

Gender-Based Violence and Its Implications on Women's Social Security and Rights in Pakistan.

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"For we women are not only the deities of the household fire, but the flame of the soul itself."

-Rabindranath Tagore (The Home and the World)

The above quote by Rabindranath Tagore reflects the very truth that women have the capability to take many forms. Women are not only the backbone of a household but even worshipped as Goddess for she is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the Universe in the form of 'Adi-Shakti'. It is also said, when you educate a woman you educate an entire family. Therefore, although women are placed at such a high pedestal within the society, but in reality they are always looked down upon, only as a caretaker of the household and kids by the society at large. In some countries women are even supposed to remain behind the veil or 'purdah' due to traditional societal norms or religious beliefs. They are hardly encouraged to get educated or work outside the boundaries of their household. Such an outlook towards women have become a tradition which has been ongoing since time immemorial and in contemporary time oppression towards women although not outrightly practiced but culminated in the form of legal norms or religious beliefs. Therefore, under an era of globalization where countries follow democratic principles, but are they able to deliver that in an egalitarian way. The reality is, no democracy in the world is immune to political infighting and inequality, partisan politics, gender disparity which further takes the form of violence and conflicts thereby jeopardizing the lives of many innocent people in which women are the worst sufferers.

In general, the persistence of threats to the safety and security of the individual and the violence generated by intra-state conflicts, violation of human rights, misgovernance, corruption, crime, terrorism, gender-based violence, trafficking in women and children and

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the like are enormous and remain a constant source of fear in most of the third world countries. Culture, religion and honour plays a crucial role in setting limitations for women in these countries. As such, women are bound under traditional and religious customs and any attempt to cross those limitations results into a death knell for them. It begins at the stage of conception; sex-selective abortions or customs like widow burning (sati) in India, honour killing (karakari) in Pakistan, sacred prostitution (deuki) in Nepal or bride price (vulvar) in Afghanistan and Pakistan etc. Moreover, traditional forms of violence such as wife-battering and sexual assault, dowry crimes such as bride burning, kidnapping for the purposes of human-trafficking and honour killings are issues which are mostly ignored in these countries. All this not only impacts on women's socio-psychological well-being but also their economic security, health security, sexual and reproductive rights; and, significantly, that it reduces women's contribution to the growth and development of a country.

Pakistan is one such country amongst most of the third world countries, where women are facing various forms of violence, discrimination and inequality in almost every sphere of life, particularly during the periods of its military rule. Violence against women at various grounds is often not conceived as a violation of human rights rather taken as a normal aspect of the lives of Pakistani people. As such, sense of fear and inferiority, imposed by the traditional practices and norms in a male dominated society as well as religious extremism relegated the position of women in terms of status, education, health and security further down. They are like road blocks in the way of Pakistani women becoming politically participative, secure and independent. In fact, although Pakistan has contributed itself towards the maintenance and furtherance of the principles of democracy to all its citizens but how far they are successful in delivering this in equal parlance with those who also form an important part of the demography of Pakistan is still dubious. Therefore, through this paper an attempt would be made to analyze two basic questions: What are the reasons that lead to gender-based violence in Pakistan? Elucidating some of the violences. And In what ways gender-based violence are posing negative implications on the women's security and human rights within the nation? Thereby diminishing the very essence of democracy and development of the country. Further, the paper would also address the mutuality between violence and development as well as the Government policies and responses towards ensuring women's security and status in Pakistan followed by the conclusion.

The Mutuality of Gender-Based Violence and Development

Peace and political stability are the two pre-conditions for development. Therefore, violence in any form can be a major factor in distracting a state from its development agenda and bringing about all round chaos and instability. In this regard, Gender-based violence or GBV is any act or practice that results in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm

or suffering because of a person's gender or socially defined role. It is the manifestation of control and power, mostly by men over women, resulting from unequal power relations between the sexes. The United Nations General Assembly in its adaptation of UN Declaration of Elimination of Violence Against Women on 20th December 1993 defines gender-based violence as, "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

GBV is also a form of violence which has both immediate impact and long term consequences. It can have an immediate impact on a women's mental development and maternal mortality at the same time it has a long term consequence of gradual deterioration of a nation's social and economic growth. It undermines not only the safety, dignity, overall health status, and human security of women as an individual but also the public health, socio-economic stability and security of nations. Women are often more dependent on basic services, such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation, because of their domestic roles. However, gender-specific biases in the way services are designed and delivered are failing women in many countries to have choices in life. For example, a lack of separate toilets (or any toilet facilities) in schools can deter adolescent girls from attending school. Likewise, the traditional division of household labour often places women at a disadvantage in terms of 'opportunity costs.' Unless women or girls stand in equal footing with men in all spheres of life and enjoy their human rights as well as freedom from any form of violence, progress of a state towards development will fall short. In this sense, when governments, businesses and communities would invest in women's economic empowerment and work to eliminate inequalities, then developing countries are less likely to be plagued by poverty and unemployment. Rather, by strengthening bargaining position and building women's confidence, can one think of improving their position within the society and through this their participation in community affairs and decision-making will increase. Therefore, for a state's development it is important that both men and women contribute equally in the state building process. In this regard UNDP Associate Administrator Rebeca Grynspan during the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women said, "There is one thing that will bring productivity up and costs down, and that is ending violence against women."

