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Violence Against Women and Its Impact On Family – Pakistan Perspective

Violence against women is prevalent all over the world. When speaking of violence against women, one must remember that it is not confined only to physical hurt. In fact mental and psychological hurt is more devastating and difficult to be measured. Since it is gender based crime it happens at all levels of private and public life within the family, at work place, and national and international conflicts. Violence against women hurts, humiliates and engenders fear in her. It is justified or condoned on the basis of relationships such as marital rape, wife beating, beating children and even honor killing which is nothing but murder.

- In Pakistan women are not only subjected to financial discrimination but are victims of inhuman customs and discriminatory laws as well.

Last Five Years Crime	No. of women were killed in the name of honor
Honor Killings	4,770
Burnt	1,570
Murders	6603
Rape	3,722
Trafficking	218

- Over 90 percent of married women reported being physically and sexually abused by their husbands. (PIMS Survey).

The very fact that the UNO highlights the day globally by holding conferences and workshops indicate how important and urgent is the issue. In one of its latest declarations Sexual Violence has been mentioned a “Tactic of War”. Further to quote, a former UN peace keeping commander “it has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in an armed conflict”.

Violence by the State

One can say that violence against women is most often an expression of one man’s domination but it may also be practiced in an organized manner by several men or by State through laws as well as extra judicial exercise of violence through state machinery.

The violence through the state is, either through the laws which are extremely discriminatory or through state Agencies, the best indicators are disappearances of people in the country. The police arrests women to force the family members in hiding to come out. The best example is of Dr. Afia Siddiqui who disappeared in 2003 from Karachi.

The states all over the world, so also Pakistan guarantees fundamental rights to its citizens which, apart from all other benefits, grants equal status to all citizens before the law and protection of life, honor and property within and out side the state. But we have seen globally, how the states amend/ or bring the new laws to enforce its Writ to the maximum, even when these are violating its fundamental rights or may I say the very fabric of the human rights. The best example is of Guantanamo Bay prison and the treatment meted out to those human beings including women.

Domestic Violence or Patriarchal violence at Home

The most common and at times ruthless and unexpected violence against women is from with in the family known as Domestic Violence or patriarchal violence.

The patriarchal norms are deeply rooted in our culture and are enforced at all levels A slight disobedience of such norms leads women to worst type of violence the best example is honor killing.

The patriarchy in Public Sector also reflects in the policies and laws enacted for the uplift of Women and children.

Formation of Parallel Judicial System like Jirgah and Panchayat (best example Mukhtaran Mai's case) also reflects the same in the system. Although the Jirgah has been declared as illegal by the High Court of Sindh but these are still working all over the country.

Violence at the work place

Gender discrimination and harassment at work place is a form of violence which violates the fundamental rights of the workers and effects not only the employer and the employee but the entire society.

The above patriarchal values suppress the legitimate authority of women with in the family and give rise to domestic violence which is accepted by women as normal.

The Impact of Violence

The irony is that on one side The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equality of all citizens and State Policy directs to take steps to bring women in the main stream and the state has ratified CEDAW; on the other side, nearly 50% of women population has a very low rate of literacy compare to men. The reasons are poverty, status of women; she is regarded as a burden, a commodity which can be traded as compensation where disputes are settled between the warring parties. This is called wanni. They do not have the right to education as boys are given preference. They have no right to choose their life partners if they dare to they are murdered in the name of honor ,there are forced in to marriages as well as exchange of girls in marriage.(Watta Satta)

A women has no right over her body. She can not give consent for a surgery or abortion , either her husband or other male family members will do it .

Even when medical advice is given she can not refuse to her husband and forced pregnancy is imposed on her to the detriment of her failing health.

Women are held responsible if there are no children. She is cursed and divorced for giving birth to girls.

All the above practices are nothing but violence against women affecting the very fabric of society.

Now a days girls schools are being torched and destroyed forcing women to stay in the house and depriving her of education.

A discriminated and harassed woman is a traumatic human being and unable to perform her civil duties thus becoming the responsibility of the state and the society which fails to protect her.

The psychological effects of abuse also prevent its victims from acting logically, "they become indecisive and dependent. They are mentally torn between love and hatred for the same person and since there is legal relationship they feel more vulnerable,



betrayed and hopeless." It also causes inferiority among women and children and hinders their personality development. Sexual life of a couple is also affected if a woman is traumatized giving rise to more violence in many cases.

In some cases after years of abuse women become aggressive and in this mental condition can commit any aggression, even murder.

The question is why do they tolerate the violence?

In most cases they do not have a place to go.

Monetary dependence and family pressures to wait also play a vital role.

All the above elements affect the family life. If there is violence on the females of the house in the presence of children they are definitely affected. The reaction on the children can be different. In the upper middle class family the psychological affect on the children can be seen in the school reports indicating lack of concentration in the class, frustration at times resulting into aggression against the other children ,it can also result in the lack of appetite and can be lack of sleep also. The also develop defiance to the authority in the house. The children try to get away from home and school and wile- away their time keeping the parents ignorant. In the lower strata the children run away from homes and become target of different mafias like begging, child trafficking, child prostitutions etc. Violence of any kind and too many restrictions on the girls forces them to leave the safety of home and seek shelter somewhere. This is dangerous as they can fall prey to wrong hands .In all these conditions the family and the society suffers resulting in corrosion in the family life. Pakistan has large number of street children and some of the NGO's are trying to establish shelters for them. There are very few shelters for women. These projects need full Government support as it is the state's responsibility of good governance and protection to all its citizen.

