bees. Meanwhile, Iqbal Bibi's husband, Mohammad Ali, returned from Manawala where he had gone for business.

Mohammad Ali, Allah Yar and Iqbal Bibi proceeded towards Manawala Police Station, which is five miles away. They were intercepted by the opposing camp, which pleaded a compromise. Finally, it was settled that the girls be returned to their house. By the time the parents of the victims arrived home, Maqsooda and Kulsoom had been pushed back through the taaki. Their clothes were torn and their legs smeared. This, of course, is the version narrated by the family, the victims and Allah Yar.

On the other hand, the villagers swear to the innocence of the accused. They admit that a fight did take place, but they deny allegations of rape. Numerous stories of Maqsooda Bibi's promiscuity were recounted -- it was alleged that she had eloped several times. The entire village was up in arms against the victims.

Then why was Rang Ali so keen to marry Maqsooda if she was "foot-loose and fancy-free?" There seems to be a definite confusion in the value system of the Macharwals. Forced marriage, physical abuse of women and rape are all forgivable, but marriage outside the biradari is something that cannot be condoned.

The FIR was finally registered on April 6, after the victims threatened to approach the Superintendent of Police, Sheikhpura.

Macharwali is one of the many rape cases registered every day in Pakistan. No rape case is "black and white" in law. Each dispute has to be decided on the evidence available. The medical report and evidence of the victim alone is not sufficient to prove rape. Even the medical report should show signs of violence on the victim's body.

What happens to rape cases like the one in Macharwali? Witnesses are intimidated or not sympathetic. Hence, goodwill among one's kin is the only way to survival, even at the cost of one's future. The Macharwali incident is yet another story which will soon be forgotten. It is yet another saga for those will not follow the dotted line. There may be no official caste system in Pakistan, but it certainly exists in Macharwali.

Asma Jehangir: The Herald, May 1989 (Excerpts)

Women Forced to Dance Naked in the Bazaar

In the latter part of the twentieth century, in a supposedly civilized society in the midst of the uproar about the sanctity of "chadar" and "chardivari," women were stripped naked and forced to parade around in a busy bazaar in Nawabpur, a suburb of Multan. These women from a poor artisan family were displayed in this barbaric manner to the horror of shocked and stunned onlookers, paralyzed not only by the horrendous sight but also by the omnipotence of the feudal lords.

It is not only a brutal manifestation of how human dignity can be shamefully shredded to pieces, but more than that it showed and was meant to show, the absolute power that the feudal lords command over the people residing in their areas.

The matter was brought to light when the citizens of the village, anguished and infuriated by this event, cast aside all their considerations of personal safety and staged a protest in front of the newspaper offices and the SSP's office demanding exemplary punishments to culprits of this barbaric act.

Due to mounting public emotion, some 13 persons were arrested. But these people are from influential landlord families of the area. It now depends on every conscientious member of the society to see to it that these culprits do not use their influence to get away. It is the duty of every person who stands for the respect of human dignity to see that these persons are given such an exemplary and severe punishment that no feudal lord or any other person in authority can dare think of debasing human dignity and respect of women in this unpardonable manner.

The women who were paraded around in this manner were subjected to this humiliation for no fault of their own. As the story goes, 13 armed men led by Mohammed Iqbal and Sajjad Hussain, sons of the Chairman Union Council Nawabpur gave a severe beating to a poor carpenter Noor Akbar. They broke his arms and legs and even chopped the fingers off his hands. They suspected him of having illicit relations with a woman of their family. Later they entered the house of Noor Akbar, forced all of the women to come out of the houses and stripped them naked despite helpless shrieks of mercy. If they tried to conceal their bodies with their hands, they were hit with sticks. They were then made to dance in

the streets amid perverse laughter, vulgar remarks and "bhangra" of the maniacs.

Apparently the people of the area lived in such terror of these influential people that they did not dare intervene to stop this abominable act. Noor Akbar later died because of the fierce beating he got.

Since this incident took place near a big city like Multan, therefore, the people had the courage to go to the city and be noticed enough to persuade the authorities to take action. What about the hundreds of such incidents that take place in the villages and go unnoticed and unreported?

In the villages the local landlords are all-powerful, capable of doing whatever they like. One cannot even look at them squarely in the eye, let alone stop them from any act. They can do as they please with no one to challenge them as long as they continue to wield power over the destinies of people born in less fortunate circumstances than them and with lesser means.

In such a set-up, women, who already have an inferior position in this society, suffer under the double burden of being poor and of being a woman. As far as these feudal lords are concerned, the poor women are no more than objects of pleasure and they can go to any extent of having a woman of their choice from among the poor peasants' daughters, wives or sisters. They are kidnapped, abducted, raped without the culprits being questioned about anything. All protests of these women fall on deaf ears. They may scream and shout but who will hear them?

This is, of course, not the first incident - however barbaric - of its kind and it is not going to be the last. The reason for it is that the law enforcement agencies in our rural areas are subservient to the local landlords.

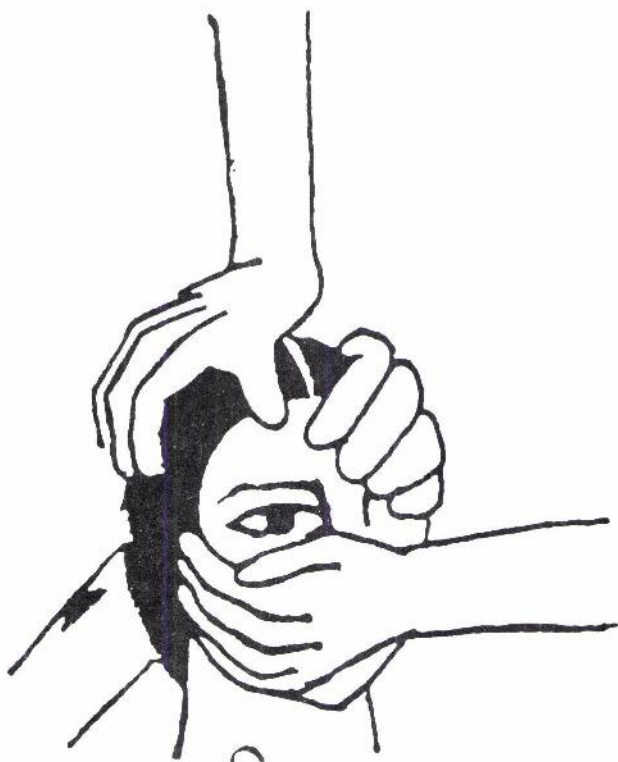
It is also equally true that unless the feudal system is done away with, such atrocious evils will not disappear. Unfortunately the feudal interest continues to dominate the establishment and the politics in the country.

The fight for human rights and dignity of women in this context has to be a fight for the total abolition of feudalism. The land reforms of the last three decades or more have not weakened the feudal structure in any real sense. This is the root cause of a number of our social ills, particularly the degradation of women in rural areas.

The Nawabpur incident should not be allowed to be forgotten. The women's organizations throughout the country should launch a joint movement to bring the culprits to book. Usually, even judicial inquiries produce no positive results. The reports of such inquiries seldom see the light of the day.

The least the women's' organizations in the country should do is to keep this issue alive until the culprits are tried in a court of law and punished. Moreover, first class legal assistance should also be provided to the women who suffered most barbaric treatment. Without first class legal aid there is every possibility of the culprits not getting the deserved punishment. The women's' organizations must keep the practical aspect of the case also in mind. The minimum requirement is first class legal aid and giving maximum exposure to the legal proceedings.