Historical Overview of Status of Women in Pakistan

Pakistan officially known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, with a population of 179.2 million approximately is the sixth most populated country in the world. After its formation it had various political and economic problems that the newly-born state had to contend with. Amongst them soon after the death of *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, a continuing controversy over the role of Islam in the nation's political life cropped up which had a direct

bearing on the trajectory of women's advancement. Thereafter, with the collapse of the political institutions the military assumed a dominant role in Pakistani politics. All fundamental rights guaranteed in the 1973 Constitution were suspended, including the right to be free of discrimination on the basis of sex. Pakistani state lacked Islamic morality, and this was the cause of the state's weakness. With such opinions and outlook the military regimes of Pakistan demanded that women be returned to the *char divari* (the four walls) of their homes, an idea that Zia-ul-Haq one of the military rulers in Pakistan later incorporated into his Islamisation program for the nation. A series of laws were sanctioned which represented a diversion from the past commitment of the Pakistani state to "secular values." These includes the Hudood Ordinance (which changed the law of rape and adultery and made fornication a crime), the Qanun-e-Shahadat Order (Law of Evidence Order) which relegates women to inferior legal status and, in some circumstances, renders the testimony of a women equal to only half the weight of a man's and the Qisas and Diyat Ordinance (Islamic penal laws governing compensation and retribution in crimes involving bodily harm). However, the coming to power of a civilian government in 1988 heralded a new era which promised an unprecedented alignment of state power with an apparently progressive woman's rights policy. But soon after the election, it became evident that, once again, the protection of women's rights had been subordinated to the need to maintain a delicate balance between various political forces, including those representing conservative religious values. Thereafter, the policies adopted by the following Pakistani leaders in so many years, had appeared to have blocked all opportunities for the advancement of women's rights. The government of the time in parliament enacted the Qisas and Diyat Ordinance which instituted Sharia-based changes in Pakistan's criminal law, making it a permanent part of the Pakistan Penal Code rather than an ordinance subject to periodic renewal. Therefore keeping the historical overview of status of women in Pakistan the following heading underlines the reasons and some of the GBV inflicted on the women of Pakistan particularly in the conflict-zones of the country.

Gender-Based Violence against Women in Pakistan

Gender-based violence is pervasive across class, religion, ethnicity and the urban/rural divide in Pakistan, and the reasons for such violence and discrimination against women within the nation can be attributed to three basic reasons: Firstly, since the inception of the country there has been debates over the very ideology of the nation: whether it would be a secular country 'for Muslims' or an Islamic country 'of Muslims'. To this end with every change of government the ideologies changed thereby leaving gaps and loopholes towards attaining one holistic ideology, for decades. In fact, 'Islam' is used and abused by the powerful in order to quell freedom of expression and free thought in Pakistan. For women, this equation had extremely negative effect. Thus, such ideological shift has left deep wounds on the few

rights women in Pakistan had managed to gain since Partition. Secondly, Pakistan consisting of a patriarchal social structure made women subservient to men, and they are viewed more as property than as individual beings. Because of deep-seated cultural and traditional practices and inadequate responses of society and government, in Pakistan women are the victims of direct violence and in most cases, they are killed mercilessly in the name of honour, customs, and compensation of crimes or bringing insufficient dowry. Therefore, at this point one could refer to Johan Galtung's definition of violence which highlights three forms of violence- Personal violence, Structural violence and Cultural violence. Here personal violence is violence with a subject, structural violence is violence without a subject, and cultural violence serves as legitimization of both personal and structural violence. Therefore, if one frames these three forms of violence within the fold of gender than one can see that women are being denied their dignity, freedom and status under all three forms of violence. For example, when a husband kills his wife because of suspicion or any other reason, it is direct violence or Personal violence. When the majority of men follow the same practice of killing women, it is structural violence, which is embedded in patriarchal setup of society and when society does not give adequate attention towards this inhuman practice, it can be said to be a manifestation of cultural violence, which is legitimizing structural and direct violence. It is unfortunate that Pakistani society is not reacting against such vicious circle of violence which is the third reason of growth of gender-based violence in Pakistan. In other words, neglect or ignorance and an overall gender-based biased approach, ranging from government institutions to mass population is another prime cause of violence against women in Pakistan. Such violence not only brings physical injuries to women but also puts psychological impacts on their power of thinking and behaviour. Thereby keeping in view these three reasons of gender-based violence in Pakistan there are some major gender-based violence inflicted upon the women in Pakistan which are discussed as follows:

