

REPORT
OF TWO DAYS NATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON
‘WOMEN, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN PAKISTAN’
21-22 MAY, 2010
ORGANIZED BY: HEINRICH BOLL STIFTUNG AND SHIRKAT GAH

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INTRODUCTION TO HBS AND THE CONFERENCE

Two days National Conference on Women, Religion and Politics was held on 21-22 May 2010. The Conference was jointly organized by Heinrich Boll Stiftung and Shirkat Gah at Holiday Inn, Lahore. The Heinrich Boll Stiftung-ShirkatGah Conference on Women, Religion and Politics in Pakistan was inaugurated by Mr. Gregor Enste, Resident Director, HBS. After welcoming the participants, partners and associates to the conference, Mr Entse spoke about the long association between ShirkatGah and HBS. In speaking about the history of HBS in Pakistan, he claimed that it was one of the few German organizations that has a political mandate, and the only German organisation that does not have its country office in the capital but has been based in Lahore since 1993.

He stated, that apart from its work in Germany and Europe, Heinrich Boll Stiftung works in around 16 countries worldwide and that it has 25 offices. He said that HBS' focus in Pakistan, is on bi-lateral relationships and that German Pakistan relations are fostered at various levels, through exchange programmes, visits and scholarships as well as through our partnership projects. He concluded by informing the participants of HBS role in promoting international understanding and democracy in the regions in which it works especially in thematic areas of 'gender democracy', 'women's rights and gender equality' as both issues are integral to its 'Green Values.'

In speaking about the background of the conference, Mr. Enste revealed that it was an outcome of HBS work on women, religion and politics undertaken about a year and a half ago. Ms Farida Shaheed's research based paper on Gender, Religion and Quest for Justice in Pakistan, was part of this project. This research, he said, had been jointly carried out by the HBS Head Office in Berlin and the United Nation;s Research Institute for Social Development. The aim of this research study and the conference was to generate debate and new ideas for the organisation's future work on gender development and democratization. He stated that HBS was planning to hold an international conference on the same issue. This conference, he said, would be shaped by the research outcomes as well as the information provided in the country papers. This, he hoped, would facilitate the examination and understanding of women's subjugation in the name of religion and also help in making strategies and planning for further research and the validation of women's work that is creating spaces while living in an environment where their existence has never been acknowledged in terms of their socio-politico and economic rights.

Ms. Khawar Mumtaz also spoke about the partnership between HBS and Shirkat Gah that had begun when the former first set up its office in Pakistan. Speaking about the thirty years of Shirkat Gah's history, she explained that it was a women's organization engaged in the dissemination of information to women for capacity and confidence as well as awareness on issues dealing with their equal rights as citizens. She recalled that the first, study undertaken by Shirkat Gah had been on the impact of customary practices on women's lives and on people's lack of awareness about their rights and spoke about Shirkat Gah's work on the issue of reserved seats for women in parliament. She stated, however, that despite visible gains in the area of women's political participation, there was a very strong sense of spaces for women getting tighter instead of expanding and felt that there was a need to find out why this was happening.

Khawar Mumtaz also spoke about the current situation in Pakistan and said that it was clear that over a period of time the political use of religion had become a major challenge to women's participation not only in politics but in public arena too. Women's entry into the public arena was being impeded and restricted as religion was being used to define what was right and wrong for women. Commenting on the dangerous trend to make political use of religion to justify the unjustifiable such as bombing girl's schools in Swat and acid throwing in Balochistan, she said there was an urgent need to examine this phenomena and find ways of countering it.



SESSION 1

CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

CHAIRPERSON: KHAWAR MUMTAZ

PAPER 1: KHALED AHMED: 'AN OVERVIEW OF THE RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT IN PAKISTAN'S POLITICS' ¹

Mr. Ahmed presented an overview of the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan. He argued that as a consequence of the Islamism [Islamisation?] the Mullas or the clergy has been given space to preach their 'particular' version of Islam. He said, their message is against democracy and they employ threats to create a feeling of terror amongst masses so as to publicise their version of Shri'a, which focuses predominantly on the control of women's mobility and freedom and propagates democracy as a western ploy to undermine Islam. He traced Pakistan's path to becoming an ideological state and the move towards "revisionist nationalism". He said 'there had been a level of ambiguity in the Pakistan Movement about the kind of state Pakistan would become in the future. However, the speeches of Quaid- e- Azam were clear on one point, viz that Pakistan would be a secular republic and not a theological state. The dominance of religion over state that we see today is a part of the nation-building process that began in 1949, immediately after Quaid passed away, with the adoption of the Objectives Resolution by the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

Speaking about the historical and political background of Pakistan, he said soon after the political elite realized that their interests could not be accomplished while keeping the 'Low Church' in loop. The term 'Low Church' was used with reference to the pluralist culture associated with the Sufiic tradition. Hence, Sufism and the cultural values associated with it were rejected in favour of the idea of Pakistan as an Islamic state. Assuming erroneously that Islamic law-making could not be achieved under the conditions of the 'Low Church', there was a move to bring the Deobandi faction into the political loop to give legitimacy to state institutions. This was ironical, as the Deoband faction had not been part of the Pakistan Movement and Maulana Maududi was one of those who had opposed the Muslim League and the creation of Pakistan. Later a Council of Islamic Ideology consciously dominated by the Deoband faction was set up.

Religious fundamentalism was covertly legitimized by the government of General Zia. There was an upsurge of religious militancy, as the Religious Right received heavy financial support from Saudi Arabia. For strategic reasons, America also supported the Jihadi faction in Pakistan as it hoped to use them against the USSR in Afghanistan and financed Jihadi youth groups who were trained to equate the spilling of blood in the name of Islam and belief in martyrdom as the real tasks of true Muslims. The propagation of Jihad and the consequent 'weaponisation' of Islam have inflicted permanent damage on civil society and state institutions in Pakistan.

¹ Khaled Ahmed, Director of South Asian Free Media Association, consulting editor The Friday Times and Contributing Editor Daily Times (2001-2009)

This, according to Khaled Ahmed is the formal iconic reason for the 'shrinking' of the state as access to weapons along with the acceptance of their use to kill or threaten with harm have created a legitimate space for the criminal factor in the country. As a consequence the state has dwindled, to the extent that it has lost control in 60% of Pakistan. This loss is not just territorial; it also includes areas where the writ of the state is no longer acknowledged and has given way to indigenous identities and cultures. In Pakistan today, there are 'No-Go' areas: there are dacoits along the River Indus in the south and terrorists who have taken over part of the northern areas and have now set down roots in South Punjab. These groups have established their own states according to their particular gains and interests.

Religious extremism began in earnest during the second jihad which was the extension of the Afghan jihad against the Soviets, when it moved to Kashmir as a low-intensity conflict with India after 1989. The first jihad had empowered the Jamaat Islami and many other militant groups were also trained to infiltrate in Jammu and Kashmir. The notion of a single ideology created the phenomenon of the Enemy. This has been useful in strengthening the role of the army and in legitimizing the use of non state actors. These non-state actors or Jihadis were trained and equipped with arms on fascist lines and their atrocities have been cosseted by ISI and other intelligence agencies. The surrender of internal sovereignty to these militias happened first in the NWFP and the Tribal Areas; it later extended to a number of cities in Punjab especially Rahim Yar Khan and Bahawalpur, in Karachi, and other parts of the country as well. Increasingly the youth joining the jihad have been trained or conditioned to believe that Jihad is vital because the Pakistani state has failed to enforced true Islam and that Pakistanis are not true Muslims..

PRESENTATION 2: FARIDA SHAHEED: GREAT REVOLTS AND SMALL REBELLIONS: CITIZENSHIP AND THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF MOVEMENT BUILDING

Ms. Farida Shaheed began her paper by saying that the idea of rebellion or theory of revolts is perceived negatively in our society. However in the context of social activism this notion has positive connotations, as citizens' activism and their involvement is a crucial element for any radical change in society and at the state level. Women should also be part of this political process. She clarified that the meaning of political process is not limited electoral politics but is the integral part of each process of civic actions. She referred to Antonio Gramsci's concept of a citizen that states that '[a] critically engaged citizen is a good one', and that the term does not exclude women.

