

Women and Society in Balochistan

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ABSTRACT:

Our whole society is a multi-colored, which is strongly structured on the basis of gender specifications for both male and females. Our society has a rich heritage of socio-cultural diversity. Their inhabitants are admixture of different races. Balochistan society is basically tribal in nature and there are different ethnic group with their own patterns of socio-cultural system and code of conducts. There is a clear cut structural difference between rural and urban parts of the society. Balochistani women have some special and significant characteristics as a member of a tribal society with some special features which increase the worth and dignity of a women and makes safer their position in a social system. Despite all these facts and realities the Balochistani women is facing enormous hardships of life like poverty, illiteracy & ignorance and poor health conditions. Woman faces lack of social services and many other social problems and hurdles in their lives, but still she is fighting against all hardships with courage and consistency to combat the misfortunes to make their harsh destiny comfortable and prestigious.

INTRODUCTION:

According to the George A. Theodorson "Society is a group of people with a common at least some what distinct culture who, occupying a particular territorial area, have a feeling of unity and regard themselves as a distinguished entity".¹ (Theodorson & Theodorson:1969) The above mentioned definition has clearly defined the meaning of a society group of people with distinct cultural

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values, specific area and most important thing is the feeling of unity about their unique entity. If we study our society we can realize that female and male both genders are the integrated elements of an entity or unit. Without their cooperation it is impossible to continue to whole process of human survival. Every woman and every man has some special status as a brother, sister, wife, husband or daughter and as a son. Generally speaking the division of labor between the sexes is best explained by gender but because reproduction is based on a universal biological difference between the male and female sex societies use this as a basis of allotting other tasks. These tasks are allotted according to convenience and precedent in the particular culture and determine masculine and feminine roles. (IUCN Pakistan Sindh program) Gender sensitization training).² (Source: Oxfam uk & Ireland 1994)

Women are approximately more than half of the total population of our society (51% approximately). The population of women has increased slightly more than population of men. The latest intercensal average growth rate per annum is estimated at 2.6 % for women and 2.5% for men during 1981-1998.³ (ADB: 2000) Women of our society are playing a vital and well defined role at every sphere of their lives. In our society there are well defined and gender organized role which are mostly specified for each type of gender.

If we put a glance on the societal pattern of our country, we can easily understand from the historical review of our society that we have a rich heritage of socio-cultural diversity. There are various ethnic groups of peoples composed on the basis of different languages, customs, tradition & other cultural and social values. Because the inhabitants of sub-continent are the admixture of different races of the world. On the basis of huge societal and cultural diversity, societal traits are multidimensional and unique to some extent for example: with different skin colors and complexions, as M. Iqbal Chaudhry has mentioned in his book, "Pakistani Society" that the people of Pakistan are descendant of different racial groups and sub-racial stocks which entered the Indo-Pak sub-continent over the past 8000 years, mainly from central and western Asia from time to time. In Pakistan there are different types of people living having different biological traits, which includes both minor and major physical traits ranging from facial characteristics to biological

stature".⁴ (Iqbal: 2000) Generally speaking we have the characteristics of invaders, nomadic and most ancients' civilization just like "Mehargadh" "Mohan-jo-darro" and "Harrapa". Civilizations where the social organization and well- developed life style were clearly adopted by the ancient inhabitants of our society.

Balochistani society is well defined and strongly structured with clear cut social and gender specifications for male and female members of society. Geographical Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan with its 347,193KMs comprising land almost 44 %(43.61%) of the country's total area. ⁵ (UNISEF & GOB :1995) .with scattered population patterns of estimated 6.2 million inhabitants in 1993-1995 . Its inhabitants live life within different groups identified on the basis of various socio-cultural and languages. Bloch, Pashtun, Brahvi are considered as major linguistic groups, other social-linguistic groups are Sindhi, Siraiki, Punjabi, Urdu speaking, *Hasni, khetran, *Dehwaar*, and Hindco speaking.

If we take the women's situational analysis than the case is very similar all over the whole Pakistani society .There are generally similar conditions all over the society such as described in a report of (Asian Development Bank of Women in Pakistan, July 2000) the status of women in Pakistan is not homogenous because of the inter connection of gender with the forms of exclusion in the society. There is considerable diversity in the status of women across classes, regions and the rural\urban divide due to uneven socio-economic development and the impact of tribal, feudal and capitalist social formations on women's lives. However, women's situation vis-à-vis men is one of systemic subordination, determined by the forces of patriarchy across classes, regions and the rural\urban divide.⁶ (ADB: 2000)

In Balochistani society most of the part is structured by tribal and feudal setup. The role and responsibilities of Balochistan women are different from male member of the society.