1. Honour Killing (Karo-Kari):

Honour killing is one of the worst forms of direct physical violence against women in any civilised society. The term honour killing or Karo-Kari (in Pakistan) means the unlawful killing of a woman for her morally or mentally unclean and impure behaviour by a male member of the family for tarnishing the family image. Honour killings can also be described as extra-judicial punishment of a female within a society for assumed sexual and marriage offences. These offences, which are considered as a misdeed or insult, include sexual faithlessness, marrying without the will of parents or having a relationship that the family considers to be inappropriate and rebelling against the tribal and social matrimonial customs. But, if they go against these social customs and choose their own marriage partner, they are assumed to have broken societal norms and considered an act of defiance to the family. In

the South Asian countries women are looked upon as the embodiment of honour of a family. In Pakistan the case is even worse, seeking divorce from an abusive husband, which is a right of a woman as defined by Islam, is considered to be against the honour of the family. Therefore, the girl is either killed in the name of bringing back the 'lost honour' or father brings charges under Zina Ordinance against their daughters who have married of their own choice. In recent years, there is dramatic rise in the incidence of honour killings in the country. For example, in June 2014, Saba Maqsood miraculously survived being shot by her relatives and dumped into a canal in Hafizabad town in Pakistan's Punjab province for trying to marry the man of her choosing against family wishes. In a similar case, Farzana Iqbal who was a pregnant woman in Lahore, had gone through the same fate. In some cases, murders are committed for other motives and dressed up as honour killings. Seeking divorce, bringing fewer dowries, or avoiding giving property shares to women, men kill women and colour these killings as honour killings.

In Pakistan besides the patriarchal dominance over women, tribalization is also another factor of rising incidence of honour killing in the State. People show indifference towards such killings, viewing it as a tribal custom. In the tribal areas Pakistan-Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) honour killing has turned into a day to day affair of acquiring illegal money. In these areas men accuse their wives, sisters and daughters of having indecent relations with wealthy man. Then the woman is declared as Kari-a bad woman- who brings shame and dishonour to family and is killed. The Karo (suspected lover) is pressed to give compensation to the woman's family and then he is pardoned. This inhuman tradition provides many opportunities to make money for tribesmen, policemen and tribal mediators. Since few years honour killings are seen in other provinces of Pakistan like FATA, Upper Sindh, Punjab and most of the urban areas.

Thus, hundreds of honour killings within Pakistan especially in tribal areas of the North are believed to go unreported each year as a result of social connivance, often involving district administration, which results in failure to report such murders to the police. According to a report submitted by the Federal Ministry of law in Pakistan, a total of 456 and 477 cases of honour killings were reported in Pakistan in 2013 and 2014, respectively. Of these, 80 cases belonged to Punjab, 287 to Sindh, 78 to KP and 32 to Balochistan. Once again, the greatest number of such cases (602) was reported from Sindh in the year 2015. Likewise according to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan there are an estimated 869 honour killings in 2013. However the exact number of deaths is difficult to determine because the crime often is ignored or hidden. The family, local community and politicians wary of losing votes by opposing traditional values collude to hide the deaths and the vicious circle goes on enveloping within its fold further violences against women.

2. Dowry Deaths :

Dowry is usually a term used to describe the process of transfer of certain amount of money or valuable things from the bride's parents to the groom and his parents at the time of marriage, which is a common practice followed in most of the South Asian States. Traditionally dowry has been interpreted as Stridhan (i.e the gifts given to a women by her parents). But in contemporary times the type of dowry that is practiced today is nowhere close to its traditional form. The modern dowry system prevalent in South Asian countries are more lavish than the earlier modest form and even went to the extent that it may be expected or demanded by the groom and his family. The purity of marriage has turned into a kind of business in which they sell and buy their children in the name of customs and traditions.

Unlike India, the practice of dowry and its effect over women in Pakistan are not much highlighted. In Pakistan, dowry practice is very common in rich family marriages of Punjab and Sindh provinces and particularly in tribal regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, as it is widely recognized as a traditional and compulsory ritual of marriage. Thus, in order to maintain the 'honour' in the family, community or tribe, parents give a huge amount of dowry to their daughters in the form of wealth and lavish goods.

Such practices within the Pakistani higher society have taken deep roots even within the poor sections of the society. The poor families of the girl's side are bound to give dowry because if the bride's family does not fulfil the required demands of the groom's family then in many cases marriage does not take place. Even if the marriage takes place but still if the bride does not fulfil their dowry demands they are tortured to death or murdered and even burned alive (Bride burning or Stove Burning). The bride burning is not only against women's rights but it is a serious crime against humanity as well. Thus, dowry which was supposed to be a simple gift of parents to their girl child turned into a demand and greedy societal custom. Moreover the irony is Pakistan is a Muslim majority Islamic state. According to Islamic laws and customs 'dowry system' as such does not exist. For Muslims marriage is a contract and a marriage is not officially complete without a contract. 'Jahez' (dowry) is not required to conclude the marriage contract while 'Mehr' is required. Therefore according to Islamic laws it is the groom who promises mehr to his bride as a gift of love and respect. But with time the very concept of 'mehr' got diluted with the negative aspects of the modern day dowry system, which did not originate in Pakistan. It is purely a cultural phenomenon which has crippled into the South Asian countries.

