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WOMEN IN SINDH

By AFAB HASSAN KHAN

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Sindh is the second largest province of Pakistan, where i born, grown up, studied and used to work for many years.

By Aftab Hassan Khan

INTRODUCTION:By nature Sindhis are a very loving, polite & generous nation. They love their land, home and fields and, in most cases, do not want to leave Sindh.. The roles that women take on in society are very important: they are mothers, sisters and wives. But, too often, being a woman in the Sindhi society is a thankless task, and often very dangerous.

In Sindh,patriarchal customs of control over women include the institutionalization of extremely restrictive codes of behaviour for women, a practice of rigid gender segregation, specific forms of family and kinship, and a powerful ideology linking family honor to female virtue. Men are entrusted with safeguarding this family honor through their control over female family members -- controlling, specifically, the female body, both in terms of sexuality and and its reproductive ability. Thus, when a woman's behaviour is seen to threaten the patriarchal order, it is her body that is punished -- with beating, burnings, sexual abuse, and murder in the name of "honor."

Women in Sindh are particularly handicapped by the entrenched feudal system in rural Sindhi society, religious fundamentalists, and the government, which is run primarily by members of the ruling feudal caste. There are several factors that impede the development of women in Sindh, including a very low legal status women hold, as well as the lack of political power and will to change the gender disparity. The status of women reinforced by most family structures is compounded by a general acceptance of this low status by a majority of women who cannot even imagine the concept of equal rights. Thus women continue to perform three distinct duties – reproductive, productive, and community management – and are most often treated quite poorly throughout.

Women contribute substantially to the agricultural sector, often as part of family labor, yet the diversity and importance of women's roles in rural development is not yet recognized. In the rural areas of

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Sindh, women normally work a 16-hour work day including household and field duties, as well as fetching drinking water and fuel for cooking. Their subordinate position limits their access to and control over resources and benefits. Women's performance of domestic work, especially the care of children within the home, both furthers their dependence and subordination within marriage. (since they are the men who actually benefit from this work) and also weakens their position within the labour market, contributing to their low wages and poor conditions as wage workers.

Family and Community:

Sindh belongs to a part of the world where woman's status is disadvantaged by systemic injustice. Human development indicators such as sex ratio, literacy levels, educational attainment and labour force participation are abysmally low while the statistics for maternal mortality and morbidity, fertility

and crimes against women are extremely high. Sindhi males, customarily, are very suspicious & mistrustful of their sisters and wives especially. It is very normal for a man to prohibit a stranger from talking to his sister or wife, and vice versa. In either scenario, however, it tends to be the woman who is then punished for the shame. However primitive it may sound - however primitive it is – it is very easy for a Sindhi to declare his sister, daughter or wife as shameful, and thus opt to kill her via the practice of Karo Kari, which translates literally as Black Black, and translates figuratively into Honor Killing. There is very an open secret that when ever there is a monetary ,land ,property related or other petty dispute,many unscrupulous persons use their sisters,wives,mothers or even daughters as a tools to have upper hand in settlement of the dispute.This beast first kills his daughter,mother,sister or even daughter on pretext of having illicit relation with the person with whom he has some dispute,then announce to kill that person to protect his and his family's honor.The alleged guilty person ultimately settle the dispute on the term and condition of the killer to save his skin.The true story of that case happened in my city Sanghar ten years ago when one of the advisor,a lawyer by profession, of then Sindh Chief Minister killed widow of his brother and then married her only surviving daughter to his son so as a result easily get hold of his late brother's share in family property.The law does not protect women from this, nor does it persecute the male murderers.

It is also a common practice in Sindh to marry one's daughter to inanimate and holy objects, like the Quran, or even a tree, for example. The marriage with Quran is called"HAQUE BAKHISH" means" with draw from the right to marry".This cruel tradition runs usually in families of agrarian landed aristocracy of Sindh.The main purpose behind this inhuman act is to avoid the transfer of land property out of family hands at the time of marriage of their daughter or sister.The male members of family force the girls to have marriage with "Holy book" and with draw from the right to marry.One of our former Prime Minister and at the present moment one of the leader of opposition party from Sindh who's party is known for it's democratic credentials had forced their sisters to follow this cruel tradition so that they could have save there agricultural land.As well, it is not uncommon to arrange a marriage between a mature woman and a 12 year-old boy, or a young girl and an old man.