Najma Babar: Star, 8 March 1984



TWISTING THE TRUTH

The Aligarh Qasba incident engendered one totally baseless report in a Karachi Urdu daily, which sent shock waves running through the city. The item, carried on the front page by the daily *Amn*, gave a graphic account of how masked invaders had forced a woman to unrobe and dance in public, and sexually assaulted her, and then killed her. The story, neither identified the source, nor the victims of the incident, and to this day all investigations have failed to uncover a clue about its authenticity. But with emotions running high and rumours of the most horrifying atrocities circulating, the story was seized upon, unleashing a wave of sympathetic statements for the victim. In the frenzied atmosphere, no one bothered to question the authenticity of the story.

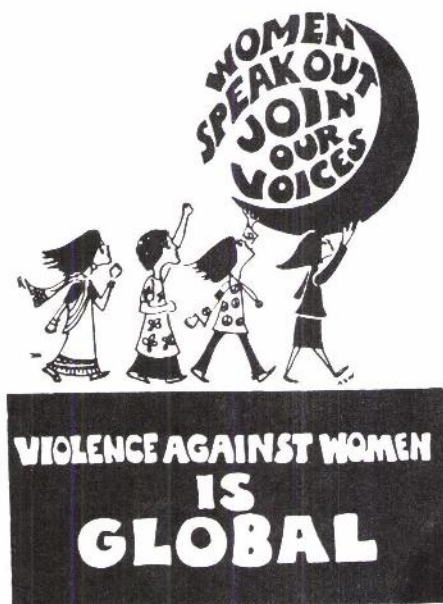
But this was certainly not the only example of a newspaper printing a purely fabricated story. The desire to play on the feelings of one ethnic section might well have helped increase circulation, but the end product was journalism that offered unchecked sensationalism at the expense of the truth.

Although many reports that either amounted to disinformation or even misinformation were published by some of the leading Urdu and Sindhi language newspapers, one report, related to the Karachi backlash and carried by a Sindhi language newspaper, surpassed all others in terms of irresponsible journalism. On October 3, 1988, *The Hilal-e- Pakistan* featured a double-column front-page report from its staff reporters, stating that the bodies of 11 Sindhi women had been brought to Jinnah hospital from the Korangi, Qasba Colony and Malir area. The report, quoting hospital sources, further stated that at least one of the women was first raped and then killed, another had her breasts chopped off, and most of the others were also sexually assaulted. The report also claimed that six of the bodies had been taken away by the relatives of the victims, but five were still lying in the hospital.

All investigations about the authenticity of this news report failed to reveal that any such incident ever took place. In fact, a probe conducted by some independent journalists did not even substantiate the report's claim that the bodies of the 11 Sindhi women were ever brought to Jinnah Hospital following the troubles. There was also no mention of any such event in the police or hospital reports.

The explanation provided by some of the newspaper's staff members was that the reporter's story was based on a press release issued by one of the doctors' associations. However, none of the doctors at the Jinnah Hospital could substantiate the information in the report, nor was anyone else able to provide any information about the identity of the women who had allegedly been killed. Again, it was clear that the report was completely baseless.

Zaffar Abbas: The Herald, January 1990 (Excerpts)



29
Monday

APRIL

30
Tuesday



IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE
POLITICAL AND MORAL
CONDITIONS OF A STATE, ASK
WHAT RANK ♀ HOLD IN IT.

Tribunal on “Crimes Against Women”

On the occasion of the forty-fifth International Human Rights Day on 10th December 1993, HRCP organized a Tribunal on ‘Crimes against Women’ at Al-Hamra Arts Council, Lahore. It was a public hearing programme in which the victims themselves narrated their miseries. The victims of rape, forced marriage, traditions, torture, burning, beating, domestic violence and Hudood Ordinance who gave their testimonies came from different provinces and belonged to different classes.

Ms. Gul Nisa:

A victim of Hudood laws recounted that she has her own house adjacent to a factory and its owner is one Sabir who wants to forcibly buy her house so that he can expand his factory premises. Although Sabir was her husband’s friend, he made allegations of adultery against her. She was arrested and jailed for about one year and during this period her daughter died and her remaining five children lived in a miserable condition. Her eldest son of 14 years worked as a domestic servant and a vendor to support her family. Ultimately she was acquitted but Sabir is still harassing and threatening the family to carry out his designs.

Ms. Ahmadi Begum:

She was also a victim of Hudood laws that are being misused against women. She recounted that she had some dispute with Maulvi Akbar (her neighbour). He complained against her at Nawan Kot Police Station with allegations that she is running a brothel. She was detained illegally and severely beaten up with batons ‘inside and outside.’ Assistant Commissioner of Lahore was appointed to inquire about the torture. He confirmed it. Ahmadi Begum was also acquitted after two years.

Shahida Parveen:

A mother of a young daughter who was burnt to death in a stove blast incident at her husband’s house recounted that she was unable to fulfil the demands of her daughter’s in-laws for a TV, refrigerator and a buffalo. Her daughter was sent back many times to blackmail and pressurize her. At last, one night she was burnt by a stove and was hospitalized. She did not survive. She gave her dying statement, which was recorded by the doctor concerned but to no avail. The police visited the hospital along with her in-

laws but by then she had died. The culprits were acquitted. She had two daughters; both of them are afraid to get married.

Zahida Bibi:

Zahida Bibi was engaged when she was only four. Her mother died after the decision of the engagement but even after her death Zahida honoured the decision. Her father however, who is a drug addict had other plans. He wanted to marry her off for Rs.40,000/- to someone else. Zahida, on her refusal to enter the marriage was raped by the same person on the abatement of her own father.

Parveen Martha:

Parveen was a victim who was burnt by her husband. She said that soon after marriage her husband started bringing other women to the house. When she tried to stop him, he threatened to turn her out of his house. He also accused her of loose character and having illicit relations with his brother-in-law. On February 24, 1984 while she was cooking, he threw kerosene oil on her and set her on fire. She received severe burn injuries. While in hospital she was threatened that if she reported the incident, she would be killed. She was eventually divorced.

Sardaran Begum:

She testified that she was married at the age of 12. She belonged to a very poor family. The marriage party was served with tea only. She started to weave baskets and mats to earn her livelihood and save some money, but her husband always grabbed the money to buy drugs, as he was an addict. Her husband also forced her into prostitution, which she resisted, but to no avail. She was raped many a time. Her husband and his family also beat her on many occasions. Now her case for divorce is pending before the court.

Riffat Sultana:

She was married at the age of 15 and her family was unable to give her a large dowry. Therefore, after some time, her husband started to ask for more dowry and began to mistreat and beat her. She lost her mental balance. She has two children who are living with their father and she is not allowed to meet them.

HRCP Newsletter Vol. V. # 1, January 1994

4

Saturday

MAY

5

Sunday



BEING A ♀ IS A TERRIBLY
DIFFICULT TASK SINCE
IT CONSISTS PRINCIPALLY
IN DEALING WITH MEN.