Dowry has been labelled as anti-social practice and is banned or restricted by laws in most of the South Asian countries. Even in Pakistan there is the Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restrictions) Act of 1976 and the Marriages (Prohibition of Wasteful Expenses) Act of 1997 in Pakistan. Nevertheless, no legal, political or social action seems effective in

discouraging the practice of dowry, in fact, the practice recently seems to have further intensified and extended.

3. Acid Throwing :

The very gender 'female' bounds a woman within many limitations in a society and for any reason if they happen to cross those limitations then they become victims of violent acts like acid throwing, stove burning or battered to death. Acid throwing is another heinous act inflicted on women in Pakistan. It is a form of violence which usually takes place either within closed doors or outside. In the first case the issue is domestic violence as the perpetrator is normally the husband or in-laws. In other cases the main motive is revenge. The domestic issues may vary from infertility or dowry demands or to suspicion of illicit relations. But besides these many a times rejection from women's side to marriage proposals leads to an attitude of revenge, the rejected male throws acid on the woman's face and body to give her pain and suffering because she 'dishonoured' him by refusing his proposal. In some cases, religious fundamentalists throw acids at women who wore western attire because they felt the women were too modern and westernized and furthermore, anti-Islam. The Acid Survivors Foundation estimated that there were 114 cases of acid attacks in Pakistan in 2014, involving 159 victims. . Therefore, although such acts are prohibited by both international and national laws. Still it has been continuing almost unabated because of deep-rooted patriarchal structures, a weak law resulting into the cheap availability of acid in the markets. Despite protests of Human rights activists against open sale of acid, it is still easily available. Thus, according to human rights commission of Pakistan, so far at least 42 cases of acid throwing had been reported in 2004 and the unfortunate side was that only in four cases, the accused were arrested and still many cases go unreported.

4. Sexual violence :

For any individual self respect is the most important thing that everyone treasures. But in most of the societies or communities people does not value the self respect of women in particular. Sexual violence is such a crime which haunts the female victims throughout their lives. Sexual assault over women again occurs within closed doors or outside. Since Pakistan has a patriarchal social structure the incidences of sexual violence over women are frequent. Women are sexually assaulted in the form of avenging oneself up on one's enemies by raping their women who are considered as a family's honour or through incest or keeping the women as a sex slave. Moreover, marital rape is not a crime in Pakistan. Unwanted sexual attacks are seen as a part of the institution of marriage and the concept of exercising sexual choice does not exist in the majority of cases. Besides this women outside their homes are also sexually harassed or assaulted or raped but they have to go through a long process in order to seek justice or face death. At times women are raped even in police station and

many incidents go unreported. Kursheed Begum, the wife of a member of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) activist was raped in police custody on November 19, 1991. These cases are such where urban and educated women were victims who had dared to speak out against this inhuman treatment of police. Therefore, women are discouraged from reporting a rape because of their vulnerability not only to the legal system but to the whims and personal biases of the police.

Unfortunately the laws that were formulated in order to provide justice were pro-male than female. For instance, The Qanun-e-Shahadat Law in Pakistan reduced the legal status of women. It barred them from giving evidence in case of rape, or any other harm. Likewise, the Zina Ordinance resulted in a rape victim being jailed for zina unless proved by four male Muslim witnesses. This makes rape practically impossible to prove without the confession of the rapist. In this regard, Weiss argues that, "without a man's verbal confession, it was nearly impossible to prove his guilt, for what four salah men would stand by and let a woman be raped?" The same logic applies to marital rape exemption laws. Since the passage of the Hudood Ordinance, a woman cannot charge her husband with rape. Men are in this way given full possession of women's bodies after marriage. Rhonda Copelon argues that the "defence of honour" excuses men for their vindictive behavior. This gives every man enough space to commit such crimes against their female family members with impunity.

Thus since the passage of the Hudood Ordinance, hundreds of women have been charged with the crime of zina. Most of the women affected by these laws are poor women having no support from the family or the state. Building on this, class cleavages are extremely sharp in Pakistan, women of upper classes are able to escape trial or punishment because of their class position. For middle and upper class women these laws are less threatening as the state is more willing to turn a blind eye to their 'sexual transgressions'.

However under the current civilian government although modifications of the old ordinances are made and women were encouraged to participate in the national politics still clear violations of International Law in the Rights of Women, discrimination in access to government resources and services continues unchecked in Pakistan and other South Asian countries. But how such violation of their human rights and threat to their security impacts their mental and physical growth and thereby influences the development of the nation are discussed below.