Personal jails belonging to and run by Sindhi Wadayraas (Feudal Lords) are common in Sindh. These jails are used to imprison Harees (poor peasants) and their families who are unable to pay their ever-increasing debts to the landowners. Imprisoned Harees are not protected by law and practice; and it is understood throughout Sindh that the treatment of Harees, outside of these jails and especially

inside, is egregious.

A colleague of mine told me about a girl of about thirteen or fourteen years old whom she had met recently. The young girl was very thin, with a covered head. She relayed the following to my colleague: "What worth does my body have? Does it have the feather of the proverbial surkhab or is it studded with diamonds and pearls? My brother's eyes forever follow me. My father's gaze guards me all the time, stern and angry... If it is so precious that it must be watched at all times, then why must I labor in the fields? Why don't they do all the work by themselves? We, the women, work in the fields all day long, bear the heat and the sun, sweat and toil and we tremble all day long, not knowing who may cast a look upon us. For if someone looks at us, we may be accused of dishonouring the family, and then be condemned kari and murdered." The young girl continued: "In a small village close by, there's an old man called Karim Dada. As a little girl I used to play in his lap. He is known and respected by my family. The other day I was working alone in the fields. Dada Karimoo passed by. I called out to him, "Dada, can you help me lift this crate of tomatoes and place it on my head. I have to carry it." He said, "You are like one of my daughters and very dear to me. But you should never call out to me, never speak to me. Your brothers are extremely cruel. If I help you put the crate on your head, somebody looking from a far might suspect something else. Together with this old man, your precious

little life will also go to waste." I cannot even talk to men who are old enough to be my father or grandfather."

She looked at herself with flaming red eyes as if she wanted to spit out her body. She is taught to blame her body for being a potential threat to her life.

This young girl is Meeran who lives in Khosa Goth, a small village in Kandiyaro and Darbelo in the district Naushehro Feroze. In this village a 13-day-old girl was recently declared kari and put to death.

HONOUR KILLINGS :

The stories are, tragically, plentiful: In an interview with a young woman last month, it was revealed that she had fled from her village in the Khairpur district because the tribal elders there declared her "kari." The reasons for the charges, it turns out, were that her husband and father-in-law levelled the false charge because they were opposed to her being a schoolteacher.

The woman, Rozina, who belongs to the Ujan tribe, told she had been forced to leave Sukh Wahan village in taluka Gambat after her husband, Sadiq Ujan, charged her with having an affair with a 15-year-old boy and threatened to kill her. Rozina Ujan said she and Sadiq are cousins who were married only five months ago, and that she was now pregnant.

The woman, who is in her mid-20s, said she had received secondary education, and her husband and his father, Naik Mohammad, charged her with being a "kari" after failing to pressure her into leaving her job at a private school in Sukh Wahan.

The woman said she and the boy, Sheral, were found innocent at a tribal jirga convened on March 13 after her husband levelled the charge against her on March 4.

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But tribal elders held another jirga on March 28, which denounced her and Sheral as "kari" and "karo," she added.

The jirga ordered the boy's family to pay a fine of Rs 80,000 to the family of her husband, who had asked him to divorce his wife.

But although Sadiq Ujan complied, she decided to come to Karachi because she still felt her life to be in danger.

Four-month pregnant Ms Ujjan said: "I was standing outside my home with my sister when a 15-year-old boy of the neighbours also came over there. My husband saw the boy standing near us and he made it an issue for nothing."

There are lot of girls who are declared "Kari", but still not killed called "DOHI" get refuge in the so-called safe house" called "KOT" of the feudal lards where they are totally at the mercy of the area king who and his henchmen use and abuse them which is not very difficult to imagine. The sitting Chief Minister (CM) is on the record to have statement that he like to kill all the Kari-s (Monthly Herald, Karachi). It's well establish fact that the majority of that type of killing occur in the area to which the incumbent CM belong, tribal clashes between Mehar (CM belong to this tribe) and Almani clan which resulted in numbers of deaths on the Shaista Almani marriage issue. His clan have the one of the largest "KOT" where hundreds of innocent girls are dumped with out any cry, just like silent birds with severely wounded wings.