Referring to the Khaled Ahmed's concept of the 'shrinking state' she emphasised the need to examine its causes. By drawing attention to the fact that when we speak of the state, we focus on the public arena but not on the private sphere, she raised a very important question which she herself answered later. She asked the participants to consider the role of the political parties and the military establishments and their strategic use of Islam in nation building. In answering this question she stated that the ruling group had always shown that Islam was endangered and that there was a need to save it. This focus increased during Zia-ul-haq's government when religion or Islam or Islam became a privileged marker for the justification of any action by the state.

The state, she argued, had made a consistent use of religion to take away the rights of the people such as the denial of provincial autonomy or the banning political parties etc. Even secular parties had used religion to gain power or had allowed themselves to be pressured by religious parties to pass retrogressive and undemocratic laws such as the 18th Amendment under which the Ahmadiya Sect of Muslims were declared a non-Muslim minority, or the ban on alcohol by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's popularly elected government. In fact it was Bhutto who first established the Ministry of Religious Affairs and used religion to gain time and consolidate his position in power and to justify changes in the socio-cultural and political field. By politicising religion, the state has also used it to control women.

In her definition of what constitutes a citizen, Farida Shaheed pointed out that while describing the definition of a citizen she said an official belonging of being a citizen who enjoys the rights of being citizen of any country. However, unfortunately the poor and marginalised, minorities and women never have the same rights in the context of Islamist patriarchy. What is needed is a direct relationship between a citizen and the state. However, according to our research we have found out that 80%-90% of the women of Pakistan have never met a state representative and hence are not part of the power structure. Nor are they in a position to get their voices heard.

In Pakistan, the family, clan, tribe or baradari and local customs are the land mark instruments which are used to control women. Women are more oppressed in our society than men. So how do women get their freedom? Even voting is not done as an individual but as a member of the clan or tribe and our politician also go to the head of tribe or Biradari for votes. Further, even the rights that are given by the state are not usually enforced by the public; people prefer to consult parallel systems like the Jirga and Panchayat. The concept of multiple identities has been discouraged systematically and focus is on a singular religious identity i.e. of being a Muslim. The narrowing down of this vision has been encouraged by the state. The middle class women suffered more as their spaces started shrinking and the patriarchal hold became stronger. The gap between the state and politics widened. The women want change in their everyday lives. They want to exercise their own choice in marriage; they are concerned with the problems that they face on an everyday basis. They seek the source of empowerment which could change their status instead of talking about state issues or other problems of the society.

She pointed out the impact of General Zia's Islamization. He brought religion into every day life. He tried to enforce Shariah and through the Hudood Ordinance treated designated women as unequal citizens. The army had been using Islam even before Zia to maintain the status quo. It has used 'Jihadi' non state actors whenever they required in the name of Islam. Zia tried to change the whole spectrum of society. He even inserted his kind of religious ideology while changing the cultural dress of women. He marginalized the minorities and created a hostile environment of vulnerability and intimidation for them. He used the media to inculcate a certain kind of image of a good woman. The Recitation of the holy Quran became a norm at the beginning of any activity or programme.

A research carried out in Vehari 2007 revealed that 177 mosques were made there, all funded by Saudi Arabia or the Middle East. The Women's Movement picked up a lot of state issues and agitated against the Islamisation of the law. But it is time to rethink our strategy. She concluded

by saying that we, as women rights organizations and civil society groups have always demonstrated on the streets and want every women to do the same which is not easy for everyone. These religious parties use the print media, radio and television to send out their message. We also need to do the same. The human rights language is not understood but Islam is since it is an every day phenomenon. It is and has been used to empower women e.g. quick justice in Swat and advocacy through FM Radios in Swat. Fazalullah gave space to these women for small rebellions e.g. not to be always obedient to man or it is not a sole task of women to please their husbands for their sexual needs etc. and they should also come forward and join TTP so that they could also play their role as independent human beings.

PRESENTATION 3: AMINA SAMIUDDIN:

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL OBSTRUCTIONS TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION²

This presentation was focused on women's participation in the electoral process and the maintenance of the public and private dichotomy where the link between home as private and civil society as public is clearly gendered. The data was based on field research carried out in Vehari, Punjab and Usta Muhammad, Balochistan monitoring the 2008 general elections and examines the bases of women's exclusion from the electoral process as both voters and candidates. Some of the issues discussed relate to culture, religion and violence, factors which perpetuate inequality and conceptually divide the world in two separate domains where home becomes the ideological and legitimate space which women can occupy resulting in their being deprived of their right to vote or to vote freely and contest elections. She stated that patriarchal interpretations of our social, cultural and religious context creates a disabling environment for the empowerment of women as a consequence of which many women choose not to challenge the status quo because of the cost associated with their actions. Underlying the use of religion and culture is the internalization of patriarchal ideology where women internalize these norms and beliefs and play an active role in reinforcing existing gender systems. These elements play a crucial role in dividing citizenship along gender lines relegating women to the private sphere where they continue to face inadequate representation at all levels of decision making from the household to the political sphere

While describing the study findings Amina Samiuddin said in Usta Muhammad violence was used by men to control women's decision making as independent persons where women were left with no choice but to vote for the candidate supported by their husbands as they were physically beaten if they disobeyed them. She pointed out the threat of divorce was also prominent and used to control women's decisions and mobility whereby if they go out of the house without permission or vote freely they are divorced and left with no protection or means of supporting themselves. According to the men in Usta Muhammad, about 50% of the women do not have an ID card which is not only a requirement for voting, but for finding employment, opening bank accounts and generally needed for registration of any form. Women are not allowed to get their ID cards made as the mandatory photograph is violative of cultural norms

² Researcher ShirkatGah

regarding women. In Vehari it was seen that women were caught between two different sets of legitimizations. Both culture and religion was used to justify women's exclusion from participating in the elections.

She narrated that once control has been internalized the use of 'power over' women is no longer necessary. Female candidates expressed the view that women's empowerment should be limited to within their own household. Local women also expressed the view that household activities were the main concern of the women whereas men were permitted by religion to work outside the home and secure a livelihood. They believed that a woman cannot disobey her husband's decision on who to vote for because it would be a sin to go against his wishes.

Christian women responded that they would vote for the candidate who they felt was most deserving. They believed that their religion does not oppress women. While talking about the religious factor as an instrument to control women, she stated that religion has played a vital role in barring women from participating in politics and in most cases has been politically motivated. However it is also important to note that it is not only women who face restrictions on voting freely. The structured space for women and men to make independent decisions on whom to vote for is influenced by local power structures such as kinship, biradari and tribalism where the principle of collectivized voting is followed rather than one of individual decision-making.

The culture of purdah was a common justification given by candidates for not addressing women. According to Ayub Khan from Awami National Party, though his party was in favour of women voting, women themselves do not come out of the house to vote. However ANP has been one of the parties that have made agreements with local leaders in tribal areas as well as in certain rural areas of Punjab and Sindh to ban women from voting claiming that traditions in those areas prevent women from leaving their homes. In these areas female polling agents are stationed outside polling booths not to facilitate women's voting but to bar them from casting their vote. Despite the assurances about women's equality in their manifestos none of the candidates addressed the issue of gender equality. The legal requirement for a Bachelors Degree resulted in women being allowed to contest elections by their families but only to act as surrogates for their male relatives who did not have the necessary qualifications to contest.

In recent developments despite cultural restrictions Mai Jori a peasant women contested the by-elections on a vacant seat for the Balochistan Assembly on 10th march 2010. She was contesting from the area that had been in the limelight in 2008 when women had been buried alive in a case of honour killing. During the 10th march by-elections Nissa, a community based organization run by women also mobilized women to get their CNIC's made and register for voting. The situation compels one to think about what is more difficult in the quest for empowerment – the threat of divorce and violence justified by culture, or interpretations of Divine Law which demands total obedience on part of the wife to the husband's commands?