Implications of Gender-Based Violence on Women's Security and Rights in Pakistan

As mentioned above the amount of violence inflicted over the women in Pakistan has negative implications on women's thinking, growth, security and status in the society. It instills in them a sense of inferiority and fear thereby depriving them from using freedom of expression or their basic rights. In comparison to other South Asian nations the plight of

women in Pakistan and mostly in the tribal regions of Federally Administrated Tribal Area (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan are in the most deplorable state. According to Human Development Index 2014-15 Pakistan ranks 0.538- which put the country in the low human development category- positioning it at 147 out of 188 countries and territories. On the gender inequality index, as per the 2014 Human Development Report "Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience", Pakistan fell by four spots to 127 from last year's ranking of 123. Thus, keeping in view these factors one can view that the ongoing gender-based violence over women is getting worst thereby impacting both its citizens as well as the growth of the country. In this sense, what are its implications on Women's security and rights are discussed below:

1. Education :

Education is one of the basic factors of human growth and economic development. As such, in a nation, education is considered as a key contributing factor to human capital formation as well as poverty alleviation. But, to generate education in a peaceful way or to work for its further expansion and awareness, requires a state to be free of suspicion, fear, discrimination, violence and conflicts. Like many other nations of the world, Pakistan too had pledged to take responsibility for imparting basic education to all its citizens. This obligation is reflected in the principles of policy in Article 37 in the Constitution of Pakistan. But in reality majority of Pakistani citizens have been denied right to education, most of them being woman and girls. Shahnaz Rouse argues, that even when the state was supportive of women's incorporation in the public realm in the case of women's education, it was only under the pretext that educated women made better wives and mothers rather than taking it up as a responsibility. Consequently, they are bereft of many opportunities for personal development and contributions to society.

In fact, gender disparity in the educational sector is a burning issue in Pakistan thereby impacting women's educational security. The percentage of female student enrolments in schools and colleges shows a downward trend due to constant threat and fear from religious extremist groups like TTP or LeT and other religious terrorist groups who discourages female education in the name of 'Purdah' or disobedience towards the Islamic laws. The events that have led to the barbaric attack on Malala Yousufzai also point in the same direction. Thus, following Nigeria, Pakistan has the largest number of out-of-school children and youth, and is estimated to still have 3.7 million children out-of-primary-school in 2015. The 10th EFA report titled 'Putting Education to Work' views that despite having committed itself to the particular United Nations Millennium Development Goal, Pakistan still has the second largest number of out of school children: around 5.1 million. Of the 5 million, 63 percent are girls. According to the current estimates of female literacy rate in Pakistan it has come down to 48

percent in 2012-13 to 47 percent in 2013-14. The figures suggest there is still a long way to end gender disparity in education, as the male literacy percentage stood at 70 percent like previous years.

Even in case of female teaching staff the number of teachers during 2013-14 was recorded at 1.53 million as compared to 1.55 million during last year showing a decline of 1.2 percent. According to The Global Gender Gap Report 2015, Pakistan has the highest ranking in the reports overall measure of gender based biases and educational attainments when compared with other South Asian countries. [See Table I: Global Gender Gap Rankings of the South Asian Countries out of the 142 country]

Country Name	Rank Out of 145 Countries	Economy Rank Out of 145 Countries	Educational Attainment Rank Out of 145 Countries	Health Rank Out of 145 Countries	Political Participation Rank Out of 145 Countries
Bangladesh	64	130	109	95	8
Bhutan	118	90	121	126	132
India	108	139	125	143	9
Maldives	113	117	43	130	133
Nepal	110	121	122	94	70
Pakistan	144	143	135	125	87
Sri Lanka	84	120	57	1	59

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2015(World Economic Forum) URL:
<http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR2015/cover.pdf>

Moreover, from the above table it can be seen that Pakistan ranked second to last i.e 144 in global gender gap out of 145 countries and even in other sectors like economy and political participation its rank in comparison to other South Asian countries is very low. Therefore, the solution, however, requires more than just building schools and hiring teachers. Targeted interventions are needed to reach the most marginalised children and youth who are out of school today, including those with disabilities; from ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities; and children particularly girls affected by armed conflict and direct violence.

2. Health:

Health is one of the most important aspect of any individual to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. In fact, access to good health and nutrition can contribute positively to the