* Hasni:a Baloch tribe residing in the Beautiful valley of "Rarkan" situated in district Barkhan.

* Dehwaar,mostly residing in the area of Mastung district.

THE ROLE AND STATUS:

Women's social status and economic roles vary within the different groups according to the different social customs, modes of livelihood and levels of economic well-being.⁷ (UNICEF & GoB: 1995). There is a clear cut distinction between rural and urban societies. About 84% of Balochistan population lives in rural areas only 16% to 17% population is urban in nature. So, there is a big difference in the social norms, customs and traditional values, of practices, Illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, lack of social services: just like educational, health, employment opportunities, medical and recreational or rehabilitative services are the common problems of our society. As a member of an underdeveloped society we all facing the social problems of social disorganization, worsen situations of law & order, destabilization of region, exploitation and unfair distribution of wealth and resources, violation of human rights, harassment, honor killing, murder, rape, kidnapping and human smuggling are also the serious problem of our urban societies rather than rural society.

NATURE OF SOCIETY:

Balochistan society is basically tribal in nature with clear cut tribal practices: every ethnic group has further branches or sub tribes. The leadership is considered as hereditary its transfer from father to his son in most of cases, the local leadership known as chief, Sardar, Khan, Takari or Malik. Every ethnic group or tribe has their own codes of conduct and socio-cultural practicing values, their customs and tradition are also the reflection of misconception about religious injunctions. In a tribal setup people given preference to the collective benefits overall society, kinship is also a significant feature of the tribal society. Male dominance can be observed in that setup. Segregation of male and female in every aspect of life is quite evident. Subordination of women in every aspect of life in our whole Pakistani society is obviously resulting in the exploitation of the recognized women rights.

• THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MARRIAGE: FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD.

In Balochistani society the women's is considered as the "izaat" or honor and "gherat" of the male family member. In urban areas females follow the principle of purdah but in rural areas women only cover their bodies with a long "chadder" and also avoid talking with strangers on the way. But according to tribal tradition, if a visitor comes to some ones residence in absence of male member of the family, female is allowed to talk and entertain according to the hospitality.

Bravery, truthfulness & faithfulness are positive traits our society. According to the tribal rules the marriages are arranged by the elder members of the family. Marriages are considered an institutional relationship between two families. Mostly people prefer to marry within their own relatives, caste & tribes. But not restricted outside family. In some tribes the male or bridegroom pay or support the women's family in the shape of cash or "jaheez" which is called (*valver or *lab). But in urban areas educated areas educated people don't need this type of support. In some areas exchange marriages are also arranged for the protection of women rights or avoid the women exploitation which is called "watta satta".

In rural areas the women play a very well defined role as well as in urban areas women are more responsible for the socialization process & other household responsibilities & male family member bears financial expenses of the family & other responsibilities outside the family institution. In Baloch tribes, wife is called "*log banuk" which means "Queen of the house".

In joint family system or extended type of family the women plays supportive role for each other usually the elder women of the family distribute the domestic tasks other responsibilities. Rearing & caring of large family members including infants, cooking, washing, cleaning, maintenance of house are the daily routines of a household women. The working women mostly plays double role in urban areas. After performing their duties, they are also responsible for household chores. The rural women's are hard working in a sense that they performs activities which needs physical exhaustion, she collect

* Chadder :Beautiful ,embroidered or printed long piece of cloth ,for women ,spatially to cover the whole body.

* Valver: In some pashtoon tribes the male or bride groom pay or support the bride's family in the shape of cash or goods, called Valver.

* Lab: In some Baloch tribes the male or bride groom pay or support the bride's family in the shape of cash or domestic goods, called Lab.

* Log banuk: is word of Balochi language which means, Queen of the house.

firewood, fetch water, gathering fodder for animals from hilly and faraway from their residence. The social life is expended in rural area on different occasions of child births ceremonies and marriages or deaths or illnesses they frequently visit their relatives and live simple modes of life and enjoy the life in real sense.

Tribal laws and customary practices are more functional than, religious injunctions or *Sharia* and state laws "jirga" and "merh" and "merkah" in any awkward situation of dispute.

- **WOMEN LABOUR WORK:**

A considerable part of our society is agro-pastoral in nature. The participation in economical activities or labor force varies according to the class and social strata.

Many studies suggest that women in rural Balochistan engage in a wide variety of agricultural and pastoral activities, depending on the setting.⁸ (UNICEF & GoB: 1995) Balochistan handicraft are popular overall the world specially different types of embroideries, rugs, woolen made, carpets and "numda's". Women's participation in livestock and herding is significant in Balochistan.