PRESENTATION 4: RAZIA AND FAROOQ MALIK, CHOLISTAN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL: A TESTIMONY.

Razia and Farooq Malik presentation focused on the recent mounting of militant Jihadi organizations and their operational tools to engage the common public of Cholistan. They described the way Jihadi organizations had entered Bahawalpur. As a desert area, the prosperity of the people of Cholistan was entirely dependent on the rains. If the rains fail, the people have only the poverty to contend with. Jihadi organizations have exploited the helplessness and poverty of the people to their own advantage, by setting up religious seminaries or madrassas in the area and systematically motivating parents to send their children to acquire religious education. They tell the parents that their children will get three meals a day including fruit, milk etc and they will also be provided with nice clothes. Apart from catering to the needs of child they also provide monthly rations of flour, rice and other eatables for the family and a stipend for each child to the parents. This offer is accompanied by the reassurance that would be allowed to meet their child once a month. In the beginning, they keep the children in madrassas near their village. However, after a period of six months the children are taken to a Tehsil or District level Madrassa and later, the children are shifted to the District Head Quarters. They keep on shifting them to different madrassas at district level. The Children are not allowed to stay in any one madrassa for long, but are continuously shifted from one madrassa to another.

These children are given formal militant training and brainwashing during this period. Once this phase is over, they are prepared for Jihad. The speakers claimed that Maulana Masood Azhar, who heads Jaish-e-Muhammad, has established a huge madrasaa in Bahawalpur. The Government and other authorities are aware of this seminary and its work as a training camp. However, no one is allowed to even question its existence. Anyone daring against those running the madrassa, would not only be endangered by the Madrassa militia, s/he would be questioned and chastised by the Establishment and by the 'Agencies'.

While talking about the conditions of women in Cholistan they said that women are facing extreme inequity in the area and are being treated like animals. They hardly know what their rights are since they have to struggle hard to meet their the daily needs. They are the ones who face the brunt of extreme poverty in the desert area. They work hard looking after household chores, livestock and also carry out some needle work to meet their necessities of life. The speakers said they had formed groups of women and men at the village level to advocate women's rights. We aim to make the women aware of their economic and inheritance rights and right to marriage of their own choice, as the issue of forced marriages is very high in Cholistan.

The women who are engaged with us in awareness raising campaigns face the consequences of being active in curbing violence against women. They pay heavy price as being mutilated and victimized physically by the local racketeers. There are many customary practices like Watta Satta and Tan Bakhshi among others which are causing the worst repercussions. According to the outmoded custom of Tan Bakhshi, through which the girl is asked to verbally pronounce that I have surrendered my body to this particular man without any legal contract. This way the man whom to she gives up her body is called her husband, but in case of any child from the man, it

would not be considered legitimate hence are not permitted to get any share from the property of that man. Women are being forcibly married to much older men. To keep the inheritance undivided they even get the girls married to Quran or in one case even to a pigeon.

DANCES BY PNCA: MOHENJO DARO AND DUET CLASSICAL KATHAK:

There was a dance performance after the lunch break which provided a delight to the participants. Three performers presented their classical and kathak dance performances on Mohenjo-Daro and classic theme. These artists were invited from Pakistan National Council of Arts.



SESSION 2

RELIGIOUS MILITANCY AND THE RETREAT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

CHAIRPERSON: SHERRY REHMAN

PRESENTATION 1: SAMAR MINALLAH, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND DOCUMENTARY FILM MAKER AND ANTHROPOLOGIST.

Samar Minallah, a shared her views on the suffering and exploitation of women due to religious extremism and terrorism in SWAT and Malakand Division. She stressed upon the fact that the rise of fundamentalism had undermined public social spirit to the great detriment of Pakhtun women. Personal beliefs, she argued are usually a blend of culture and religion e.g. women visit

shrines and or engage in area specific funerals rituals such as 'bang' which is a particular form of elegiac poetry. This has a cathartic effect on the grieving family as it releases personal tensions.

that they developed and even those positive things that had a very positive effect as a catharses of grieved family but also get them released their personal tensions in that society that have ended because of militancy and Talibanization of the Pakhtun region.

Another aspect of religion that has been used as a form of exploitation for e.g. if a woman is being flogged publicly, none was able or would dare to question that. So then religion was used as a form of exploitation and thirdly religion has been used positively also as a form of emotional healing by the Pakhtun women too. To establish that she showed a picture of an Afghan woman called 'Gulpatti' who had kept a copy of the Holy Quran with her when she left Afghanistan-that was the only possession she kept with her. She did this because she believed that the Quran gave her great strength in difficult times.

Religion is a symbol of collective life, another aspect which cannot be ignored. In this reference she spoke that women got united and entered into a single moral community when they started giving their jewellery to Maulana Fazallullah. It was kind of a moral community that they had entered into, and that itself had a big importance in their lives at that time. And they came together for collective rituals and they felt as if they were starting anew when they gave up their jewellery which traditionally or culturally meant a lot to them. Just giving up their jewelry had a lot of cultural significance in the Pakhtun society and many women were divorced by their husband's when they gave their jewellery away to Maulana Fazallullah. She mentioned another point that religion has an important force for change. She shared her thoughts of while visiting and interviewing women in Swat where school girls and women in Mardan refused to go back to Swat as they feared that Taliban would come back again very soon and they just protested against that particular ideology of Taliban. So I see, she said a lot of hope in such women and in such girls as they clearly seem to question this particular ideology.

She showed pictures of Women victims of Taliban:

- A picture showed a woman called Shabana who was murdered in that market area called 'Green Chowk' She was a professional singer and was extremely afraid as to what might happen tomorrow on her return back to Swat.
- A picture showed a lady whose husband was killed because he had taken an injured man, beaten up by the Taliban to the hospital. She was so afraid that she got her 10 year old daughter married off out of fear because she was scared that she might also face the same consequences from the Taliban.
- Another picture showed a lady who was hoping that her share of inheritance would be given to her by Maulana Fazalullah, which was taken by them. She feels betrayed today thus.

She shared a montage of various testimonies of girls and women in Swat to express that how religion can play a positive or a negative role in the lives of women.

Testimony 1:

Samar pointed out that a woman says 'she does not believe in the Taliban ideology and that we do not want to go back and we do not want to endanger our children's lives'!

Samar explained how this woman had told her that the 'Taliban's information system was very efficient, how they found out very quickly who was speaking against them'. Thus in the highly insecure premises, if a woman spoke against their ideology this is a very positive thing in which we all should invest positively.

- Another testimony was of Buddhist women who was expressing her distress over cutting and putting on fire the old tree which were used be prayed by Buddhist community in Islamabad. She urged that we all as civil society groups should take ahead in protecting and respecting the virtue of minorities living in Pakistan. We (women) should challenge and need to reclaim it so that women can use these spaces positively as well.

In Dr. Samar's opinion this was all very positive as indicated in the testimonies that there were many people who had understood that religion was being exploited, women were being exploited negatively and the civil society groups and government should give them an alternative voice and space to help them so that they do not feel that they are alone, the way they did last time.