economy and social development of a nation. But, for the generation of good health it is necessary that a society is free from any kind of conflictual environment. Poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy also adds to the ill health of the population of any nation. Therefore, these factors cumulatively have a direct negative impact on mortality and morbidity, but also indirect impacts related to displacement, disruption of health care services and elevated risk of disease transmission. In Pakistan due to the ongoing gender-based violence women's health status are also gradually going down. Physical abuses in the form of sexual assaults, battering and mental tortures has lead to higher rates of miscarriages, bleeding in late pregnancy, premature labour or delivery, still births, unsafe abortions, female foeticide etc. In addition, women's vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as HIV, gonorrhoea, syphilis and Hepatitis C increases when women finds it difficult to negotiate for safe sex with their spouses due to fear or threat of violence. This leads to risk of unwanted pregnancies and sometimes being forcefully raped. Besides this the brunt of the armed conflicts between religious extremist and military are inflicted upon the women in the form of threats of kidnapping, rape or murder by the militants. In Gilgit-Baltistan, the Tehrik-i-Taliban-Pakistan (TTP) warned the authorities of bombing of the ultrasound facility for women at Chilas's district headquarter hospital, which the militant organisation dubbed as anti-Islamic, if it was not closed. Thus, due to undergoing such terrorising violence and continued humiliation women undergo chronic depressions or trauma compelling them to even commit suicides or flee from their homes.

According to Mother Mortality Ratio 2015 Pakistan ranks 147th last year to 149. According to the report, Pakistan sustained high MMR of 276 per 100,000 live births but when the disparity between the rich and the poor in different urban areas are compared such as in Balochistan there the MMR was over 700. Even in case of child mortality rate in Balochistan, out of 1000, a total of 158 children dies during birth as compared to 103 in other parts of Pakistan. Likewise, according to Save the Children's annual State of World's Mothers Report 2014 referred to Pakistan as the 'most perilous place' for mothers in the world. Pakistan was ranked at 147 out of total 178 countries in terms of condition of mothers-lowest ranking compared to all other South Asian countries. While Pakistan has halved its maternal mortality rate, it has failed to achieve targets set under MDG 5 for maternal mortality ratio by 2015 mostly owing to natural disasters and conflicts that have engulfed the country. Moreover women living in crowded and unhygienic slums lacked access to basic facilities such as safe drinking water, immunisation, mother and baby care during pregnancy and immediately after delivery, treatment for diarrhoea, pneumonia and other common illnesses. Further, according to the Pakistan Demographic Health Survey (PDHS) 2012-2013 launched in 2014 classified 14 percent women, between the age of 15 and 49, as thin (BMI<18.5) while 40 per cent as overweight or obese (BMI<25). In addition, the report also highlighted

Pakistan's maternal mortality rate stands at 276 deaths for every 100,000 live births. Only 41% women have access to skilled birth attendants while giving birth. In another study, conducted by Contech International, a healthcare research, consulting and management organisation in collaboration with Research and Advocacy Fund (RAF), Pakistan is ranked 4th in global maternal deaths where 16,000 women die annually due to complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. The UNICEF Demographic Health Survey for 2014 found that more than one in seven adolescent girls also experienced physical violence during pregnancy in Pakistan. Therefore, it is necessary that the health care providers should be active enough to create awareness about the consequences of such violent actions against women and not just neglect it considering it as a 'personal matter.'

3. Political Participation :

Political participation means the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. Political parties are among the most important institutions affecting political participation. In practice, however, there are often formidable obstacles to women's active participation in politics. Societies in which traditional or patriarchal values remain strong may frown on women entering politics. Besides this paucity of financial resources, lower levels of education, less access to information, greater family responsibilities act as hurdles for making political networks necessary for electoral success. In addition, militarism, the absence of well-established political parties as well as failure to include women in peace negotiations further adds to their woes.

In Pakistan Fatimah Jinnah sister of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, played an active role in the political sphere and that had been an inspiration to all women in Pakistan. Even the Constitution of Pakistan under Article 25, 32 and 34 asserts the protection of women's rights in all spheres of national legislation. But in reality women's political marginalization and other forms of gender discrimination and gender-based violence continue to be the norm in Pakistan (See Global gender gap 2015 ranking in terms of Political participation of Pakistan, mentioned in Table I). Pakistan has experienced extensive violence within the political sphere, especially against women. For example, the former Prime Minister Ms. Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in 2007 under political skirmishes. Similarly, Women's rights activist and Punjab Minister for social welfare, Ms. Zille Huma Usman was also assassinated in public view in 2007. There are several other cases of suppressing women's participation in politics such as barring women from voting in few areas of Punjab, FATA, PATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). In these regions of Pakistan even the limited political freedoms, such as franchise, are under attack by violent religious extremists, with women often the prime targets. In FATA adult franchise was granted only in 1996 by Benazir Bhutto's government. Political parties

were banned until August 2011. President Zardari, extended the Political Parties Order (2002) to the region. In the 2008 elections, militants prevented a third of FATA women from voting. In a number of polling stations, including in Upper and Lower Dir, Buner, Mardan, Dera Ismail Khan, Nowshera, Batagram and Malakand districts, men from almost all parties agreed to bar women, including party supporters, from voting. Male provincial assembly candidates in Upper Dir agreed a signatory would be fined ten million rupees (some \$100,000) to be paid to the jirga (council of elders) in case of non-compliance. Along with the politicians even the Pakistani Taliban distributed pamphlets warning women that they would be kidnapped and killed if they voted or otherwise participated in the democratic system that clashes with Sharia.