Pakistan is signatory to CEDAW and the govt. is obliged to take steps for its implementation.

Steps taken by the Govt. of Pakistan.

The Constitutions of Pakistan 1973 guarantees equal opportunities and equal status to the citizens of its country (Article 4,8,10,14,25) and under Principals of Policy (Article 34 & 38). In view of above guarantees and since 1996 when Pakistan ratified CEDAW ,different governments took steps to improve the status of women and children by taking following steps:

Steps Taken in 1994

1. Induction of Women Judges in Superior Judiciary.
2. Raising the status of Women Division to full fledged Ministry of Women Development.
3. Establishment of First Women Bank.
4. Establishment of Women Police Stations.
5. Introduction of Lady Health Visitors Scheme.
6. Reserves seats for women in Parliament.
7. Increased women employment in Bank & Multinational Companies.

The Government which took over in October 1999, considering the prevailing conditions and under pressure / demand of NGO's and Civil Societies setup National Commission on the status of Women in the year 2000, with the mandate to review and amend the existing policies, rules regulation and existing laws and to propose if necessary to introduce new policies, rules regulation and laws to improve the status of women. The other steps taken are:

Induction of 33% Women at grass root level as counselors.

Nearly 18% Women on reserve quota in the National & Provincial Assemblies – retaining the right to contest on General seats.

A Women appointed as President of State Bank of Pakistan.

Amendments in Hudood Ordinances giving relief to Women.

Policy to main stream Women in all Ministries.

Increase in the Literacy rate.

Policy to alleviate poverty.

Induction of Women in Armed Forces.

Establishing Crises Centres.

The Present Govt. is proposing to introduce amendments in Family Laws and to legislate on domestic violence and harassment at work place.

Measures to end Violence in Asia

If we look at the Asian progress we find that, there is recognition of the importance of gender equality in development but the tendency is just to add women without considering the male based models. Like the concept is based on a full bread winner model and does not address the role that women play in providing unpaid and un accounted for, services.

The Informal sector is still ignored and unprotected by social security. The recognition of the issue is there but due to lack of will, increasing poverty play a great part .here is no organized method to collect data.

The increase in violence against is staggering .The UNO has also declared that violence against women is tactic of war.

In Pakistan the episode of Red mosque, torching and destroying girls school has become a daily phenomena.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies to be Adopted to Combat Violence against Women at National Level.

1. Cultural Change by Change of Mindset:

In order to bring reform in the underlying cultural values of society, the structure supporting Patriarchal violence against women and children efforts must be made to change the mind-set of the people, including women who often learn to accept their low status as normal due to unrelenting socialization, and at cultural institutions such as schools, family, mosques, government and law enforcement agencies. It entails changing gender roles and social norms, opening economic opportunities to women and improving self respect for children and women's status by dismantling patriarchal structures.

2.The best tool for this purpose would be education with strong element of propagating the human values. In this context increase in literacy rate (particularly in the countries with low literacy rate) and greater awareness of women's rights / gender issues world over, including the countries with high literacy rate as for instance USA, Canada, etc. is imperative. The reason being that even the developed countries have high frequency of violence against women, which marginalizes the women and other weaker sections of the society.

3. Legal Reform

As social norms begin to change, the legal system with gender perspective must also be initiated. In this context NCSW has made various policy recommendations to the Government of Pakistan, for necessary Action. Recently, the government has also introduced a bill on domestic violence which is pending to be taken up.

4.Strengthen family institution by promoting values like respect and tolerance for the needs and ideas of each of the member of the family including women and children.

5.Improve interactions between the law enforcing agencies, NGOs, political decision-makers, legislative bodies, judiciary, local bodies and the victims of violence, in order to design co-ordinated actions against violence;

6.Initiate medical/social protection measures to help victims of violence and facilitate access to Justice.



7. Set-up counseling centres and shelter homes for destitute women particularly in the areas with high frequency of patriarchal violence against women;
8. Promote full participation of women in politics and decision-making as per Article 34 of the Constitution.
9. Ensure proper strict enforcement of laws to abolish the culture/tradition of early and forced marriages etc.

National, Regional & International Levels

1. It should be seen that CEDAW and other conventions for the protection of women and children are strictly implemented in all the countries which have ratified the same.
SAARC countries should work together to combat trafficking of women and children.
2. Initiate, enact and Implement/enforce strong polices and laws to combat violence against women and children Nationally and Regionally with coordinated efforts.
3. Initiate researches on different forms of Patriarchal violence against women with standardized research methodologies and ensure its disseminations at all levels in the region.
4. Gender mainstreaming at all levels;
5. Promote training for Police and subordinates judiciary on children and gender issues and promote exchange program in the region.
6. Condemn all forms violence against women and children in situations of conflict/war;
7. Condemn systematic rape, sexual slavery, enforced pregnancy of women and young girls and all forms of violence including trafficking against women and children, as these, as tend to be used as a weapon of war; (Afghanistan & Iraq).
8. In post-conflict regions, promote a public debate and disseminate information concerning abuses of women and children in order to prevent repetition of violence regionally and globally.
9. Electronic and print media to be used to combat violence against women and children at National, Regional and Global levels.
10. Compile country reports, based on research and information collected at national level, focusing on violence against women and children and the measures taken to combat it and exchange in the Region.
11. Rape and gang-rape must be the declared and considered as the most condemned war crime.
12. The International Conventions recognizing rape as war crime must be ratified by all the countries.
13. The religious scholars / institutions must support and collaborate with the government and the civil societies in combating violence against women and children.