PRESENTATION 2

DR.SARFARAZ KHAN- TESTIMONY FROM SWAT

He elaborated first the historical background of SWAT that in the 16th century the Yousuf Zai tribe came from Afghanistan and conquered Peshawar. They went from Peshawar to Malakand, Mardan, Swat and then all the way to Buner. This tribe was present in all these places till 1969. It was then during the period of Gen. Yahya Khan Swat got amalgamated to Pakistan. During Abdul Wadud Khan and Jahanzeb Khan's reign Swati territories forming part of Swat. The State enjoyed an amazing peace and development in the fields of education, health and communication. The Yusuf zai conquered Swat in the first quarter of the sixteenth century and emerged and remained dominant segment. Instead of forming a government they lived in the tribal fashion, divided into two Dalas (factions) headed by their own tribal chiefs called Khans and Malaks. The Swat Yusuf zai enjoyed freedom and neither had paid taxes to Delhi or Kabul not yielded obedience to any foreign law or administrative system. They fought Akbar's mighty arms for years and incurred great losses over them. During the period of Khan's, not only procedures of litigation were simple in the state but also the cases were decided quickly in one or two hearings and the decisions were properly implemented as well. Moreover, there was no court fee. The people were safe from the pull and drag of lengthy litigation and the verdicts had been brief and properly implemented. This tribal set up was present in all these places till 1969, it was then during the period of Gen. Yahya Khan Swat got amalgamated to Pakistan.

The distribution of land in the Pakhtuns of the Yousuf Zai tribe is called 'Malli'. In 'Malli' only men were the owners of lands –women could never attain ownership of these. It was believed that women do not have any share in land thus they were not given any such share. There was no land settlement system or any concept of official settlement of land in place. In fact Kurram agency is the only one where such settlements are found till date. Amongst seven of PATA agencies only Kurram was the one which has made a settlement and that too has been made by a foreigner. After 1970 the whole business of land settlement was officially started in Swat. Sheikh Rasheed's land commission handed over the lands to those who actually owned them. Since women have not had land holding therefore they were not given share even by the Government of Pakistan.

Describing the distress of Swat people he shared that there has been a great unrest amongst Swatis over their territorial status. Since 1969 it has been called PATA (Provincial Administrative Tribal Areas) or parts of sometimes even N.W.F.P. Pakistani Law was not being extended there till the Governor of Pakistan's intervention. In 1970 there was no concept of parties, only JUI was present in some places, Khan Afzal Khan fought elections in Benazir's times. He was the only one with a liberal mind in Swat. Later onwards PML people also starting participating in the elections. The 1970 elections did not tell what the people actually wanted or wanted to do and till date there are no political parties in FATA yet. This has its' own repercussions.

Addressing all the demands that Swatis brought forward after merger with Pakistan he maintained that SWAT undergone a severe negligence by the state and its authorities. There have been lesser schools, lesser provision of medicines and no dispensaries in Swat since then. When Pakistan's Commissioner went there he built a school and a dispensary in the Wali's State area. Local movements e.g. Mazdoor Kissan Party's movement in Hashtnagar for land ownership rights were being replaced by Bhutto's Islamic socialism. During 1974 military dictator Zia-ul-haq, also played his role to oppress the voices of the intelligentsia of Swat. Zia-ul-haq alongwith close alliance with USA backed the Jihadi warriors in Afghanistan against Soviet Union thus the seeding stage of political environment was toxicated through weaponization and heroin culture got flourished immensely.

During the peak of Musharraf's time both the Taliban and the State functionaries were one and the same thing. When the operation started there, these State functionaries were the ones who protected the lower cadre of Taliban and the leaders were however managed escape to the Bajour and North Waziristan.

During the period of Sufi Muhammad and Molana Fazalullah mushrooming of illegally run FM radio stations have become powerful tools in the hands of these terrorists. Their use has continued unabated not only in Swat but also in its adjoining districts and tribal agencies. In fact, on May 17, an Inter-Services Public Relations statement said that 36 illegal radio stations were operating in Swat and Buner. Such unchecked proliferation of radio stations has helped and swell the ranks of Taliban sympathisers, which in turn affects the war on militancy. Pakistani authorities, however, have made only half-hearted efforts to block these illicit radio channels while the US seems to have woken to the danger they cause rather belatedly. When tensions

among different groups heightened, local warlords appeared on radio, threatened people, raised their number and created divisions and conflicts for the state.

Fazalullah simulated women to join the Taliban ideology stating that a woman's role neither is to cater man's sexual pleasure nor to do any household work to fulfill domestic responsibility. This appeared to be an outlet for women who wanted a change in their lives. They then began to join Fazalullah in his mission. However some recent interviews in FATA have showed that women are questioning their right of inheritance now, asking for it as this is Islamic right! Women empowerment can only happen if women are vested with their basic fundamental rights-those rights they are entitled to by virtue of being a human being. There can be no democracy without women giving their rights-if we think we can bring democracy otherwise that is a mere misunderstanding. According to the present situation he stated that our military, agencies are covertly protecting these militants because of their close binding with the state, military and agencies. Our establishment does not want them to be killed only for the reason of their own gains.

THIRD PRESENTATION:

MS. SANA HAROON, CONSULTANT RESEARCHER WITH SHIRKAT GAH

AMR-BIL MARUF: CONCEPT AND RHETORIC

Ms. Haroon talked at a length about where the idea of Amr-bil Maruf has been derived from. She quoted the Quran, Ayats references to the enjoining of good and the eschewing and preventing of evil in society. Its message – that the role of a practicing Muslim is to enjoin virtue, and to prevent vice among others, quite naturally lends itself to proselytizing and Islamist imperatives concerned with governing society. It is by definition a discourse of control by a religious right. Its implications were exemplified in the Hasba Bill of 2005, a parliamentary bill designed to create a district level justice and policing system of the country. The purpose of this bill was described as the implementation of an Islamic way of life revolving around Amr bil Maroof Wa Nahi Anal Munkir'.

In its specific references to women, the Hasba Bill made provisions for the protection of women in public places, working against honor killing, and the protection of women's right of inheritance. But side by side with this are the very curious culturally and arbitrary features of the bill which reaffirm a patriarchal rationalist authority through the 'special power' bestowed on the Muhtasib such offering unsolicited 'advice' to those who are 'disobedient to their parents' and to 'eradicate' those who professionally deal in 'Taweez, palmistry, magic etc'. In the text of the Hasba Bill, the Muhtasib with his special powers, and his sidekicks, the Hasba Force, take on the national objectives of the neo-reformist right (represented nationally by the Deobandi group, the JUI.)

She pointed out, Nizam-e- Adl was an act designed to entirely abrogate national legal structures in Swat and replace them in their entirety with the remit of the Darul Qaza and its subordinate courts and magistrates all working through Quranic and Sunah derived precedence to make law and pass judgments. This act, unlike the Hasba Bill, did not use the concept of Amr- bil Maruf

anywhere in its text. It was in a sense a more evolved form of the Hasba Bill (and was certainly seen by many as a litmus test for Islamisation across the country). Like the Hasba Bill, the Nazim -e- Adl talks about speedy justice and security for applicants to the courts, but does not specifically mention the place of women as plaintiffs or affectees of the legal code.

Through what was probably an evolution and tightening of legislation documentation towards creating Shari'a courts, the proponents of an Islamised Swat removed the concept of Amr Bil Maruf from the Nazim-e- Adl despite the fact that policing and public virtue remain a strong part of the demand for Shari'a court. Amr bil Maruf proved itself to be incompatible with policy because of its basis in personal opinion and personal morality rather than the rational, universal fundamentals which legislation prefers.

She mentioned three ideas- the insecurity of the religion, the impropriety of men and the threat to the virtue of women were dominant features of TTPs agenda. They that women are in danger of being raped or molested by criminals, or of attracting improper attention from men. Hence their movements and appearances should closely be governed. Even without the intent to assert their sexual charms, women are sexually beings and their presence in public spaces endangers a very fragile order of sexual morality.

