



RESEARCH PAPER

Traditional Customs and Rituals for Women in Rural Sindh, Pakistan

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This is anthropological research paper explores the regarding the women's cultural practices and rituals in rural Sindh, Pakistan which had been practiced since the generation such as aurt as *sati* a women who remains unmarried whole life, *Sang chati*, compensation in the form of girl, Saam tradition in Sindh, *shelter*, bride price, to sell the women for earning money, *takan te sang wathan*, and *Chhokari jo pet dayan*. Those customs are still being conducted for the women in rural villages in which only women is victimized, found guilty and men always become dominant because there is the patriarchal society in rural villages and non-availability of especial girls education and awareness, to sensitize e about the basic right of women who are innocently, maimed, tortured and punished by the *Waderas*, land lord. Police also does not protect the women and government welfare department also does not play its due role to save the life of the innocent women.

Introduction

The traditional customs and rituals have been conducted by the members of the rural communities since the generations and those rituals and traditions are continued by the patriarchal society because there is male dominated society. Every decision is taken by the male members of the community and women are not involved in the decision making. Every ritual revolves round the women, take the example of Satti women, she is not married because of property, if she is got married to outside family (exogamous married) then whole property would be out of the family, this is way the girl is married within family, if there is no mate then she is remained unmarried whole life and that girl is named as *Satti* women and she remains at home till to death.

There is another example of bride price, the women is sold on the money, when girls is sold on the money like commodity then she does not get good respect in the mother in laws family, because she is always tagged as purchased commodity and has been sold by their parents and she loses respect when she is sold by their parents. *Saam* is another customs where a women is blamed for honor killing, so her family try to protects her, they handover the women to the landlord or any higher caste family such as Syed then girls remains at their home till the final decisions, she serves at their home like servant until any decision is made.

Such kind of customs and tradition also are misused by the patriarchal society for their own benefit and State does not take any decision against them where women's are punished, tortured and maimed on the name of rituals and traditions. There are also lack of insinuations which should have the behavior change, counselling of the patriarchal society as they can improved and women may progress in their filed, unfortunately, no any concrete step has been taken to improve the rural women's condition in the remote areas of Sindh. This study has highlighted the real issues of women as their problems must be addressed in order to solve the women's issues and problem and they can contribute to the welfare of the nations and their families for the future generations.

Literature Review

There has been too much literature review on the gender and patriarchal society in which many researcher have contributed a lot, however there are many other Social scientist who have highlight major issues of the women who suffers a lot ingot villages especially in the rural areas of the villages because there are the facilities in the urban areas , however there is no any good facility for the women in the rural areas as they can get the benefit, if we take the example of the urban cities , there are women who also perform the job duties and contribute for their family and women are major contributor for their families and the nations , In rural areas women are deprived from all the basic facilities .

This author has argued that there is in inequality in rural areas of Pakistan at different places such as women are not treated equals at homes, communities and in decisions making and they do not have access to health facilities, education, they are not permitted to participate in-house decision making work, this shows that there is dominance of the patriarchal society (Muzaffar, et. al., 2018; Ali, 2020).

Author further has mentioned that kinship system is old and has roots in the patriarchal society and that society is too much dominated at female society since the generations and it is very much important that education is must for the women to uplift the status of the women especially in the remote and rural areas of Sindh, Pakistan (Shah, 2020).

The researcher has argued that Government could play pivotal role to address these issues which are based in the gender perspective in which government must start the grass roots level community development programs into the village to educate the women and bring them into the main steam of society and equal to male and it is also important that the male must be sanitized (Pasha, 2016).

The education role is important for promoting the women's status at the remote and rural areas of Pakistan, because majority of women suffers into the rural areas of Sindh and as well as other parts of Pakistan. In Baluchistan there are many villages which are deprived from the basic facilities, schools, health and other basic amenities, if such kind of basic facilities are not given to the females then how could they progress (Khatri , 2015).

There is inequality in the whole Pakistan for the women and Pakistan must declare the emergency for the development of the women, School should be made in every village, health facility must be given to every areas, especially vocational institutes should be opened for the girls. Rural areas must connected to urban areas as women can get access to urban development and even get jobs and education in the cities (Tarique , 2012).

Education Scholarship, jobs, medical education and vocational training should be given to the females as they can help their families. Women should be empowered through the education, health and business as they can independent and should not dependent on other members and make their own decision (Aman, 2013). There is too much review of literature on the women and majority of the authors have emphasized on the education of the women. They have recommended that basic education is utmost important, it must be given to every girl of the village, on other hand few authors have also suggested that male education is also important for the progress and improved to patriarchal society as new generation will benefit from the education and contribute for the women and will help the girls for promoting their education.