However, the Provincial Commissions for the Status of Women (PCSWs) though created to review provincial legislation and policies to promote empowerment, ensure gender equality and counter discrimination. But provincial response has been uneven in all the provinces due to lack of resources and political backing in Pakistan

4. Economic Empowerment :

Like men, women too have the potential to earn their living, as well as contribute towards the growth and development of communities and countries in which they live. At times due to societal customs, patriarchal dominance, limited access to resources and unequal opportunities, men continue to hamper women's ability to lift themselves from poverty and gain more options to improve their lives. In this regard, if women are economically empowered through access to land, credit or financial services tailoring to their basic needs, then they could also raise healthier and better educated families as well as they themselves too can become economically more independent in taking their life decisions. But, in reality women are not as economically empowered as much they should be. Mostly in the post-colonial countries the conservative attitudes and traditional practices and customs have bounded most of the women within the limits of their household.

In Pakistan economic empowerment of women is at a very poor state ((See Global gender gap 2015 ranking in terms of Economic Participation of Pakistan, mentioned in Table D). Due to societal norms and family pressures women are not allowed to have a job outside her home or restricted only to some specific jobs outside home. As such, women working in factories or industries earn low wages as compared to the male. Even in office workplaces women are assigned low scale jobs and excluded from collective bargaining because of their limited number and often contract employment status. According to International Labour Organisation Global Wage Report 2014-15, released in December 2014, Pakistani women are less likely to hold wage jobs and women earn 38.5% less than men in similar jobs. Insecurity and harassment also prevent them to spend more time out of their homes to

enhance their income. The Pakistan Demographic Health Survey (PDHS) 2012-2013, measured the level of women empowerment in the country for the first time. According to its recent reports, 29 per cent of women interviewed between the ages of 15-49, were employed compared to 98 percent men in the same age bracket. Thus, the main challenge to Pakistan is in the path of economic empowerment of women. The programmatic interventions posed by persistent social and cultural factors acts as an impediment to women's access to services including schools, work places and health care centres. Moreover, refusal of basic rights like inheritance and ownership of property, justice combine with constrained information about legal rights keep women socially excluded and unable to seize opportunities. Nowadays, even religion is used to restrict women's participation in public affairs.

Governmental Responses towards Women's Security and Rights in Pakistan

In a democracy, the government is looked upon by its citizens as the sole provider of security and justice. But, in Pakistan although the early military regimes and civilian governments were well equipped to provide justice and other basic resources and opportunities to its citizens but how far they were successful to ensure women's human rights and dignity is still questionable. In Pakistan, the physical and psychological torture endured by victims of gender-based violence at the hands of their male relatives is heightened by the lack of societal response to their suffering. Adding to their woes, even the Pakistani government does not take enough measures or show political will to prevent such violence and therefore in a way they too are partially responsible for the physical and psychological trauma experienced by victims of GBV. Despite of the alarming evidences of domestic violence and the reports of honour killings, the state refuses to formally acknowledge this problem or prosecuting against the culprits. Besides this, Pakistani government rules and regulations, does not apply to women in many parts of Pakistan. The primary justice system in tribal areas of Pakistan is based on traditions and custom that pre-exist the State.

However, rhetorical contradictions in the ideology of the state have allowed the Pakistani government to protect the liberal citizens of Pakistan in their deviations from the literal interpretations of Islam. Ayesha Jalal argues that "the state would tolerate all variants of Muslims, even the occasional emancipated women, only so long as its own Islamic credentials-intrinsic to its claims to be legitimate-were not put to the test." This has allowed a handful of upper-class women in Pakistan's history to take active roles in the Pakistani political sphere. The first women's organization, the All-Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), was founded by one such woman, the wife of the former Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, in 1949. This organization was given formal approval by the state as an example of its "progressive" attitude towards women's emancipation. Therefore, women's rights in Pakistan have historically only reflected a small group of women's voices. The vast majority

of women in Pakistan still remain invisible to both the state and to women's rights organizations.

Nevertheless, under the efforts of many international organizations like United Nations, Amnesty International and Human Rights agencies Pakistan Government have shown little interest towards protecting and securing women's rights and dignity. In this regard many steps were undertaken towards curtailing gender-based violence in Pakistan. Firstly, since the starting of the second millennium Pakistan organizes a campaign of sixteen days every year starting on 25th of November as 'Activism Against Gender-based Violence' that ends on 10th of December on Human Rights Day. In addition, it also observes 25th of November every year as the 'International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.' Secondly, within the period of five years from 2000 till date many new legal measures were promulgated for securing women's rights and status. For example, Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2004, Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance, 2006, Prevention of Domestic Violence Act. 2008, Harassment of Women at Work Place Act. 2010, Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act 2011 etc. Thirdly, the Government of Pakistan had also initiated various policies and programmes as well as established women commissions for the upliftment of women and their empowerment. For example, National Commission for the Status of Women, National Policy for the Development & Empowerment of Women, National Gender Reform Action Plan, the National Plan of Action, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), Benazir Income Support Program etc.