Hudood Ordinance

*In this tiny cell
I am both fettered and free
There's a tiny window
Almost as high as the ceiling
When the sun is about to set
It passes just above it
A handful of rays
Beam through the window
They form a kind of path
For me to tread on
So I can go home.
Even now my father brings me
Bangles and combs from the city
Apa leaves my share of 'rotis'
Covered in the bread basket*

*Then: she feeds it to the birds
Both my brothers still go
To the mosque to study
All God's commandments-
They hear and then repeat.
Ma, crazed by her grief for me,
Ma, spends her time picking pebbles*

*Or, she stays, talking to the birds
As they peck at the birdseed
She says when these birds
Understand what she's telling them
They will pick pebbles in their beaks
Grasp stones in their claws
And such a storm shall rage
That every judge and every pulpit
Will shatter into smithereens.*

*And He shall be my witness
Who rules the world
Who is just and gracious.*

Zehra Nigaah: Translated by Rukhsana Ahmad

سولہ سالہ حافظہ قرآن بچی کا قتل

میں غریب والدین کی بدقسمت بیٹی ہوں۔ آٹھویں جماعت کی طالبہ ہوں، والد گرامی کو یکسر ہے۔ وہ لاہور کے ایک ہسپتال میں زیر علاج ہیں۔ میں گھر میں اکیلی تھی۔ گاؤں کا ایک بد معاش میرے گھر آیا۔ میرے ساتھ زیادتی کرنے کی کوشش کی۔ سخت مزاحمت پر اس نے مجھ پر پناہ تشدد کیا، پھر مٹی کا تیل چھڑک کر آگ لگا دی، جس سے میرا سارا جسم جل گیا۔ مجھے شاہ کوٹ سے الائیڈ ہسپتال فیصل آباد منتقل کر دیا گیا۔ اب میں بستر مرگ پر ہوں۔ چاروں طرف موت کے سائے ہیں، مجھ جیسے غریبوں کا پاکستان میں کوئی پرسان حال نہیں۔ میری آواز کوئی نہیں سنتا۔ یوں معلوم ہوتا ہے آسمان بہت اوپر چلا گیا، زمین بہت نیچے چلی گئی ہے۔ اے خدایا! میں نے اپنی عزت نہیں دی، زندگی قربان کرنے کو ترجیح دی۔ میں سخت پریشان ہوں کہ میں موت سے بچ بھی گئی تو علاج کے بعد کس منہ سے گاؤں جاؤں گی۔ سخت شرمندہ اور خوف زدہ ہوں۔ گاؤں کے بااثر غنڈے ہمیں مار دیں گے۔ ہمیں تحفظ اور انصاف نہیں ملے گا، کیوں کہ یہ دونوں چیزیں طاقت اور دولت سے حاصل ہوتی ہیں، جو ہمارے پاس نہیں ہیں۔ والدہ غم میں پاگل ہو گئی ہیں، اس دنیا میں کوئی نہیں، جس سے مدد کی امید ہو۔ بستر مرگ پر دراز، میں عرش معلیٰ پر اللہ تعالیٰ سے رحم مانگتی ہوں۔ صدر پاکستان جنرل پرویز مشرف، عدلیہ سے انصاف کے بھیک مانگتی ہوں۔ اگر انہوں نے انصاف دینے کا ارادہ کیا بھی تو اس وقت میں اس دنیا میں نہ ہوں گی، کیوں کہ جسم اور سانس کا رشتہ تیزی سے کٹ رہا ہے۔ بدقسمت بیٹی

عاصمہ رفیق بٹ بنت محمد رفیق آرائیں، گاؤں کیٹری بھٹ، شاہ کوٹ ضلع شیخوپورہ، ایمر جنسیبی وارڈ برن یونٹ، الائیڈ ہسپتال، فیصل آباد 2001-02-17

عاصمہ شاہ کوٹ ضلع شیخوپورہ کے ایک دور افتادہ گاؤں کی رہنے والی تھی۔ یہ خط 10 مارچ 2001ء کو روزنامہ جنگ (کراچی) میں شائع ہوا۔ خط لکھنے کے تین دن بعد عاصمہ کا انتقال ہو گیا۔ پتہ نہیں ملزم گرفتار ہوا یا آزاد فضاؤں میں سانس لے رہا ہے۔

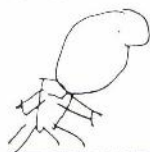
1
Saturday

JUNE

2
Sunday



Where is
my pistol?



Jaely

Preserving the Sanctity?

On May 16, 1996, Dr. Nayyar Haque became the first woman medico-legal officer (WMLO) in Pakistan's history to perform a post-mortem. She was asked to do autopsies on the bodies of two women who were killed in a family dispute. According to a Supreme Court directive issued on January 9, 1996, only women medico-legal officers are permitted to perform post-mortems on deceased women and only Muslim female paramedics are allowed to assist her. However, in this instance, due to the non-availability of qualified female paramedics, Dr Nayyar was assisted by two male paramedics.

A medico-legal officer (MLO), in lay terms, is a qualified doctor who has been certified by the health department to perform investigative medical examinations and autopsies on people who have been assaulted or have died due to unnatural causes in order to determine the cause of death or injury. In the case of a reported suicide or suspected murder, a post-mortem is a legal requirement of the state. The Supreme Court of Pakistan's directive issued in this regard states that 'Post-mortem of female dead bodies [is] to be conducted by lady doctors alone in the presence of female members of the paramedical staff.' Expounding further on this subject, the directive states: "In Islam, the dead persons and dead bodies deserve to be respected (...) It is directed that in the future, female dead bodies should be post-mortemed by lady doctors posted at every district and tehsil headquarters' hospitals. No male member should be present during the process. The skull, if required to be opened should be got opened by male/female members of the paramedical staff. The Secretary Health, Government of Pakistan, will ensure that directions given by the Supreme Court are strictly complied with throughout Pakistan." [Dates of hearing January 9 and 10, 1996]

In other words, the directive prohibits male MLOs from examining the body of a deceased female, and insists that female doctors exclusively handle female corpses. Even though a male may examine the cranium of a female corpse, under no circumstances can a male MLO examine a corpse, which is suspected to have been sexually assaulted.

Several questions and issues, however, still remain unanswered and unresolved. How will a handful of WMLOs and female paramedics in all of Pakistan ensure that the sanctity of a

woman's body is not violated? Secondly, will post-mortem proceedings become more thorough and effective if only WMLOs and female Muslim paramedics handle the bodies of deceased women? According to lawyer Hina Jilani, it often takes up to 10 days for a body to be examined. Consequently potential evidence, which may aid in the investigation of say a murder, corrodes as the body deteriorates. It is imperative that a body, which may have been physically or sexually assaulted, be examined immediately after recovery to secure any potential evidence, which may be necessary in a court of law. Says Ms Jilani, "After the police takes the body and puts it in a mortuary, the relatives of the deceased must often bribe the authorities at all stages in order to move the process along." The conditions in which the corpses are kept are far from adequate, and often relatives of the deceased have complained about the unprofessional attitude of the paramedics involved in the procedure.

With only three WMLOs in Karachi, the unavailability of certified female doctors may cause a delay in the post-mortem procedure. This could lead to further delay in the burial which may not only cause anguish to the families of the deceased, but the evidence required in the medical examination may become more difficult to extract as the body deteriorates, and this may pose an obstacle in the investigation. The absence of WMLOs in the interior, despite the Health Department's insistence that there is one posted in every one of the 700 basic health units in Sindh, indicates that the postings are no more than governmental diatribe. Hence, if a woman's corpse requires a medical examination, it will have to be transferred into the city where WMLOs are present, and this could mean a long haul. Bureaucracy and availability of WMLOs aside, the procedure itself may take weeks, thereby corroding or nullifying any evidence pointing towards the cause of death. Hence, a murderer or rapist may go scot-free due to a delay in the post-mortem proceedings.