MORALITY AND THE PUBLIC IN THE LIVES OF WOMEN OF MALAKAND

Ms. Sana narrated that the link between moral up righteousness and staying indoors or being closely veiled in the minds of women in Malakand was very strong one; even before the Taliban became more visible and dangerous forces in Swat in 2009. The moral code of Izzat is highly dominant in the area and it has been internalized by elder women very strongly. She further discussed that public spaces create a great deal of ambivalence in women who on the one hand say that Purdah is the restriction on their public movement which prevents them from going to the bazaar, going to school and continuing into the college. On the other hand, all women testified that the only domain in which they had authority and control was the private, domestic sphere. One girl whose mother had died said that her greatest sense of accomplishment had come from choosing wives for her brothers. Even after attending education, women's control and authority seems only to survive in the purdah of enclosed spaces. Women's desire to be outside was described as partly utilitarian and about getting an education or a job or just having control over budgets and material acquisition, but it is more about the freedom to shop, walk, observe, meet new people (as in college) or old friends (when out visiting)- altogether relishing life. So the ambivalence may well come from this fact- that at its core, what makes being outside really interesting is exactly what women are not supposed to do- waste time instead of tending house, spend money unwisely, be seen people, or bring people other than immediate family into position of importance in their lives (whether male or female).

The agenda of Aamr bil Maruf removes the divide between the potential for 'wrongdoing' and the actual act of doing 'wrong'. These themes must be examined both in relation to the Taliban, and reports of similar fears in contexts unconnected to the Taliban. She mentioned a cultural backdrop of Pakhtun society which places its own restrictions on women, and the role of the Taliban as seeing themselves as part of a movement of social reform.

SESSION III

'POLITICS OF SEXUALITY'

CHAired BY: FARIDA SHAHEED

PRESENTATION 1

DR. RUBINA SAIGOL: RESEARCHER, ACADEMICIAN AND GENDER EXPERT

RELIGIOUS VALUES AND BELIEFS IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Dr Rubina Saigol shared the findings of her research study that on Islamists Organizations and Madrassas regarding religion and women's education. As part of her research she had interviewed teachers of Shi'ite and Sunni faith based organizations in Lahore and Peshawar. The students and followers of these Madrassas and organizations were also interviewed. She had also conducted a component of the research with civil society leaders and head of the organizations for comparison. Discussions and questionnaires focused on the following questions: (i) should women receive an education? (ii) If yes, what kind of education they should be given? (iii) are there any particular subjects/topics that women should /should not be taught, and why? (iv) what are your views on co-education.? (v) what is your opinion about the bombing and torching of girls schools in Malakand division and tribal areas.

The faith based organizations that were part of the research were: Jamaat-e-Islami, Minhaj-ul-Qur'an, Al-Huda, Jamat-ud-Daa'wa, Jamia Minhaj-ul-Hussain, Jamia Al Muntazir, Imamia Students Organization, Jamiat-ul-Ulema--e-Islam (Fazlur Rehman), Jamiat-ul-Ulma-e-Islam (Samil-ul- Haq)

Research findings revealed that 'Dars-e- Nizami' is different for boys and girls. Dars-e -Nizami is teaching discipline/ methodology that is followed by most religious seminaries. She said that these religious seminaries were tools for the creation of passive and subservient bodies. Girls are given less education than boys and research is not considered necessary for them. The entire curriculum and syllabus for girls revolves around the notions of home making, wifehood, obedience, subservience to male authority and a secondary status in the social hierarchy. Most of the Madrassa leaders and managers are men and the teaching and training is premised on value education through the curriculum, but also through Aadaab and etiquette. She stated that this study reveals that women's education in religious settings is organized around the specific patriarchal ideologies espoused by the particular sect to which the Madrassa belongs.

It was found that all the religious organizations supported the education of women as long as the curriculum and syllabus were controlled, and women were trained to be good Muslim wives and mothers able to provide appropriate upbringing for the nation's future citizens. While both religious and secular subjects are upheld as necessary for women, there was a great deal of emphasis on a proper religious conservative and patriarchal education. The patriarchal gender

division of labor is clearly visible in that men consider an education in the domestic sciences necessary for women, while nearly all the women rejected home economics as a useless subject. Men were far more likely to see women confined to certain gender based roles and responsibilities as compared with women who regarded education as a right.

Men seem to be far more rooted than women in the separate spheres perspective – the public, male productive sphere and the private, female reproductive sphere. On the other hand, it was found that Women stake a claim to education as a basic right and feel that all subjects are not suited for women's unique nature and gender role. Men seem to emphasize the instrumental reason for educating and argued that an educated women meant an educated family and an educated nation. Women rarely accepted the idea that there are innate and natural differences between men and women making them suitable for different vocations. On the other hand, men frequently referred to women's weaker, delicate and different nature to argue that certain professions were suitable for them. Education and medicine were seen the best professions for women as they are considered to be 'respectable and decent' professions for women. The gender divide among women and men was thus clearly evident in the responses to the kind of education that is deemed permissible for women. In general, Shi'ite men and women appeared to be more liberal and open to women's secular education and emancipation than the Sunnis.

Dr. Saigol narrated the views on women's education that were obtained from members of civil society who are either secular in their approach or whose work is not specifically tailored to religion. These included academics, feminists, teachers and development practitioners. Their perspective on women's education offered interesting contrasts and convergences with the respondents of faith based organizations. The secular, civil society members were of the opinion that women should be educated; they should study all kind of subjects instead of studying only home economics. With regard to the issue of co-education, the entire group of respondents supported the idea. They maintained that coeducation would demystify men and women for each other. This contrasts very sharply with the views of religious men who expressed deep rooted fears of licentiousness, immorality and transgression of moral norms in a co-educational environment. The mainstream development discourse regards women's education as a modernizing and liberating force capable of ushering in progress and prosperity in society. She stated that most donor agencies active in developing countries underline the central importance of education in creating a modern, enlightened and progressive society where productive forces would be unleash through the spread of mass schooling. Women's education in particular, is perceived as a major development concept capable of enhancing women's productive capacity, empowerment and emancipation. It is also generally believed in the view point of civil society members that women's contribution to national economic and political development would increase if they were to be given an education.

HOORIA KHAN: RESEARCHER SHIRKAT GAH

TOPIC: MORAL PANIC-THE CRIMINALIZATION OF SEXUALITY IN PAKISTAN.

Hooria Khan's made a research-based presentation on the criminalization of female sexuality in Pakistan was based on the research on the criminalisation of female sexuality by the criminal

legal system and cultural and religious contexts in our society. She argued that an examination of the legal environment of any country reveals that it is a product of the relationship between the legal institutions, political paradigms and the cultural backdrop of that nation. This complex relationship is of utmost importance as it outlines the rights and entitlements available to citizens, the extent to which they are protected and whether citizens are treated as equals under the law.

While talking of the legal position on women's sexuality she delineated that the legal system in force in Pakistan is blurred because of its strong interaction with other factors including custom, culture and religion. Tracing the landmark moments in the history of the legal system she first spoke of the colonization of India that led to the uneasy co-existence of personal laws that were different for Hindus and Muslims in addition to the overarching Anglo Indian laws that were completely different in their origin and the values they embodied. The legal system in place in Pakistan is almost entirely based on British law she said. The Second moment occurred when the Islamic criminal laws related to sexual relations, alcohol and drugs were included in to our Constitution.

She added that crimes that involve some aspect of a woman's sexuality or its control are problematic for our legal system yields ground to culture and tradition, forfeiting the sovereignty law in terms of both letter and spirit and thus allowing what is *deemed* permissible to play a more prominent role than the law itself. The question of consent is an example of trumping rights in favour of control. Under Islam a woman has the right to freely give or withhold her consent when contracting her marriage. Any attempt by a woman to assert herself, even where law and religion support her is seen as disturbing and extreme measures are taken to discourage such practices.

Talking about the cultural position on sexuality she described that the ideas of izzat (honour) and purdah (veil/segregation) and their interconnectedness are key concepts when trying to understand masculine and feminine perspectives of what is deemed acceptable behavior. For women especially there are codes of conduct that are internalized and followed without question like not making any eye or body contact with certain categories of men. The rationale behind this 'restriction' is that women are unable to control their sexual urges and desires and in that sense need to be 'controlled', except the argument presented is that they need to be 'protected'. Preservation of this honour legitimizes the use of power. This scheme of patriarchy is also supported by senior women within the family with regard to younger women of marriageable age. Culture is a powerful tool that is used to reinforce standards of behaviour in society. A woman who does not adhere to accepted standards loses her reputation and is seen as 'bad character'.