- **SPECIAL FEATURES OF SOCIETY REGARDING WOMEN:**

Concept of worth and dignity of women in society, despite of other gender difference and role limitation, Balochistan people are practicing some significant tribal social norms regarding women. Women have a respectable status according to the customary roles of the society. Women is considered as the "honor" for the male members of the family so they are responsible to give her protection from any kind of exploitation and violence, Because women children and other weaker groups are considered vulnerable most of the world societies. So children, aged people and women's are specially given respect by the male members of the society. The words of "Izzat" "Gherat and Nung" and "Namus" are the most common relative terms used and practical in our society. According to Palwasha Kakar "Namus can be defined as that which is defended for honor to be upheld, instead of acted upon to achieve honor (such as hospitality, if someone offends the rules of the gendered order, then there is reason to act in defense of one's namus".⁹ (Kakar:2003) Balochistani woman is a beautiful reflection of modesty, innocence and faithfulness. In early age she is socialized in that away to

protect her "izzat" and modesty. She is a blend of simplicity and sincerity. She is skillful traditionally and trained in all the socialization process.

- BRAVERY, CREDIBILITY AND SPIRITUALITY OF WOMEN:

Bravery and faithfulness are also special traits of our women. Historically, there are so many examples of such brave and bold women's like "Mai Bandry" "Gul Bibi" and "BiBo" and numerous other brave women will remain the sign of boldness. Especially in rural society's inhabitants live in rough, tough and harsh conditions they live the lives in an open environment, eats poor food and take peaceful sleep which makes them physically and mentally strong in comparison urban artificial life. So in some clans it was factual reports that women's give birth to her child in a natural way without any external assistance as a "natural phenomenon".

There are thousands of stories of "love" faithfulness of women which are present in the valleys of Balochistan. Women in our society are the "sign of peace, prosperity and also sacrifice". If a woman comes between the disputed tribes the furious battle will be stopped at the time and women will be honored by a "chadder". In some cases to resolve the dispute of murder, women of opposite tribe will be married to the male member of effected tribe, which is a great example of a women sacrifices and make positive relations between two disputed tribes, another distinguished characteristics of Balochistani women is spirituality and morality, "Bibi Nani" and "Bibi zi'arat" and like Rabia khuzdari, were the enlighten and miraculous personalities. In 1987 when flood has destroyed the whole structure of Bolan Pass and smashed away on the miles and a famous bridge called "Bibi Nani Bridge" made by tones of iron was also washed away but the grave of Bibi Nani remained safe.

* Mai Bandry, was a bold & brave Baloch women of hamayun's Baloch regiment. when Baloch arm were defeated by enemies, she came alone in the battle field and was the reason for Baloch's great success.

* GulBano: was a prestigious women in Baloch society. she has made unsuccessful Iranian and British politics.

* BiBo: In 1666, Mir Ahmed Khan was khanate of Kalat fought 17 battles against Baroozai family and succeeded in last battle, due to the leadership qualities of MAI BIBO.

* Bolan pass: A historical beautiful adventurous pass, situated b/w Kolpur & Rindli.

- BEAUTIFUL AND MEANINGFUL NAMES OF WOMEN:

There is a beautiful tradition to give graceful and gorgeous identity like "BANUK" "GODDI" "IAIE" and "AMMA". The names of tribal women reflect the aesthetic sense & creativity of the society. There are hundreds of examples of the feminine identical names like "gohar naz", "mah ganj", "shah parri", "zer gul", "gula lai", "mah noor", "anaar gul" "bakhtawer".

In spite of these optimistic and factual, customary practices of our society there are some wrong and negative practices are also common in our society which is the sour fruits of illiteracy and ignorance. As a social scientist and social researcher according to my point of view there are obvious and clear cut bifurcations in our society as rural and urban society. According to the practical applications of social systems, social norms and social organization of the structure of the society, we can not adopt the same strategies for rural and urban society. If we want revolutionary and dynamic social change and social development in our society, we should consider the different significant features and characteristics of our rural and urban type of society plus the tribal customs and traditions. Again if we look at the common social problems of our society most of the effectees are "commoner" of our society both genders male and females, they are facing the problem of poverty, illiteracy, economic crisis, problem of insecurity, exploitation, ill health and so on-----. The most devastating consequences of under development in any society is a high fatality rate. Balochistan has highest infant and maternal mortality ratio (MMR). Compared to that many Asian and African underdeveloped countries. For example the MMR in Karachi is 281 compared to 673 in rural Balochistan¹⁰(MEGALOMMATIS: 2008)

Illiteracy is a major social problem of our society because social development is impossible without education. Education gives people sense of awareness, sense of responsibility and power of judgment.