Shazia Premjee: Newslite, July 1996 (Excerpts)

OUTRAGE!

Humaira Butt is a classic example of the fate of Pakistani women who dare to take a stand on the most important decision of their lives: the man they marry. The fact that this woman dared to question the authority of men (her father and brother) has sealed her fate forever.

The problem started the day she decided to question the patriarchal rules that governed her life. This was an open challenge to male superiority and they reacted in the crudest manner possible. They wanted to be as harsh as possible so that there would be no option for Humaira but to be cowed down and to abide by the decision thrust upon her. They also reacted in that ham handed way so that there would be no loss of face in their community.

Their barbaric reaction put paid to all their promises to protect and cherish their women for eternity. Care and respect were replaced overnight by coldness and cruelty. It degenerated to the extent that Humaira's blood relations no longer cared about exposing their daughter/sister, protecting her privacy (haya, sharm) or worrying about the agony of embarrassment unleashed upon her. They had to take revenge to save their own face. They had to be seen to be teaching her a lesson. They had to be seen to be demonstrating their manhood. The very same father, who considered his daughter a rehmat, began to look upon her as a zehmat as he accused her of adultery.

This is the point where the mullahs should have protested and cried out against this brutality. Why didn't they retaliate then? Where was their sense of responsibility towards their religion? Why weren't they doing anything for Humaira Butt who was being accused of something – choosing her own mate – which is not a crime in Islam? The men, once more, justified their actions by saying that what they were doing was for the good of us lesser mortals, women, and we were just too naïve to understand it.

It is horrifying, in this day and age, to find men insisting that women act like chattel. They expect the woman to completely forget that she has a mind, a spirit and yes, a body of her own. They think nothing of inflicting a man upon their daughters who may make them physically sick. They think nothing of the

revulsion a young woman may feel for a man whose children she might have to bear. They think like this because that is how they view their own "arrangements" that pass for marriages. Most men don't think twice about making a match to placate their parents they fully expect to express and "enjoy" themselves out of wedlock. Marriage for them is to have children. Nothing more.

Humaira Butt's case has exposed this very double standard. On the one hand a woman is the "zeenat" (adornment) of a family, to be respected and protected. But the minute she wants to be a little more than an adornment, when she wishes to express herself in the matter of marriage, she is condemned. The aggression unleashed against her is meant to be a warning for other women who may be planning to speak their minds or think about their basic rights. Humaira has won her battle but she will never forget the agony of that lonely, dark walk to freedom. She has paid a huge price for her freedom. I hope her husband Mahmud Butt, deserves her.

Zara Javaid, The Friday Times, 19-25 March 1999

SONG



*We are gentle, angry women
and we are singing, singing for our lives.*

*We are missile-stopping women
and we are singing, singing for our lives.*

*We are anti-nuclear women
and we are singing, singing for our lives.*

*We are brave and frightened women
and we are singing, singing for our lives.*

FALLOUT OF THE 15TH AMENDMENT

It is significant that responding to Mountbatten's remarks at the inauguration of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, on August 15, 1947, Jinnah while affirming the universal Islamic tradition of "tolerance and goodwill" chose to recall the times of "that great Emperor Akbar" (when the Moghul Empire was truly secular) and also the spirit of thirteen centuries ago when "our prophet (peace be upon him) not only by words but by deeds treated the Jews and Christians after he had conquered them, with utmost tolerance and respect for their faith and beliefs." (This portion of Jinnah's speech was specifically a reference to the non-Muslim British officers of the old Indian armed forces who had volunteered to serve in Pakistan).

The Constituent Assembly, which also served as the central legislative body, elected Jinnah as its president but he did not actually chair it for long. However, to the best of one's knowledge, there was no formal debate either on his inaugural speech of August 11, 1947 or on his statement subsequent to the actual transfer of power by Mountbatten on August 14, 1947.

According to Richard Weekes, the Constituent Assembly did not meet on the average for more than ten days in a year as a constitution-making body for the first six years of Pakistan's existence. There was, therefore, very little discourse on the mode of governance of Pakistan; the Jamaat-I-Islami during this period held an extremely reactionary position in the hope of creating a truly Islamic community.

M.H. Askari, Dawn, 7 October, 1998 (Excerpts)

We Sinful Women

*It is we sinful women
Who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear gowns
Who don't sell our lives
Who don't bow our heads
Who don't fold our hands together.*

*It is we sinful women
While those who sell the harvests of our bodies
Become exalted
Become distinguished
Become the just princes of the material world.*

*It is we sinful women
Who come out raising the banner of truth
Up against barricades of lies on the highways
Who find stories of persecution piled on each threshold
Who find the tongues which could speak have been severed.*

*It is we sinful women.
Now, even if the night gives chase
These eyes shall not be put out.
For the wall which has been razed
Don't insist now on raising it again.*

*It is we sinful women.
Who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear gowns
Who don't sell our bodies
Who don't bow our heads
Who don't fold our hands together.*

Kishwar Naheed: Translated by Rukhsana Ahmad

1,460 women being raped in Pakistan every year

More or less 1,460 women are raped annually in Pakistan i.e. four women every day. These figures released by the Ministry of Women's Development may not be depicting the true picture as many rape cases go unregistered due to some social pressures. The actual figure may be several times higher than the official figure.

Raping an opponent's wife or daughter appears to have gained some form of unwritten approval in our culture. No rapist has ever been punished according to Islamic injunctions. In fact 75% of all women detainees in jails are said to have been locked up under Islamic laws, according to a lawyer. The rapist appears to have the support of the law and in most cases gets away with his crime with the connivance of the police.

According to the Ministry of Women's Development, wife beating is fairly common. Wife beating seems to be consecrated by Pakistani culture. Wife bashing is as common in lower-middle class as in the Pakistani upper class.

The wife appears to be helpless for she has little hope of getting any legal protection from the police. No woman dares file a complaint against her husband unless circumstances become beyond control and in most of the cases the beating is endured till divorce. Even professional women appear to be helpless against physical abuse at home.

In a household survey of more than 1000 women in rural Punjab 35% of the women reported are being beaten by their husbands and 7% reported that they were beaten regularly.

In another study quoted in the World Bank's report titled 'Improving women's health in Pakistan' by Anne G. Tinker, 74% of 176 married men in Karachi reported that domestic violence was a common problem and 65% stated that there was a need to create public awareness of the problem. 28% of the men reported that they had abused their wives physically in the past year and 93% reported inflicting bruises and 31% lacerations.

The most prominent factor inciting violence were children (72%) and economic problems (31%).

In a second study quoted in the World Bank report out of 150 married women 34% reported some form of physical abuse. Of these, 39% reported verbal abuse, 37% sexual abuse, 64% economic abuse and 94% reported psychological abuse during married life.

Almost one half of the women who had been physically abused had been hit during pregnancy and one-third of those women reported a miscarriage.