Even though Islam has been seen as revolutionary in terms of the rights it accorded to women, religious texts are used to provide proof of male superiority over women in terms of their rights and what they are entitled to. This position of 'superiority' as it were has led to religious texts being interpreted by Muslim jurists and scholars and 'the discourse on women's sexuality and women's proper place in the social order has been dominated, if not totally monopolized by the male voice'. Any interpretation of a given text is bound to carry the personal perspectives or inherent biases of the interpreter himself. Moral codes for women exist and additionally are

enforced by the legal system in countries like Pakistan that subscribe to Islam as the religion of the State and use it as a source for family and personal laws.

MALEEHA ZIA-RESPONDENT TO HOORIA KHAN'S PRESENTATION

TOPIC: MORAL PANIC-THE CRIMINALIZATION OF SEXUALITY IN PAKISTAN.

Maleeha Zia, a lawyer and a human rights activist, responded to the points raised in Hooria Khan's presentation. Speaking about the mainstream obsession with women's sexuality, she problematised the discursive link between female sexuality and the notion of family honor. She argued that the entire game of honor and sexuality was a control mechanism over the woman's body which society has evolved over a period of time. This notion, which is fundamental to patriarchy, she said, was bound up with the concept of woman as male property. The head of the family was a man and women's mobility and freedom of action was controlled to keep her 'chaste and pure' in the interests of patriliney. The idea being that only by controlling a woman's mobility and sexual behavior the clan can ensure the passage of the father's name and property to his sons.

In our cultural context women do not know when to cut themselves off from traditions since our community, social system and customary practices play a very crucial role in categorizing those who break with the norms as immoral women and deal violently with them through acts such as 'honour killings'. So great is social pressure that even when men do not want to take recourse in this custom, they may be forced to do so under pressure from the family and the community. This mindset also found in our Government. There is a lack of political willingness to take action against those who commit such acts or even condemn them, because men in government are willing to trade off women's life in return for social security and harmony – and the vote. Our legal system perpetuates discrimination using religion and custom as an excuse. A lack of interest and willingness from the State to implement the laws pertaining women's protection is another key factor for violence against women

Using honor crimes as an example she talked about how judges show their bias in interpreting provisions relating to existing laws. Before the promulgation of the Honour Killing Act in 2004 murder in the name of honor was not considered a crime but a norm of society. She cited a few cases showing judicial bias in the handling of honour killing cases. Judicial bias is also evidenced in sympathetic attitude judges often adopt towards those on trial for murder in the name of honour.

Maliha Zia cited the following case to substantiate her argument: (i) a case in which a boy and girl were found in a 'comprising position' by the girl's brother. The brother along with his friends killed them both in the name of 'honour'. In this case Judge found the boy guilty but did not order him to pay monetary compensation to the victims' families by saying that victims were 'not masoom'(innocent) therefore they should not be compensated. (ii) the Saima Waheed case in which Saima married a person of her own choice and a judge expressed his disapproval in the following words, even as the Lahore Bench upheld the marriage: , "unfortunately there is no law which stops women from marrying of their own choice". (iii) the rape of a minor girl in which the

man was found to be 'not guilty' because finding of the medico-legal report showed the no bruises were found on the victim's body, thus showing that she was a consenting partner to the act and there was no rape. Thus her murder was justifiable. These sorts of judgments by our mainstream judiciary demonstrate not only a narrow approach in their thinking but also a deep rooted biased against women.

PRESENTATION 4

DR. FAREEHA ZAFAR: EDUCATIONIST AND GENDER EXPERT

RESPONDENT: RELIGIOUS VALUES AND BELIEFS IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Dr Fareeha Zafar shared the findings of recent research by SAHE in the urban areas of Khanewal and Rawalpindi. The research theme was the Gender Review of Punjab Text Book Board. The following points highlight the main findings of the study.

Islamization: Islamism and religion are the key points in the texts books of primary classes. She stated that there was a deliberate effort involved in making the entire system more Islamic when Jamaat-e- Islami had been taken on board to make Pakistan an ideological state. She pointed out that the personal version of Islam of Maulana Maududi was incorporated in all institutions of Pakistan. The education system was also formed on those lines so as to propagate the notion of a single religion based identity for all by repeated references to Islam in the officially produced text books.

Militarism: admiration for the armed forces and military heroes provides another area of focus in school text books. She argued that this was an act of conscious indoctrination to militarise the mindset of the entire nation. She supported this argument with reference to a school in Sialkot where photograph of Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan was given pride of place alongside the Quaid-i-Azam. She stated that this was one of the ways in which militarism and a jingoistic nationalism were promoted among the younger generation. She stated that their field research had been unable to find any display photographs or pictures of Fatima Jinnah, Benazir Bhutto or any other woman of note.

Gender disparity: Mushrooming of English Medium schools running privately predominantly in urban areas of Punjab set trends of their own version of Co-education. They call themselves Co-ed; however they have drawn the lines of gender segregation in the seating arrangements. The same premises are used for boys and girls till the primary level, but they do not sit together at the same desk. Classes are segregated at adolescence, which is considered a perilous period for girls and boys. The responsibility for this arrangement is usually placed on parental demand.

With regard to the issue of gender equality, research findings showed that all the groups including teachers, parents, and students, maintained that there should be equality at each level and there should be no discrimination between the two sexes. However, this position was countered by the simultaneous reference Quran and Islam that allocates specific roles and

responsibilities to each sex. She stated that most parents felt that the acquisition of education was safe and respectable for women.

The students were of the opinion that they are treated equally, however, girls also highlighted that the checks on their mobility that are far greater than those faced by boys. They said there were not allowed to go out with friends, but the boys were free to do so even late at night and they also get more spending money than the girls. Female students also mentioned that were expected to take domestic responsibilities whereas this was not expected from the boys. Dr. Zafar pointed out the gender division and level of equality that families maintain is visible. Teachers pointed out that the “girls are much submissive, obedient and easy to teach than boys. Teachers also pointed out the problems associated with the policies regarding the employment female teachers in boy’s schools near their hometowns. They said this exposed them to a lot of intimidation and sexual harassment from the male staff and even students, thus highlighting the fact that unless policies to facilitate female staff are thought out planned carefully, they can have a negative impact.



DAY 2

MAY 22, 2010- SATURDAY

SESSION 4: RELIGION AND WOMEN

CHAIR: BUSHRA GOHAR

PRESENTATION 1

Dr. FARZANA BARI

GENDERED PERCEPTIONS AND IMPACT OF TERRORISM IN PAKISTAN:

Dr. Farzana Bari's presentation was based on a research study on the plight of internally displaced populations in Peshawar, Mardan and Rawalpindi. She stated that according to research findings, 'women face harsher consequences of displacement compared to men'. They suffer more in militant operations conducted by the armed forces as victims of forced marriages and sexual assault.

Findings on 'gender perception and Talibanisation' showed that the majority did not support the Taliban. When they were asked what was their level of support before their migration, 55% of the people acknowledged talking to and supporting the Taliban. They said that they were good to them in the beginning; they provided justice to the poor. Others sympathized with them on ethnic grounds as they believed that the Taliban were helping Pakhtuns to fight America.

Dr Bari stated that 82% women believed that the Taliban were interested in power and the desire to gain control over the area and not in the Sharia. The study also showed that the Taliban exploited criminals, the poor, unemployed youth, students and those affected by the military operation and those who had internal disputes; that they convinced them to join their Tehreek for easy justice. The Taliban exploited their emotions, their poverty and even their criminal records for their own ends. They gave them power of arms, money and authority to command over common populace.