However, despite of such measures, as long as state and society do not realize the need for a social revolution, including demolition of patriarchal and feudal tyranny, it will be possible neither to end violence against women, nor to empower them, nor even to break the vicious cycle of poverty and exploitation which consequently undermines the growth and prosperity of the State.

Conclusion :

Gender-based violence whether it is within closed doors or outside remains one of the least legally addressed issues in Pakistan. The number of gender-based violences is alarming in Pakistan but there is no concrete information or data available which could measure it. Traditional, cultural and religious beliefs are used as a cover to legitimize the maltreatment of abusers. At homes, domestic violence is considered to be out of the realm of the law whereas those conducted outside are legitimised under religious customs and norms. Although after the democratic transition since 2008 the Governments of Pakistan had formulated various laws to provide security and protect the rights and dignity of women but how far they are implemented in the society at large is still dubious.

The Pakistani Establishment has a responsibility to bring their domestic laws in line with international human rights norms, especially since they are signatories of the Convention

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This applies not only to the formal laws, but also to customary or religious laws (which may or may not be written into the state legislation or Constitution). But, in reality Pakistan has little to show in regard to its commitments made in its 2011 CEDAW report towards promoting gender equality and curbing violence against women. The Hudood Ordinance, the Qazf Ordinance and Law of Evidence, which are against the interest of women, are still prevalent in Pakistan. Therefore, such laws should be repealed in order to end the state-sanctioned gender discrimination that has undermined women's dignity, rights and security and fostered violence and intolerance. There is also dire need to repeal the FCR and extend constitutionally guaranteed freedoms to women in FATA and KP, whose lives are gravely threatened by direct physical violence, sexual violence, structural violence and even militant violence due to indiscriminate military operations.

Although under the eighteenth constitutional amendment the Government of Pakistan had placed the onus on its provinces to end legally enshrined gender-based discrimination and assigned them the responsibility to protect and advance women's rights. But still one of the main challenges to Pakistan in regard to protection of women's rights is to go against the set patriarchal customs, norms as well as the dominance of tribalization in FATA, KP and Balochistan. The existing society and individual attitudes of the people in Pakistan, particularly the village and tribal areas accept violence against women as 'normal' or consider it as a 'personal matter' because of which the women remain away from seeking justice and equality for themselves. To this end, the federal and provincial governments must ensure that women have access to gender-responsive police and an accessible, impartial judiciary in order to mitigate the impact of violence and armed conflict. Therefore, the existing NGO's, women's organisations and groups should make an effort to mobilise all sections of the society, community as well as families promoting gender inequality and help in altering the prevailing gender-biased attitudes, customs, and practices towards women and support them in their struggle for dignity and justice. In addition, both the Government and society should work together to ensure that all girls are able to receive proper and meaningful education. Now that Article 25-A of the Constitution obliges the government to provide education facilities to all children aged five to sixteen, special efforts should be made to fill the gender gap at least at the primary and secondary levels.

Further, although the Government in Pakistan so far have themselves made or repealed many laws towards rendering the rights and freedom of women. But in reality democracy is meaningless if both men and women are not getting equal rights and opportunities as well as freedom at all levels of societal hierarchy. In this regard, gender equity should be connected to the various levels of social stratification in Pakistan. Moreover, there should be

popular pressure through mass media and pressure groups as well to implement policies which are in the interest of not only men but women in Pakistan. Similarly, women and women's rights activists should be determined, despite barriers and threats, to continue their struggle for political and economic empowerment of women. At the same time, the government should also respond to such appeals and incorporate them into policymaking, including counter-insurgency, which can only succeed when those most affected are at the heart of peace building. Lastly, efforts should be made to enhance awareness and encourage tolerance towards one another as well as try to change entrenched societal attitudes relating to women and women's rights.

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- 'Mehr' is a deferred transfer of negligible amount of money promised for payment by the groom to the bride as a gift. In this regard, even in the Holy Quran Chapter 4 Surah Nisaa verse 4:4 elaborates over the purpose of 'Mehr' it says, "And give the women (on marriage) their dower (mehr) as a free gift; but if they of their own good pleasure remit any part of it to you take it and enjoy it with right good cheer. (Al-Islam, The Holy Quran Chapter 4:Sura Al Nisa URL: <https://www.alislam.org/quran/search2/showChapter.php?ch=4>)
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GRAP is a proposed coherent gender reform agenda to align policies, structures and procedures for enabling the government to implement its national and international commitments on gender equality. The reforms are designed within contemporary development paradigm with women's empowerment at its centre, and with a view to enhancing the participation of women across the gender and governance sphere: from political participation to government actions, where these wishes are implemented through public sector machinery: institutions, policies and budgets. URL: http://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/thematic_issues/gender/background/pdf/e10pak.pdf