The Nation Islamabad, 10 August 1998

She is a Woman Impure

*She is a woman impure
Imprisoned by her flowing blood
In a cycle of months and years.
Consumed by her fiery lust,
In search of her own desire, this mistress of the devil
Followed his footsteps
Into a destination obscure
Unmarked, unmapped before.
That union of light and fire
Impossible to find.*

*In the heat of her simmering passion
Her breasts have ripped
By each thorn on the wayside
Every membrane of her body ripped.
No veil of shame conceals her body
No trace it bears of sanctity.*

*But, O Ruler of lands and oceans
Who has seen this before?
Everywhere your command is supreme
Except over this woman impure
No prayer crosses her lips
No humility touches her brow.*

Fehmida Riyaz: Translated by Rukhsana Ahmad

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women and girls has been described as the most pervasive violation of human rights. It has become a major area of concern in Pakistan in recent years as more information about its incidence and impact have become available, and particular forms of violence appear to have been on the increase. Violence against women occurs at all levels of society and has diverse forms. It ranges from the more covert acts (e.g. abusive language, and coercion in marriage) and goes on to include the more explicit forms of violence (wife beating, torture, marital rape, custodial violence, honour killings, burning of women, acid throwing, mutilation, incest, gang rape, public stripping of women, trafficking and forced prostitution, and sexual harassment in the street and the workplace etc.)

While recent governments have taken some steps to address the issue, these have been ad-hoc and inadequate. Violence against women is not an easy issue to deal with. Many forms of it are so entrenched in our culture that they are ignored, condoned or not even recognised as violence by the larger sections of our society. These social biases, attitudes and inequities which perpetuate violence have also become so firmly embedded in our institutions that dealing with it will require not merely punishing the perpetrators, but changing the perception that violence against women is permissible because they have less value as human beings. This calls for strong political commitment, uncompromising legislative reform and decisive action, regardless of the controversies that may arise.

Violence against women is not peculiar to Pakistan. A recent article by a feminist writer depicts the situation most poignantly. "Opening the door on the subject of violence against the world's females is like standing at the threshold of an immense dark chamber vibrating with collective anguish, but with the sounds of protest throttled back to a murmur. Where there should be outrage aimed at an intolerable status quo there is instead denial, and a largely passive acceptance of 'the way things are.'" However, after many years of struggle by the women's movement at different levels and on different fronts, the efforts have finally begun to show some results. According to a recent report, legislation against domestic violence has been enacted in 44 countries

around the world, 17 countries have made marital rape a criminal offence and 27 have passed laws on sexual harassment. It is time for Pakistan to move forward into the comity of progressive nations without any further delay.

Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women, August 1997

To My Daughter

Even if they brand you a "kari"
And condemn you to death,
Then choose death, but live to love.
Don't sit pretty in the show-case of respectability
You must live to love.
In the desert of thirsty desires
Don't be like a cactus, but live to love.
If somebody's fond memories
Come slowly to you,
Then smile and live to love.
What can they do?
They may stone you to death
But in a single moment
You can attain all of life.
You must live to love.
They may call it a sin.
So what? Bear it,
But live to love.

(Attiya Dawood: Translated by Asif Aslam Farrukhi)

Trafficking of women rampant in SAARC States

Karachi, July 17: Thousands of women and children are bought and sold between SAARC countries, as well as internally in these countries, in a widespread horrifying practice that is said to be as profitable as the trafficking of drugs and armaments.

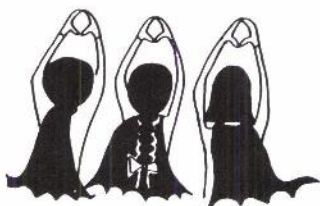
Governments of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation countries must be made more aware of the rampant trafficking of women and children, said Zia Awan of Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid, at a press conference on Friday.

Thousands of women are tricked into coming from Bangladesh to Pakistan to work legally, and sold into prostitution, sex slavery, with no chance of ever escaping, they said.

Since trafficking in human beings often involves more than one national jurisdiction, and since traffickers have international networks of organized crime, international cooperation and a joint consolidated front is urgently required to combat the offences.

The responsibility lies not with any one single government, but all the affected countries, whether they are on the generating or the receiving end, and the judiciaries, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, lawyers and the media must be sensitized and made more aware of the trafficking of women.

Dawn Karachi, 18 July 1998



**WOMEN'S CHAINS HAVE
BEEN FORGED BY MEN,
NOT BY ANATOMY**

Ghazal

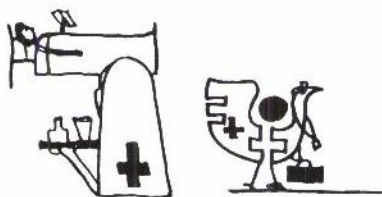
*All their lives long their marriages were blest with prayer
But they crushed their own glass bangles, to drink I hear
Enough poison there is of traditions to last us a life time
From sorrows they gave us knotted inside our veils.*

*Never was there a harvest in my village,
When the rose, not the kussum should have dyed our veils.
To the fragrances of their apparel the wind owed a debt
Those sad princesses of all seasons who have now left.*

*Even kissing those fingers is reckoned a sin
Which inscribe on dust the verses of creation.*

*Who stole the levies on the harvest this year to keep?
Tell me who owns these fields, and who has them to keep?*

Ishrat Aafreen: Translated by Rukhana Ahmad



**IF MEN COULD GET
PREGNANT, ABORTION
WOULD BE A SACRAMENT.**

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In Pakistan, violence against women is rooted in the social relations of patriarchy, which are based on a system of male domination and female subordination. Both overt and covert, it is the means by which patriarchy establishes and maintains these authoritarian hierarchies.

The different instances of violence against women are part of a continuum of violence that underpins all spheres of private and public life. This ranges from the most extreme forms of overt brutality (like rape and mutilation) to the more subtle and invisible forms (like son preference and child marriage), which cripple the mind and destroy human potential. Any attempt, therefore, to perceive acts of violence as disconnected acts of aberrant behavior is to misread the phenomenon. Equally, it needs to be understood that unless and until radical changes are affected in the power bases of the social formation, attempts to address the problem will not go beyond the merely cosmetic and, at best, will have a short-term impact.

SITUATION REVIEW

For other parts of the world, 1985 may have been the year when Nairobi's Forward Looking Strategies were formulated, but in Pakistan it was the worst period of the military dictator, President Zia-ul-Haq's retrogressive "Islamization" process. The advent of a state backed theocratization, with the promulgation of discriminatory legislation, and a systematic media campaign which focused on women's reproductive and domestic roles in society, contributed significantly to the erosion of their existing rights, and resulted in a visible increase in violence against women, this in itself is a reflection of the low priority accorded to the issue by the state and society.

This was the period when the military regime, using religion as a power strategy, focused on women's behavior as a yardstick for national morality. Simultaneously, the "free/liberal" Western world gave full support to the religious orthodoxy, historically perceived as a bastion against communism. This massive political and economic backing to the military regime and its theocratization program led to the subsequent creation of a fanatical lobby, which has been reared on the ethic of violence, and draws its authority from religious discourse.

But in the bleak scenario, women themselves played a major role in fighting for their rights. The women's movement took up the issue of retrogressive legislation and violence against women in the face of severe odds. And they were instrumental, not only in bringing women's issues to the forefront, but also in mobilizing sufficient public support to prevent the implementation of brutal sentences, to get prospective legislation toned down, to influence judicial decisions, and to dam the flow of retrogressive cultural directives.

Since the restitution of democracy in 1988, there have been some changes in the general environment with regard to women and some remedial measures to improve women's status in society have been taken by successive governments. However, given the nature of the problem, the continuing use of religious terminology as a power ploy by governments and the opposition, and the strategic use of religion by a power-hungry orthodox lobby, it is only realistic to say that a long struggle still lies ahead.

