

FORCED MARRIAGES IN PAKISTAN

"CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES"

1- Introduction:

Pakistan was created for its citizen to be free discrimination and deprivation they had suffered in the past. Citizen included women, and it was stated that They should stand side by side with men as Their companion in all sphere of life. This sentiment was reflected in the constitutional proposals subsequently made in Article 25 and 34.

Marriage is traditionally considered a sacred institution in Pakistan, rooted in religious, cultural and social values. However, when the element of free consent is absent, marriages becomes a site of oppression rather than a partnership. Forced marriages, where one or both partners are coerced into marrying there will, is a serious human rights violation.

This essay will be discussed about the causes and consequences of forced

marriages in Pakistan and will be looking upon the broader theme of legal empowerment of women. It argues that forced marriages are both a symptom and a cause of women disempowerment. Forced marriages will continue to undermine gender equality and social progress.

2- Understanding forced Marriages:

A forced marriage occurs when consent is absent or obtained through coercion, deception or pressure. It differs from an arranged marriage, where both parties willingly agree. Under Islamic law, free consent of both bride and groom is a prerequisite for a valid marriage contract (Nikkah), yet in practice many marriages occur without any consent.

3- Women's Situation in Pakistan:

Studies on Women and State have shown that state is not a gender-neutral entity. Political dispensation

at the state level can either reinforce female subordination or support female autonomy. The changing attitude of Pakistan state towards women ranges from half-hearted policy measures at best, to inaction and outright discrimination by enactment of retrogressive law particularly during the military regime of 1977-1988.

4- Legal status of women in Pakistani Society :

The constitution of Pakistan recognizes the principle of equality of all citizens and the right to equal protection of law. It specially prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, ~~stated~~ and make provision for measures of affirmative action by the state. Coexistence of multiple legal systems provides different option for settling contentious issue concerning women's right and usually least favourable to women is implemented. Even the application

of muslim laws is uneven for instance, the lack of protection Under statutory law. The women religious right to choose a spouse and the absence of punitive action for not giving women their share of inheritance.

5- Causes of Forced Marriages in Pakistan:

Forced Marriages stem from a mix of cultural traditions, patriarchal structures, economic pressure and weak legal enforcement.

i) Cultural and Traditional Practices:

- Watta Satta (Exchange Marriages) as families exchange daughters to secure ties, regardless of individual consent.

- Swara/Vani as girls are married off to settle tribal dispute or blood feuds.

- Karo / Kori (honor practices) as women are forced into marriage to restore family honor.

These customs perpetuate collective control over women's bodies.

ii) Patriarchal Mindset :

Deeply rooted patriarchy places women under the guardianship of male relatives. A girl refusal to marry is often seen as defiance or dishonor. Women identities are tied to family reputation making forced compliance "acceptable".

iii) Economics and Financial Motives:

Poor family marry off daughters to reduce financial burden. Women is treated as property as marriages can involve dowry exchange or settlements of debts.

iv) Illiteracy and Lack of Awareness:

Many women and men are unaware of legal protection. In rural areas, religious or cultural misinterpretation justify coercion. Absence of the rights education means victims often do not know forced marriage is illegal.

v) Weak Legal Enforcement:

As law exists but implementation is weak. Fear of social stigma and retaliation further silence women. Police and courts often side with families, discouraging women from seeking justice.

6- Consequences of Forced Marriage:

As it is indicated that the forced marriages has strong and long lasting impact on the lives of the spouses. They face many psychological as well physical and economic issue. Girls suffer from marital rape, unwanted pregnancies and from domestic violence. As it prescribe that consequences of forced marriage by studies. The result is of the current study much similar to previous researches.

Forcible marriage has social, logical, economic, political consequences. Forced marriages put women's physical

and mental health at risk. Forced marriages is frequently associated with forced sex (rape) and sexual abuse, which can result in serious health issues such as genital damage and injuries as well as long-term mental issues. It has also been found that women who marry in their childhood have higher rates of seeking mental diagnoses and support than other married women (Le Strat, et al., 2011).

Unwanted pregnancies are another issue created by forced marriages. Pregnant females who have not completed their physical development are at a higher risk of lifelong physical and psychological harm as well as maternal child mortality.

Childhood marriages expose girls to higher rates of HIV infection and postnatal depression. While it is thought that early marriages protect girls from Aids, studies show that HIV infection is

increased by pre marital marriage.

Marriage is widely to prevent children from continuing their education, Hence married boys and girls regularly drop out of schools. Furthermore both boys and girls find it difficult to finish their education due to financial constraint and domestic responsibilities.

7- Why Forced Marriage is a Legal Empowerment Issue:

- A marriage without consent is invalid in Islamic and legal terms, yet women are often denied this right.

- Women Rarely report force marriages due to lack of legal support.

- Many Women do not know the force marriage is a punishable crime.

- Denying women inheritance often pushes families to control them via forced marriages.

Thus forced marriage reflects the weak legal empowerment and ending it requires strengthening women's position under the law.

8- Recommendation for Strengthening Women's Legal Empowerment:

- Harmonize marriages laws across provinces set minimum age at 18.
- Ensure strict penalties including family members.
- Launch nationwide campaigns on women legal right.
- Use Media to challenge harmful cultural practices.
- Provide vocational training and Microfinance to women.
- Strengthen shelters and counseling services.
- Involve religious leaders to clarify that Islam forbids forced marriages.

9- Conclusion:

The problems of forced marriages is complicated, ~~this~~ the numerous reason have been found of forced marriages. It varies according to the legal, political and economic spheres. Parents utilize forced or arranged marriage to position their daughters because they are still considered children in some family and susceptible to parental powers. Parent feel they must marry their children at young age in order to protect them.

More is that marriage is the most important institution for preserving family honor, and it is thoroughly that a marriage as a person and the family social standing is maintained. Another method of controlling women sexuality is by forcing them to get marry.

Some Muslim families mistakenly thought that it is religious mandate

to marry their children without their consent. And few of muslim population regard arranged and forced marriages. Social and economic issues are typically present when forced marriages occurs.

It may enable the formation of the unions between family as well as the group connections and unity.