The present law protect the accused in honor killing because it said that emotions, personal and family honor forced the persons to do this act in fits, so it's a bail able offence. This law was introduced by the British colonial rulers.

The meaning of "KARO-KARI", it consist of two words, the first KARO means the male person and the second one the KARI stand for female accuse. The both are called black and they are liable to death according to this tradition.

In a recent report prepared by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). The centuries-old customary murders, popularly known as Karo-kari (honour-killing) in Sindh claimes more than 400 lives every year.

FEUDAL IN POLITICS:

Not only in Sindh, but also in Pakistan generally, working for Human rights, and/or Women's rights, or any injustice in the society is responded to by authorities as though the advocate is a criminal. Thus, many human rights workers are either killed, commit suicide, or are forced into exile. For the past many years, families belonging to the feudal and wadera classes have been ruling the country, whereas the poor and oppressed people are not only deprived of their basic rights but also of the right to rule. The country's fundamentalist forces and the Army Generals are the protectors of this medieval feudal system; therefore, they are against those who speak against oppression.

Similarly, the status of women's education in Sindh is deplorable. For the feudal landlords, there are few - if any - benefits that could arise from having educated serfs. The landlords know that education

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of the "serfs" can only lead to the downfall of their perverse social system, as educated men and women will not tolerate to be treated like slaves. For this reason, the landlord class has opposed universal primary education from the very beginning of Sindh's history, and to this day, their efforts have succeeded. Rural Sindh, which is the heart of the feudal system, has an almost non-existent education system, especially for girls. The female literacy rate in Sindhi villages was only 13% in the 1997 census.

The prevalent feudal system in the country has polarized every dimension of human life, especially with regards to the treatment of women. Until this changes, the country can neither progress or prosper.

WHAT CAN BE DONE :

In terms of the possibility for women's rights to be achieved in Sindh and the rest of Pakistan, it should by now be clear to any and all interested in the issue that the question of women's rights belongs to the realm of democratic and human rights. Given the fragility of the democratic process in Sindh and in Pakistan as a whole, the only groups with a long-term stake in the institutionalisation of such rights are the most oppressed strata in Pakistan society – that is, the producing classes. These are also the only classes capable of creating a genuine democracy in the Pakistani context. It is to an alliance with these classes that women must turn if they are to ensure their rights. This is by no means an easy task. Proponents of human rights must also demand a secular society. As long as religion continues to be interlinked with the State, any gains we achieve will be incomplete.

25 Years old Human and Women rights activist currently living in exile in Sweden since october 2003. contact Author: aftabhasen@yahoo.com

Single Women Are Hot

By Yolanda Shoshnsna

Just when businesses and advertisers think they have women all figured out enters a new category with serious buying power: the single woman. It is projected that in 2005 single women will spend \$400 million dollars which has the business world standing up and taking notice.

There use to be a time when single women were treated like outcasts and looked on with pity. Unmarried women were secretly called "spinsters" by friends and family if they were not wed by the time they hit 30. The tide is beginning to turn as single women send out the message that they can do for themselves.

Businesses as well as politicians are now checking in to see what makes single women tick. The census data shows that 40% of women between the ages of 25 to 29 are not married. While 23% of women in the 30 to 34 age range are not married. One can only guess that the percent of single women over 30 will grow due to the fact that more women are stating that marriage is not of interest to them. The messages coming from single women are diverse from choosing the single life as the preferred

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lifestyle, choosing career over marriage first, to one person homeownership.

Single women are beginning to take the country by storm, even on the top hit show "Desperate Housewives" half of the characters are single. Advertising companies are beginning to get it when it comes appealing to the single woman. One commercial has two women who are sitting down after a wedding doing a high five for having "not" caught the bridal bouquet. This message says that businesses are seeing that single women are a viable market. That is girl power that is about to be in full effect.

Yolanda Shoshana (Shoshi) is a life strategist, speaker, consultant and artist. Shoshi founded, The Lily–Rose Company, a life strategy communications company for women that uses multidisciplinary avenues to help women master their lives. In 2005, Shoshi will launch the Center of Female Empowerment(sm), which will be an innovative learning center for women. To learn more about The Lily–Rose Company (

) or to get a free consultation send an email to

.

Single Women Are Hot

Child rights in Pakistan

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