For any attempt to deal with the issues of violence, it is critical to understand and recognize the **structures and categories of violence** that pervade our society. The family, the smallest unit of social control, is a microcosmic reflection of the larger social hierarchy. Discrimination on the basis of sexual difference, and the patterns of violence initially founded in the family structure are repeated within the masculine ambits of the community, the work place, the street, and in the institutions of the state, in both explicit and implicit forms.

Physical Abuse

Wife beating is a fairly common phenomenon in Pakistan, even amongst the educated and economically privileged classes. Indulged in by other members of the husband's family as well, it tends to be seen as a necessary "corrective" measure in the interests of the larger good of the patrilocal family. This violence within the four, allegedly protective, walls of the home, frequently takes form of **torture, mutilation and murder**.

Sexual harassment in the work place and the street takes many forms. At the work place these include sexual propositions, vulgar posters, lewd songs, scurrilous jokes and "accidental" touching, and, in the more serious cases, rights, benefits, promotions and job security are offered or withheld on the basis of sexual favors granted. In the street, these range from the more

common instances of verbal abuse, sexist remarks, “accidental” pushing and shoving, and exhortations to cover the hair, to forcible cutting of hair and, in extreme cases, stabbing and acid burning. This form of violence is justified on the grounds that women’s “rightful” place is in the home. Incidents of **public humiliation and violence**, including family vendetta cases where women were publicly stripped naked and dragged through the streets, is part of the accelerating violence against women. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded 48 such cases in the province of Punjab alone in 1993, and the number nearly doubled to 92 in 1994.

Gang rape, which has visibly increased over the past fifteen years, is used as a means of revenge, not only in public places, but also in homes in front of male family members. According to official statistics, about one rape a day has been reported in Punjab alone and one every six hours in the country. Rape has, in the past, also been used effectively as a mean **to silence political dissent** and opposition by those in power.

Custodial rape in police stations has reached serious proportions, particularly since the promulgation of the Hudood Ordinances in 1979, which have increased the law-enforcement agencies’ contact with women, and thereby the opportunities for custodial violence. And, finally, the Hudood Ordinances have made victims of rape, in effect, **victims twice over** since, if they cannot “prove” rape, they can be charged with and sentenced for adultery.

Marital rape is an alien concept in Pakistan, and is not recognized as a category of violence. **Incest and child abuse** are crimes shrouded in silence and taboos, both because the perpetrators are in a position to prevent any outcry, but also because society, caught in its own image of moral purity, is reluctant to admit their existence.

Sexual violence in the work place, largely class-based, particularly targets nurses, domestic workers, factory workers and women as bonded labor.

Enforced prostitution and trafficking in women are forms of violence for profit, to which Pakistani women are also subjected. Apart from this systematic physical, sexual and psychological abuse, and economic exploitation at the hands of agents, pimps and involved police personnel, they are also vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Disabled women and girls, less able to protect themselves, are especially vulnerable to all forms of violence including neglect, less access to food, education and health care, and rape and incest. They are also often subjected to unjustified sterilization.

Murder

Over the past decade or so, murder or attempted murder by stove burning has become quite common. The high incidence of stove burn deaths led a Lahore High Court order that all such deaths would be treated as potential murders. A six-month survey conducted in 1994, of two hospitals in the cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad revealed a total of 89 cases where murder was suspected. Indicative of marital violence and affecting the economically under-privileged, these cases are rarely pursued, nor are there adequate medical facilities for treatment of the victims.

“Honor killings,” rooted in the patriarchal perceptions of the woman’s body as the repository of male/family honor, take many forms. Cutting across all age groups, and on mere suspicion of adultery or illicit sexual relations, social attitudes tend to exonerate the murderer or at least view him with sympathy. Often, women become victims of male machinations of their own tribes or groups, where allegations of adultery against them and male members of the rival group are leveled merely as a vendetta, the female victim being considered expendable.

Psychological and Mental Abuse

The psychological and mental abuse of women comes in many guises and pervades all areas of their lives. Bound up with the male control of their sexuality, this form of abuse is inherent in all socio-cultural institutions. The focus on female reproductivity, along with the high value placed on female chastity, pushes the girl child into an **early marriage** and child bearing before her mind or body is fully mature.

Cultural practice and age old traditions deny the majority of women in Pakistan the **right to choose their own marriage partners**, or to reject the one chosen for them, or to remain single if they want to. As a divorced mother, a woman is often forcibly deprived of her children, since both law and custom designate the father as the **“natural guardian.”**

Unequal divorce laws, apart from the mental anguish that they cause, make women susceptible to blackmail and compromise. Customary practice, particularly in the rural areas, often **deprives women of their inherited property**, which is “kept” by the men of the family. In some feudal parts of Sindh province, “**marriage to the Quran**,” which permanently denies a woman her right to marriage, ensures that her property remains within the natal family. In a society that perceives marriage and motherhood as the woman’s sole destiny and duty, **the single woman** is seen as an economic and social liability, and is often denied both her property rights and the recognition of her productivity.

Men’s control over women’s sexuality also finds a voice in the specificity of the abuse that is part of everyday speech. **Sexist abuse** equates women’s identity with their reproductive organs, and the deliberate use of language in both the private and public spheres violates women’s inherent dignity as human beings. Despite strict state censorship and public assertions of morality, there is a thriving industry in **pornography** in the print and electronic media.

Institutionalized Violence

The legal system, the law-enforcement system, and the media are some of the major means through which the state maintains its power. In the past fifteen years, discriminatory laws, along with the exploitation of religion to control women’s sexuality and productivity have been instrumental in increasing violence in women’s lives.

The **Offence of Zina (Hudood) Ordinance (1979)** has equated rape (a crime of violence with a perpetrator and a victim) with adultery (an act of mutual consent). Apart from making women vulnerable to malicious charges of adultery, and subjecting them to harassment at the hands of the male family members and law enforcement agencies, it has also created a dangerous situation where they can be charged for adultery if they report but cannot prove rape. Moreover, since this Ordinance has repealed the earlier law, sexual intercourse with a wife of minor age is no longer considered rape.

Excerpts from the National Report on the Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing, Chapter 4, September 1995.

CHRONOLOGY

1947

- **Pakistan**, a homeland for the Muslims of Indian Sub-continent was created. Despite strict restrictions on female mobility and rigid gender segregation among Muslims in India, a significant number of women participated in the struggle for Pakistan. Senior leaders of the Pakistan Movement promised that the new state of Pakistan would bring an end to the age-old female subjugation and open up new domains of productive activity for them.
- **Women** became the main target during the fierce communal riots that followed the partition of Indian sub-continent and creation of Pakistan. The abduction of tens of thousand of women during migration in Punjab became the most distressing issue.
- **Famous** Punjabi poetess and writer, Amrita Pritam composed her famous poem '*Aj Aakhaan Waris Shah nu*', voicing the emotions of thousands of women -- Muslim, Hindu and Sikh—who had been kidnapped, raped and murdered during the days of partition.
- **A female** activist Mai Bakhtawar of Sindh Hari Committee, a peasant movement, was killed in police firing.