Material and Methods

Qualitative research methodology had been applied to unearth traditions and rituals in Sindh. Research has also personal filed work and observation while having informal discussions, in-depth interviews during field work. It was very difficult to get the data on especial women's issue in the rural areas, however I had acquaintance with them since long time in the village and I assured them that this data will be used for research purpose and communities people's names would not disclose then they were agreed to share the information. I build their trust while living with them then it became easy to get the data and information about the women's tradition customs.

Results and Discussions

As A Sati Women (*Sati Mae / Aurt*) In Sindh

There are the few majors castes in Sindh such as Sayyed , Peer Rashdi and o Makhdom , these castes are influential and dominant as socially, culturally traditional and economical and always remain in the ruling class of Sindh government. However there are the lower middle class families who also belong to the both castes in Sindh.

Both families have endogamy marriage system. When there is no boy available of same caste within the family to get married with their own girls in the same caste family then the girl remain unmarried whole life and lives with mother and father's house if her parents dies then she lives with her brothers. There are two major reasons in both castes not to get married of girl in other families (exogamy marriage). One reason is that there is inheritance of wealth matter (land, money, property) that if she is married then the whole inheritance property would be transferred to her husband who belongs to other caste.

Another factor is that both castes are recognized superior and respected castes in the community if they get married to girl with inferior caste then this is being counted to inferior and disrespectful to them to give their women out of caste from their own family. This is why the girl remains unmarried whole life. Girl is engulfed in coercive power which is linked with two negative coercive choices because she is socially and culturally compelled and forced to make one negative choices out of two coercive powers, she has to remain with her own tradition and or she has to flee away from her homes

If she leaves her house then she will be killed then she also negatives other coercive choice that she may commit suicide but she has both negative choices which are linked with coercive power of traditional culture. Almost women do not rebel but accept the tradition of coercive power to remain at her home and remained unmarried till whole life. When she remains unmarried girl at her home then her status is also changed she is also called as Sati women and sacred women (*Pak aur /Sati Mae*). While sitting at home many females devotees (*Mureed*) come her to get the amulet (*taveez*) prayer (*duwa*) and shifa.

BBC also made the documentary on the unmarried Sathi women of Makhdum's family in Sindh it has been shown in the documentary that when girls are not married then they are being got married with Holy Quran (*Quran San Nekah*).

Sindhi noted and renowned writer of Sindh Abdul Qadir Jenjo has argued that there is no any tradition (*Rasm*) exist in Sindh to have nekah with Quran, however this is the tradition that when girl is not got married then her whole family feels guilty and they all gather at one place and come to the unmarried girl and say to her apologize them to bestow her right (*Haq bakshan*) that they could not get her married due to that she remains unmarried whole life.

This is called bestow of her right (*haq bakshan ji rasm*) but not to have nekah with Holy Quran and such kinds of cases are not being yet reported in Sindh to have nekah with Quran he further argued in his articles. There is role of coercive power because she has negatives choices which are linked to coercive powers and has two negatives choices if she runs away from her home then she will be killed or she has to accept and follow her tradition throughout the life to remain unmarried at her home whole life to secure the respect of their families and elders in the society. However due to influence of the migration, urbanization, education, media there are the few families of both lower and middles caste in which exogamy system prevails now a days.

Compensation in the form of Girl (*Sang Chati*)

This tradition which still exist in the rural part of Sindh such as District Shaikarpur, Kashmore, Thul, Kandhkot, Larkana, Khairpur and Jacobabad, has been also reported in the media and newspapers.

Sang Chati is the tradition in which a 6 to 10 years old daughter of the farmer or poor people is given into the account of compensation of debt (*Qaraz or ohdher*) to land lord or influential person of village. When a farmer has taken a debt of one lac rupees (

Qaraz) from the land lord then the landlord gives him time that farmer has to return debt after one years.

When debt (*Qaraz*) dead line comes to close then landlord asks the farmer to give him money then farmer says I do not have money to return because I have not arranged and could not managed on the due date due to the poverty then decision (*Faislo or Jirga*) is called, all the people of the villages are gathered and farmer is found defaulter in the *Jirag* then he is ordered in the *Jirga* to compensate (give) his daughter in spite of debt money then *jirgo* decides that farmer's daughter fate that she must be handed over to the land lord.