According to the latest NES, Baluchistan's total literacy rate is 34 percent against the national literacy rate of 52 percent-57 percent of

¹⁰ Banuk, Goddi, Jaie & Amma: are the words of different local languages of Balochistan, used to show great respect & grace towards sisters and mothers usually.

which is for the Punjab, 50 percent for Sindh and 49 percent for the NWFP. The literacy rate among males in Balochistan is 39 percent, the lowest in the country. The Punjab has 60 percent and Sindh and the NWFP both have 54. Similarly, the literacy rate among women in Balochistan is also the worst in the country. With only 27 percent literate women, Balochistan stands poorly against the national female literacy rate of 48 percent - 53 percent for the Punjab, 42 percent for Sindh and 27 percent for the NWFP 99.¹¹ (Daily Times: 12,june)

Some of the civilized society's women are enjoying their full human right. They have given respect, and protection of their legal, religious and legislative rights which keeps stability and balance in their societal systems, but in whole Pakistani society the situation is adverse to some extend. Pakistani women are trapped in a web of dependency and subordination due to their low social, economic and political status in society. The majority of women suffer from all forms of poverty. In order to change women's position and societal view of their inferiority, structural changes need to be brought about in the social and economic order that shape our social order.¹² (ADB: 2000)

CONCLUSION:

If we want to bring a-revolutionary and dynamic social change and developmental change then it is necessary to adopt some special strategies for urban and rural parts of society women of Balochistani society have a variety of roles and responsibilities. In some roles they perform rearing and caring of their children and aged family members with in boundaries of their house while in educated upper class or middle class women perform office jobs and also household chores. Especially rural women of our society perform differently from urban areas. So without disturbing their way of life and social patterns more effectively improvement is quite possible in their lives.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION:

- Some practical suggestions
1. Mostly the women of house are considered to manage family affairs and responsible for the socialization process. So, women should be involved

in the decision making about reproductive process, just like planning for family size, utilization of family resources.

2. Education brings social change in the societies. So government can plan 100% literacy rate for overall population. Enormous budget plantings for "Education for all". Education brings independence, confidence and awareness, about human rights. Adults' education should be compulsory and parallel with normal and technical education. Educational resources may be formal or informal. Education should be given according to the social and cultural values. And mode of teaching should be common local languages with advance technological knowledge and skills.
3. Lack of infra-structure toward all spheres of the human life is a great problem of our society because social development needs establishment of infra structure of social services for example roads, medical, educational and technical institution for people. "Participatory approach will be successful" on large-scale planning.
4. Availability and access to health facilities are directly related to the human survival, if we analysis the situation of health facilities in Balochistan. Its worsen according to the different reports on (MMR) (MIR) rates most challengeable situation is faced by Balochistan people.
5. The low health status of women is the result of different social economic and cultural constraints. Early marriages, physical weakness excessive child bearing, lack of female related medical services. Lack of control on reproductive health or women general health .so, the govt. is responsible to provide all types of health services to the people .the lady health workers and local midwives should be trained at high level medical institutions.
6. Health & hygiene is also interrelated terms, in a society women are responsible for maintenance of the hygienic standards of the life. Mostly the health and hygiene of the family or over all society depends on a women house hold .the female family-members should be specially given health and hygiene education plus trainings and refresher courses for betterment of the society heath conditions, which directly affect the social functioning of the individuals.
7. The population of our society is scattered ,people specially in rural areas live in clusters far away from each others, The can't access easily BHU'S or other medical institutions. The mobile medical services are

the best suitable solution of that problem, especially in case of emergencies.

8. Without an integrated women gender frame work, interplay of cultural and economic forces in women's access to economic opportunities and other social welfare services, the process of empowering of female gender is impossible. Women are active agents of reproductive and productive spheres of the human life. A holistic change women 'lives is possible the systematic nature of gender inequalities of social, economic, and political institution are directly addressed.
9. Economic independence insures the status of an individual in a society. Our women is traditionally sound in different skills, like various handicraft s ,world famous embroideries, woolen numdas & carpets so, many other productive activities. A large scale inter price industry should be established, and the systematic arrangements' should be introduced by Govt &NGO'S' sectors. The integrated approach should b e adopted, during all process from production to service delivery to market. Whole process should be handed over to the women. The money of production price also given to the worker women for the economic empowerment of women gender.

In the up lifting process of women, the Micro financing has played a vital role over all the world specially (economically developing societies).Micro credit schemes should be introduced on large scales for comparatively for weaker section of our society .joined micro financing scheme keep integrated approach for the social &economic development bon the' behalf of the both genders .long term result will be gender equality, which it self is a systematic process of evolutionary process.

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