1948

- **The official** government statistics puts the number of Muslim women kidnapped in the Indian territories at approximately 50,000. Only 7,000 of these women could be recovered.
- **Democratic** Women Association, a left-wing group, was established.
- **Daily Dawn** published a report of the Inter Dominion Conference held at Lahore on July 21-22. The conference discussed various issues including the recovery of abducted women in India and Pakistan.
- **A Women** Voluntary Service to help rehabilitation of refugees was set up.
- **Muslim** women's right to property (including to agricultural land) was included in the Muslim personal law.

1949

- **Raana Liaquat Ali Khan** inaugurated the first major women's conference in Karachi. The conference led to the formation of All Pakistan Women Association (APWA) to work for the development of Pakistani women.
- Maulana Abul Aala Maududi, founder-leader of Jamaat-e-Islami, published his gospel "*Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*", to give his controversial interpretation regarding restrictions imposed on women in Islam.

1952

- **Pakistan** and Indian security officials met to discuss the safe return of abducted women.

1953

- **APWA** pushed for a Family Laws Commission.

1954

- **A charter** of the rights for women was presented before the Constituent Assembly calling for reservation of ten per cent seats for women in all legislative assemblies, equal status and equal opportunities for women, equal wages for equal work, and protection of women's rights in the Muslim Personal Law. The Constituent Assembly unanimously adopted the charter, but amended the demand for ten per cent seats to three per cent.

1955

- **A Commission**, headed by a Supreme Court judge, Justice Rashid, was set up to make recommendations for the protection of women's rights in Muslim personal law.
- **Female** political workers formed a United Front for Women's Rights.

1956

- **The Family Laws Commission** under Justice Rashid, presented its recommendations which, among other things, called for giving the wife the authority to divorce, and suggested restrictions on polygamy.
- **The Commission's** report was shelved after the Islamic groups boycotted the reforms programme, and threatened agitation.

- **Ghulam Fatima** was hanged on charges of murder in Central Jail, Mianwali (Punjab). She became the first woman in Pakistan to be awarded death penalty.

1958

- **4th June** was declared as Women's Demands Day. APWA passed a resolution calling for reforms in the family laws on divorce, maintenance and custody of children -- issues that are in many cases linked with, and lead to, violence against women.

1961

- **Based** on the recommendations of the Rashid Commission, the military ruler Ayub Khan promulgated the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance. The ordinance applied conditions on Muslim men's rights to polygamy, requiring registration of marriage and divorce, allowing inheritance to children of predeceased parents, introducing standard marriage forms and raising the minimum age of marriage for girls from 14 to 16 years.

1962

- **In a rare** development a senior civil servant and Commissioner of Quetta was charged with kidnapping and sexual assault of a woman. Declared guilty, the Commissioner was fined Rs.20,000, but he retained his government service.

1963

- **The West Pakistan Assembly** passed a resolution recommending the repeal of Family Laws Ordinance. The move was, however, defeated in the National Assembly after a 20-hour debate.

1964

- **Military** ruler, Field Marshal Ayub Khan acquired the services of several Islamic clerics, who issued a fatwa (religious decree) against a woman becoming the head of State.

1965

- **Despite** the fatwa, Fatima Jinnah contested the presidential elections.

1967

- **Moved** by a woman member, Sahibzadi Mahmooda Begum, the West Pakistan Assembly passed the Prohibition on Exhibition of Dowry bill.

1969

- **The new** Martial Law regime of General Yahya Khan declared the kidnapping of women and children as a crime punishable by death.

1971

- **East Pakistan** became Bangladesh. Women became the major target of in-human treatment by the rival sides. Bangladesh authorities have documented accounts of kidnapping, rape of thousands and murder committed by Pakistan army and its allies. But only sketchy details are available of a similar treatment meted out to a large number of non-Bengali women at the hands of pro-liberation armed gangs.

1973

- **The Constitution** was unanimously passed, with milestone Article 25. Other important Articles pertaining to women are 27, 32, 34, 35 & 228.

1975

- **International Women's Day** was celebrated in Pakistan for the first time.
- **The first** World Conference on Women was held in Mexico.
- **The Z. A. Bhutto Government** established a Women's Rights Committee, headed by the then Attorney General, to recommend steps for improving the status of women.
- **A rally** for women's rights was baton charged by the police in Lahore.
- **On 8th of March** a rally of the Women Front was baton charged in Rawalpindi.
- **Nine women** were arrested for conducting union activities in a factory in Lahore.

1976

- **Women's Rights Committee** submitted the first draft of Report to Prime Minister Z. A. Bhutto. The Report recommends legal and structural reforms to improve women's status. This Report was suppressed due to subsequent change of government.
- **Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act** was passed to limit marriage expenditures and dowry expectations.

1979

- **On 10th of February**, the Hudood Ordinance was promulgated and a system of "Islamic" punishments was introduced. The maximum punishment for adultery by a married person was stoning to death, while 100 lashes for an unmarried person found guilty of the same crime. Those making false allegations regarding adultery were to be awarded 80 lashes and disqualification from giving testimony in future. All these punishments were to be carried out in public.
- **Women's Division** was established within the government, and women's development cells set up in the provinces for the first time.

1980

- **The second World Conference on Women** was held in Copenhagen.

1981

- **Women's Action Forum (WAF)** was formed, providing a platform for women's rights activists of Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad to raise their voices and concern on women's issues.

1982

- **WAF** started a campaign to save the Family Laws Ordinance from retrogressive state-sponsored "Islamization". Two thousand women and organizations signed a protest document, despite the draconian military rule. The day became a historic milestone for the women's movement in Pakistan.

- **General Zia** promulgated Qanoon-e-Shahadat (Law of Evidence) ordinance that equated the evidence of two women to that of one man, under stipulated circumstances. Subsequently, the draft was amended to restrict the evidence of two women to one man to financial matters only. In such matters, the evidence of one woman was not to be admitted.

1983

- **The signature** campaign and rallies led by the WAF and other women's organizations proved successful as the Federal Shariat Court acquitted Safia Bibi. This 18-year girl who was raped but could not identify her rapists because she was virtually blind, was earlier sentenced to public lashing, imprisonment and a fine on charges of adultery.
- **The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan** was formed by a group of concerned citizens, headed by Justice (retired) Dorab Patel.
- **On 8th of March**, WAF Karachi and Lahore observed International Women's Day as a day of protest against the Law of Evidence.
- **On 30th of September**, Lal Mai became the first woman to be publicly flogged in Liaquat Pur, Bahawalpur District. She was convicted under the Zina Ordinance and given 15 lashes by a man with 5,000 people as spectators.
- **General Zia** set up the Pakistan Commission on the Status of Women with a brief to identify women's needs in a range of sectors.

1984

- **In an act** of revenge, several women of a family in Nawabpur, near Multan, were stripped naked and forced to parade around in a busy bazaar by young, feudal men of their area.
- **The Law of Evidence** became an act of parliament. It still reduces the evidence of a woman in certain cases to half that of a man.

1985

- **The Commission on the Status of Women** submitted its report but it was promptly suppressed.

- **According to “ *Battered Housewives in Pakistan*”,** a report published by the Women’s Ministry, estimates of the percentage of women who experienced domestic violence in Pakistan ranged from 70 to 90 percent.
- **The Third World Conference on Women** was held in Nairobi. Pakistan attended and endorsed the Conference document: “The Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.”

1986-87

- **The draft 9th Constitutional Amendment (Shariah Bill)** was tabled in Parliament by Qazi Abdul Latif and Maulana Sami-ul-Haq. It was strongly condemned by the women’s movement, which launched a vigorous campaign against it, including a 1000-women strong demonstration in Islamabad by WAF, defying bans on freedom of assembly and speech.