In speaking about the general perception that women did not directly participate in terrorist activities since they were victims of terrorism and atrocities performed by the militants, Dr Bari stated that research findings based on focus group discussions, showed that this view was erroneous. People, especially women, were greatly influenced by Maulana Fazallullah. They listened to his religious sermons on radio in Malakand. They were made to believe that Fazalullah would get them justice. Some were so heavily influenced by him and his teachings that they stopped listening to music and watching television. Women gave their jewellery and other possessions to him voluntarily, and were involved indirectly in the movement. However, the study did not find any evidence of women's direct involvement in the religious militant groups. There was no evidence to show that women received training from the Taliban. The women had started helping Taliban more actively by complying with their notion of a woman's position in Islam. Also they helped in the opening of bank accounts, providing funds and support to their husbands who were involved with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan supplying money and supplies according to their needs.

As regards the impact of Talibanization on both men and women it was observed that there were various ways in which both genders were affected by TTP though the degree and nature of the impact varied with the respondent's class, social and economic positions and ethnicity. The key focus of the Taliban was on the creation of a 'moral' society. They focused on women to enforce these moral standards and employed methods such as flogging as exemplified by the case of the woman in Swat. She claimed that the Taliban have tried to re-enforce male Islamic authority on women through different means such as forcing women to seek medical help from females only and have controlled their mobility by forbidding them to leave their homes without a 'Mahrim and forbidding them from going out to work as well as to restaurants and graveyards. They could not go to work, restaurants and graveyards.

These restrictions not only angered women but angered men as well as it meant more work for them. For e.g. men now had to accompany women to markets, undertake the work that had been done by in the agricultural sector, and involve themselves in domestic labour-chores that had been the women's responsibility. Both men and women were subject to violence when they did not follow the rules laid down by the Taliban. Men were forced to live their lives as the Taliban wanted them to; women on the other hand ceased to exist as autonomous human beings.

PRESENTATION 2

NEELAM HUSSIAN: EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR SIMORGH WOMEN RESOURCE AND PUBLICATION CENTRE

PATRIARCHAL CONTEXT: WOMEN SPACES

She talked about the religious practices and women's spaces. Her presentation was based on research findings of Simorgh's work on three inter related research projects. The basic premise of her research findings was that the Dars is rooted in and shaped by Wahabi Islam and has a definite political agenda however the Mazar with roots in popular belief and the Suffic traditions. Discussing about the common factors she said both provide spaces for the exercise of women's agency and expression however both are ultimately shaped by and contained within and bounded by patriarchal precedents while moments of empowerment, opportunities for the exercise of agency occur for women, they do so within patriarchal parameters.

Mazar culture is inclusive, it welcomes pluralism, offer place to enjoy and spend time as wished by any individual despite drawing the lines of principals etc. however Dars is enough exclusivist in its nature. It is intolerant, breeds violence, valorizes Jihad and feeds explicitly and actively in to dreams of power violently seized and kept links to terrorism legitimized. The Mazar has its criminal underbelly of fraud, scams, rape and sexual exploitation, but ultimately remains at the level of relatively small scale crimes. The Dars is a middle/upper class elitist phenomenon. Participants also include the upwardly mobile as Dars meetings provide an entry point in to social circles that it would be difficult to enter otherwise. She stated that popular religion with its focus on the Pir-Mazar culture draws predominantly from low income urban/rural classes where access to material resources including upward mobility is limited by poverty related factors such

as low access to education, jobs, and opportunities. Popular religion belongs among the economically less privileged in this case the residents of Lahore walled city that contains a mix of those who can read and write and those who can not but where majority is deeply rooted in beliefs and rituals of Sufic Islam as manifested in the Pir/Mazar scenario.

According to the research findings she pointed out that there is a link between women's education and the Dars. Educating has granted access to the written word to women – conversely it opens them up to the authority of the written word thus the phenomenon exemplifies in almost literal terms as Foucault's view of the link between power and knowledge and also of power as historically embedded.

She said that the Al Huda style Dars was found unknown in walled city. At least that has been our experience in the walled city where the Dars if spoken about, tend to be used as another word for traditional Milad, which is not owned by Wahabi Islam. The Dars especially, by virtue of its link with the written word lectures, confers authority on women; as respondent said that our family members listen to us/ and our opinion carries weight. The Pir's word carries weight as well. But in itself, for the most part, women's opinions are of no account- unless they are part of the Pir phenomenon such as Mai Sahib.

Women were allowed to either visit shrines, attend "milad" or partake in Dars is not required permission. If they are needed to seek permission they are easily allowed. It was significantly observed during a visit made to observe Laila-tul-Qadra Night. This holy praying night was organized by Al-noor run by Ms. Farhat Hashmee. Women had come from various major cities of Punjab including Rahim Yar Khan, Multan, Faisalabad, Gujranwala and Sahiwal etc. They had come to participate in the late night prayer. Majority of the women/ young girls were in the mood of festivity-enjoying, eating having chats with their friends. It was a whole staged performance where a leader was delivering lecture while describing 'Ayats' from Quran.

At the end of Ms. Neelam's presentation, Ms. Shazia Shaheen, another fellow from Simorgh Women Resource Centre shared a life history of a woman called Mai Sahiba. She lives in walled city. Mai Sahiba is a woman who has devoted her life to maintain her mother's tradition to hold annual Urs (congregation) of Lal Shehbaz Qalandar. She has created a space not only for herself but for the other women of her neighborhood who come, cry, sing and play drums and share their grievances to Mai Sahiba when she goes under the control of male spirit of any saint (Bazurg).

PRESENTATION 3

HUMAIRA IQTADAR: WOMEN IN ISLAMIST PARTIES:

Humaira Iqtadar presentation was based on her research on religious institutions and seminaries around the question of why women join Islamist Parties and the impact of their presence there. The vast majority of the women she met in both JI and JD during the course of her field work did not see Purdah as a gender issue because veiling was not framed in terms of a woman's choice. This was despite the fact that some times the fiercest opposition to their decision to observe Purdah was by the men in their family. These women invariably framed their

decision in the context of their personal belief and a relatively private relationship with God. Using mostly the term 'Iman' and only rarely 'Aqeeda' for belief, the women always placed veil at the centre of their personal decision. Practicing agency in this context includes the subordination of their will to God as well as of resistance, in this case to the men in their family. Agency is then a mix of subordination and resistance at the same time. Several women explained that their decision to practice the veil made these men, who were close relatives, feel as if they were not trusted as family members anymore. Citing one example, of such change, she spoke about the woman recounted who used to sit on the motor bike, common mode of transport for the lower middle class, with her sister's husband. Ever since she has refused to do so, he has not spoken to her. This process undoubtedly generates anger, but also sadness within the families. The women themselves often spoke with much regret and sadness of the lost relationships with their brothers-in-law, cousins, nephews and uncles.

Talking about the women in Islamist groups she mentioned that it was significant to observe the impact that women have had in the context of JI and Jamaat-ud-Da'wa because women have been actively involved in their political and social activities for at least the last four decades now. This impact has been relatively limited within the Jamaat-ud-Da'wa, which has only recently turned its attention towards recruiting women. The changes that women have incited within the two groups are not the direct result of 'feminist' consciousness nor driven by the clear plan of increasing diversity within these organizations but have been due to the different sets of concerns and dilemmas that they must negotiate on a daily basis. Women in JI mentioned diverse perspectives in answering questions regarding the role of religion in their lives. Women in these parties do not operate as a bloc and many women have changed their lives significantly to meet the demands of political activism and personal piety that have been placed upon them as members of JI.

These Islamist parties have used the spaces created by poverty in the lives such as neglect and their subordinate position in their families, and given tremendous spaces to exercise their authority in the name of Islam. They made them leaders who speak in front of the audience of various classes. This whole exercise of giving Dars to women and recruiting new cadre gave them a sense of empowerment though it was shadowed by patriarchal confinement. Women are immensely involved in welfare work. They arrange income generation activities for other women belonged lower strata. They also provide dowries to poor girls including sewing and embroidery machines. This enhances their sense of power among the poor and economically disadvantaged groups. Women within these Islamists parties are both the vehicles and targets of this expansion. She concluded by saying that while secularism has so far been viewed as measuring the increase or decrease in religion, it is also important to analyze the changes in the quality of religious belief.