1988

- **The country** returned to democracy after the general elections. Benazir Bhutto became the first woman Prime Minister.

1989

- **Benazir Bhutto** published and disseminated the 1985 Commission report on the Status of Women.
- **The Women’s** Division was upgraded to the Ministry of Women’s Development.
- **The rape** of two nurses while on duty in Civil Hospital, Karachi, made press headlines in August, a year after a democratic government had supposedly been reinstated in Pakistan.

1990

- Dr. Fauzia Bhutto, an intern at the Jinnah Post Graduate Medical Centre was shot dead. Her body was found in an apartment that belonged to Rahim Bux Jamali. A case was registered and Jamali arrested on charges of Dr. Bhutto’s murder but later released on bail.

1991

- **Veena Hayat**, the daughter of a prominent politician was assaulted. She went public about her assault, claiming it to be an act of political intimidation, and thereafter the case is referred to by her name.
- **Khursheed Begum**, wife of a Pakistan People's Party activist, lodged complaint of sexual assault. She claimed that the police committed the crime to take revenge for her husband's political affiliation with the opposition party.
- **Tehmina Durrani's** potboiler, *'My Feudal Lord'*, exposed her former husband, prominent politician Ghulam Mustafa Khar's domestic cruelty and political misdemeanours.

1992

- **Jun 12, Tando Bahawal:** In order to terrorize the local land-owning women Major Arshad Jamil murdered nine people on the pretext of being terrorists possessing large cache of arms. As the story unfolded, it was revealed that those killed were not terrorists but innocent peasants working for the women who had initiated a legal action against another landlord, a close friend of the army officer. The 'encounter' and 'recovery of arms' never took place. In an unprecedented public apology, the Army GHQ also admitted the crime. A case was registered and the Major arrested.

1994

- **A National Commission on the Status of Women** was established, headed by a Supreme Court judge and included political representatives and experts.
- **Pakistan played** an active role in the UN International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo.
- **Over a** domestic dispute, 24-year-old Zainab Noor was brutally tortured by her mosque imam husband, Qari Mohammad Sharif. The incident shook the entire nation and brought the issue of domestic violence to the fore. Zainab, struggling for life, was flown to London at state expense where her life was saved. Meanwhile her husband was arrested and convicted to 30 years in prison.
- **Appointment** of women as Magistrate and Family Court Judges started. Majida Rizvi and Khalida Rasheed became

the first women High Court judges. They were appointed to Sindh and Peshawar High Courts, respectively.

- **Establishment** of Women Police Stations in some urban areas was initiated.

1995

- **The Fourth** World Conference on Women was held in Beijing. Pakistan attended this event and presented the National Report prepared in collaboration with women's NGOs. Pakistan endorsed the conference document, but with reservation.
- **Pakistan Government** signed CEDAW in preparation for the Beijing Conference.
- **The Islamic** Ideology Council declared the feudal custom of marrying girls with the Holy Quran as un-Islamic and immoral. Despite the declaration, the practice continues.

1996

- **CEDAW** was ratified by the Parliament.
- **On 11th of September**, disgusted by the delay in meting out of justice, two women of the famous Tando Bahawal case committed suicide by putting themselves on fire outside the Terrorists Court in Hyderabad.
- **On 28th of October** Major Arshad, the main accused in Tando Bahawal case, was executed.
- **Nabila Shah**, a woman activist of Sindhi nationalist movement and member of Sindh Tarraqi Pasand Party, disappeared from Hyderabad (Sindh). Despite her family's frantic search for her, Nabila whereabouts could not be traced.

1997

- **The report** of the Inquiry Commission on Women of Pakistan co-authored by Shehla Zia and Asma Jahangir, with a number of excellent recommendations especially on **violence against women** was presented to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The Commission was headed by Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid.
- **A ruling** by the Lahore High Court, in the much publicized Siam Waheed case, upheld a woman's right to marry freely but called for amendments to the family laws, on the

basis of Islamic norms, to enforce parental authority to discourage "love marriages."

- **The government** set up Crisis Centres for Women in distress.
- **Parliament passed** law making death penalty mandatory for gang-rape.

1998

- **The controversial** Fifteenth Amendment Bill was approved in the National Assembly where the Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League had an absolute majority. The Bill was to replace the existing legal system with "Islamic Shari'ah".
- **Chief Justice** Wajihuddin Ahmed ordered that an FIR be lodged against Dr. Qadir Magsi, chief of the Sindh Tarraqi Pasand Party. This was in response to a petition filed by Nasser Shah, father of Nabila Shah--the woman who disappeared under mysterious circumstances in 1996. Naseer Shah accused Magsi of murdering his daughter. This brought to light events that led up to Nabila's two-years disappearance and ghastly murder. It was then that the family learned that the un-identified, unclaimed dead body of a woman recovered from the woods near Thatta and buried by Edhi Trust, was that of Nabila Shah. With the lodging of a FIR against him, Magsi went underground and was never arrested.
- **Nina Aziz** was brutally murdered in Islamabad. An independent, highly educated and professionally qualified woman, Nina's murder led to one of the worst examples of media's lust for sensationalism. Most of the newspapers, both English and Urdu, sold a hundred or so more copies over the headless body of a girl who could not defend herself anymore, bringing more sorrow to an already grieved family.
- **Prime Minister** Nawaz Shariff announced in his Independence Day speech to the nation, the launching of the National Plan of Action (NPA) in follow-up to the FWCW, Beijing. There was no subsequent action on actual implementation.

1999

- The Fifteenth Amendment Bill continued to draw strong opposition from women's and human rights groups and opposition political parties. The Bill had not been tabled in the Senate till October when the new Military Government suspended the parliament.
- **Samia Sarwar's** murder by her family launched a nationwide protest against the so-called "honour killings", attracting wide spread media coverage of the incident.
- **In August**, a resolution condemning the act of so called 'honour killings' and demanding concrete action of the Federal and Provincial Governments was eventually turned down by the chairman and senators and could not even be tabled in the Senate.

2000

- **On 21st of April**, in his speech at a Human Rights Convention, General Pervez Musharraf declared "honour killing", as murder punishable under the law.
- **Pakistan** National Commission on the Status of Women was established, tasked, inter alia, with working on issues of violence against women.
- **President** Rafiq Tarar granted pardon to Qari Mohammad Sharif, who was awarded a punishment of 30 years imprisonment for torturing his wife Zainab Noor. The Qari was set free after only after six years in prison.
- **The Government** of Pakistan submitted the first of the required annual reports on progress achieved in implementation of CEDAW to the UN two years late.

2001

- **Women activists** staged a protest rally to condemn the release of Qari Mohammad Sharif. They urged the Supreme Court to look into the matter of grave injustice.
- **Bilal Khar**, son of former Governor Punjab, Ghulam Mustafa Khar, threw acid on his wife Fakhra, and left her in a critical condition. Despite wide media coverage, the culprit could not be arrested.
- **The Ministry** for Women's Development held the last and final consultative workshop on Draft National Policy for Women. One of the recommendations coming out from various working groups was to limit the preamble of the

draft policy to the Constitution of 1973 and international human rights charters.

- **Progressive Women's Association** launched its campaign to set-up a burns center in Islamabad.

Calendar 2003

JANUARY

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