THIRD SESSION:

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: WOMEN EXPERIENCES IN POLITICS

MODERATOR: AYESHA TAMMY HAQ

SHAHEEN ATTIQUE-UR-REHMAN She came into politics because of her family had a political background. She initially served as a member of Lahore Municipal Committee then became District Council member; after which she became a member of the Provincial Assembly and

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served as minister. She stated that it is generally considered that politics is a dirty game which is wrong; those who come in to politics to make money and power they pollute it for their own gains. She said that while in politics I acquire an opportunity to hone my political skills and I became aware of the problems of the masses e.g. how difficult for them to meet daily needs of lives. Despite been criticized for not covering my head my male counterparts failed to intimidate me and force me into wearing a duppatta over my head. She urged upon the local government system should not be abolished; it has to be placed in any form since it is the place where voice of a common woman can be heard. She also added that rape cases should strongly be put fourth and protested by women. **BUSHRA GOHAR** said politics was the art of 'compromise', as politicians had to compromise at every turn. She said women were currently playing important roles in different political parties. She was a women's rights activist before joining the politics. She came in to politics to bring a positive change in it. She maintained that before joining ANP I asked the ANP leadership to give me space not only to understand its inner politics but also to locate my own place in it. I joined it to put my efforts in creating a conducive environment and to take affirmative actions for women. She said 'When I came into politics we did not get much support from outside, infact I was blamed for anything which went wrong. She urged that as women politicians we need support from outside so that we could contribute better.

MEHNAZ RAFI (EX-MEMBER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY) She was a social worker, and served for Anjuman-e-Bahbood-e-Khwateen. She was of a opinion that I considered politics could be a big plate form to address women issues at large therefore I joined Tehreek-e-Istaqlal which was a representative of the educated middle-class. Tehreek-e-Istaqlal never came into power because PPP and IJI were in power then, and IJI was religiously dominated. I became MNA during the period of PML-Q. In this capacity I facilitated the provision of facilities unavailable especially education and health in my constituency.

AQEELA NAZ (ANJUM-E-MUZAREEN PUNJAB)

She said 'I am not a politician per se; I came into it because of the problems faced by tenants movement called "Anjuman-e-Muzareen Punjab". The movement was facing atrocities committed by the then state and its law enforcement agencies. She was invited to join the women cadre of the movement, she reluctantly joined since she had not have any experience in any such activity ever before. She said 'The apparent weakness in Anjum-e-Muzareen was the lack of literate women's participation in it. This was primarily because the women already in the movement participated in processions which was something which the educated women did not want to do'. She stated 'When I became a member of Anjum-e-Muzareen,I realized that women were put in the forefront only when they were needed for fighting or for participating in processions-they were never consulted for decision making. I talked to the leaders of the movement about this unfair attitude. It was realized in the movement and they appointed many women as leaders of their villages and she also became the finance secretary of AMP.

AMAR SINDHU (WOMEN'S ACTION FORUM)

She has been politically active since her student age when the linguistic and ethnic conflicts were on extreme in Sindh. She formed an organization for women called “Naree Tehreek”. This organization was made as a defence mechanism for the Sindhi women who were victims of injustice at the hands of the Urdu-speaking clan. She has gone through and closely observed the internal politics of political parties e.g. how the leadership and the workers treat women, how discriminatory their attitude was towards women. She was of the opinion that Political parties involve women when they want a ‘public show’ however they are hardly concerned with their issues. She pointed out that political parties should change their attitude towards the downtrodden after assuming power. She said the government had always sponsored religious extremism. Lack of democracy in the parties and male chauvinism was prevalent feature of the parties she has been working for.

RUKHSANA ALI came into politics when Zia introduced the Shariat Bill. She alongwith other progressive and likeminded women protested against the bill in front of Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani’s house. She has been intimidated many times by the males in power in the course of her political career. Addressing the issue of target killing in Baluchistan she told that her husband had been a victim of target killing in this manner as well. She requested all those seated there to think about ways for curbing this issue in Baluchistan. She said that not only men are being targeted but now women are being targeted too. **AYRA INDRIAS** talking about the minority representation she pinpointed that women from minorities come on the basis of reserved seats and they feel insecure when they are asked to discuss the issues and obstacles they face. Female representatives belonging to minority groups in the political arena face intimidation and harassment by the mainstream majority. But at the same time they also suffer and got exploited in the hands of males of their own religion



MAJOR OUT COMES OF THE DISCUSSIONS:

Each presentation of the conference was followed by a very lively question and answers session including the comments over presentations made by the panelists. These interactive sessions made the participants enlightened about the issues were raised in the presentations. These discussions also generated a sense of determination among the participants and played a role of catalyst to open up the minds of younger generation. There was an urge among the participants that this whole nexus of terrorism and role of state should be examined critically thus common people could not undergo the repercussions of military actions and terrorist attacks as well. Over the discussions it was learnt that religion should not be used to inculcate terrorism.

A student from Punjab University said that wearing hijab is some one's personal choice It, does not personally hinder my mobility per se. I adopted it on my personal will and neither Mullahas nor my family put pressure on me to observe Hijab. I personally refuse Moulvis who are engaged in negatively portraying Islam. In fact lack of education is a key problem among these religious leaders. Participants claimed that a political religion has taken over while leaving no space for personal religion.

According to the view point of another women rights activist, ratio of gang rapes in Sindh and Punjab is rising because the ruling political parties are backing criminal groups. There was a need addressed by the participants that we as civil society organizations and human rights activists should emphasize on more advocacy and awareness raising campaigns to empower people about their rights. There is also a vacuum that should be filled while forming such a platform which could provide a space where women can collectively come together, analyse their problems and formulate some kind of support. We are needed to challenge the old beliefs systems and come up with new alternatives for people's empowerment especially of women. Since there were students among the participants as well, thus they were asked to must read the speeches of Quaid-e- Azam and Munir Commission Report of 1953, so that they could also be aware of Quaid's progressive thoughts.

It was discussed that women should be more educated, well informed to counter the customary practices that impede their ways towards empowerment, legal issues/ constraints and social factors that are responsible for hindering women's participation in political arena.

There was a dire need raised in the discussions that women should be aware of their legal rights and state should ensure the implementation of laws that have been promulgated to protect women e. g. Honor Killing bill and protection against women's harassment at workplace bill 2010 etc.

Women should be involved at all levels of decision making process so that their individual voices could be heard at policy level. Local Government system was regarded as best platform for women to join political process at local level and address the issues of women.

It was also recommend by the panelists that women politicians/parliamentarian should not be asked to resign when they are unable to handle any crisis. Women have fought long to reach at this point, so they should not burdened of any wrong doing. Women should remain in the parliament and they should be supported despite pulling them back.

It was discussed that religious militancy and extremism is impacting women adversely. Similarly, increased intolerance is another problem of ours today and women have to face brunt of it. We all should work and advocate the message of plurality hence integrity of the society could remain as iconic feature of it.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

There were not specific demands formulated at the end of the conference yet it was concluded that how can we assess and deal with the shrinking of state and how to deal with this tightening of space as regard to women in our society. It was raised by the participants that we must distinguish the political use of religion in political life and in the public space. Religion should not be an issue of state civil society groups, networks; likeminded individuals should be together to work out ways in which we can expand spaces and counter this situation-to prevent religion from being used to ban women's entry into the political arena. We have observed the militant politicization in the name of Islam of young women as evidenced in case of Jamia Hafsa and Lal Masjid case. Thus we need to look at the challenges to women's participation especially in the context of militancy. We need to do more research and find out more about the dynamics of such situations. We also required more research work that will enable us to attain a more informed overview of what is actually occurring, assisting us in dealing with and meeting any challenges. We need to look at women caught in such unjust situations and identify perpetrators which are responsible to create this injustice instead of hiding them while using politics-power religion, customs or other instruments.