Now it is up to land lord either he may sell the child or get marry or keep her in his home whole life or make her servant to his home. Now innocent child whole fate is in the hand of landlord. Now the innocent child has negatives coercive choices which are related with coercive power because the *CHATI* tradition is so powerful in Sindhi society that she has to accept what so every come what may.

She always had coercive negative choices that now she has to accept all the decision, when she would remain in the house of land lord and she has to obey, and tolerate all the decisions of the land lord at his home due to the tradition of the coercive power which immense influence in the traditional society of Sindh.

Saam Tradition in Sindh (*Shelter*)

Saam Tradition is transferred from generation to generation in Sindh. This is also coercive powerful tradition in rural Sindh. This coercive powerful tradition is related to respect, honor, ego, assurance, security and protection while promising and trust worthy to the women in Sindhi traditional society which still exists few remote and influenced rural areas of Sindh such as Jacobabad, Larkana, Kasmore, Dahrki, Kandhkot, Shaikarpur and Thul.

When women runs away from her home due to love marriage or honor killings then She comes to influential man's home (*Haveli*) to take shelter as her family members may not murder her. This shelter tradition is called *SAAM*, it means the girl he who takes shelter in others home is called *SAAM* (shelter) tradition in Sindh.

When girl fled away from her home and takes shelter (*Saam*) in the influential man's home (*Haveli*) that is belongs to landlord or Syed family because no one enters in the Syed's family and landlord's home in rural areas of Sindh. As she enters in the others house then she becomes *Saam girl* means she is honor, responsibility and respect of that house and it is utmost responsibility and tradition of the forefathers that *Saam* girl should be protected at any cost.

As no one can harm her till the any decision is made regarding the *Saam* girl. Then girl is decorated with the *Ajark* which symbolizes the respect (*izat*) of the girl (*Nayani*) and this girl *Nayani* is thought to be equal of seven Qurans means one (*nayani*)

girl is equal to seven Qurans in Sindh. Now when the *Saam* girl is decorated with *Ajark* now she is responsibility of this house to take care of her until her fate is decided.

Now here we can conceptual the theoretical concept the coercive power tradition *Saam* in Sindh. because this *Saam* tradition has itself the Coercive tradition in which girls has no choice if she is in the land lord home now she is also not safe at land lord because even land lord can sexual harass her and she has not choice because if she runs away from landlord home then her family members will kill her.

She has both negative coercive choices because her life is also in danger in the land lord home. She cannot return to her home. There many cases had been reported in Sindh where land lord have also got married with *Saam* girls, have sexual harassed them, raped them and have also kept them in their home while making *Saam* in the Hallvi. Many cases had been reported in which *Saam* girls are returned while making *jira* then then they murdered. The *Saam* tradition is coercive tradition in the Sindh in which Sam girl has always the negatives choices to save herself.

Bride Price (To Sell the Women for Earning Money) (*Takan Te Sang Wathan*)

This is bride price tradition which is called in Sindhi language *takan te wahan* means to sell the women on the money which also exists in the rural areas of Sindh. In my opinion this is also coercive power tradition which is also linked two negative choices.

The women wish is not asked for marriage means her choice is not being considered. If she wishes to get married on her choice but she cannot express and get married because she is compelled and her parents are greedy who needs money and want to sell daughter for their own benefit. The person he who gives the large amount of money then girl's parent will sell their daughter and handed over them even they would not take care about the age will hand over daughter to 14 years old girl to the 40 and 50 years old man for the sake of money.

Now the girl who is daughter cannot resist whatever the decision is taken by her parents, now she has to accept it. Now she has coercive tradition of power and has negative choice here. If she leaves the home then nobody will get her marry and again her parents will not accept her.

When she is got married she is dealt as an inferior at husband's home and his family members say her that we have purchased you due to home work and they treat her as servant. They ask her that you have to work and clean the whole house means bride price women is not respected in mother's law home. She is always bad treated and she is always realized that she is sold women like commodity.

She is always made realized that you are infer because your parents sold you and she does not have value then she passes the hard time in husband's home. Now she has negative choices, if she runs away from her husband's home then her parents would not accept her or her parents would sell to another party.

If she remains at husband's home then she has to face all the subjugation at home. Now she has always negative choice because coercive powers have always been negative choices and bride price culture is so coercive in Sindhi society in which women has always negative choices.

Chhokari Jo Pet Dayan

This is the cultural tradition in rural areas of Sindh known as *Pet jo sang* means when girl got married to the boy then her parents decides that when their daughter would give birth to girl baby who will grow then will get her marry with her daughter's brother's sons. Parents decides the fate of her daughter's daughter who has not come yet in this world means her daughter's daughter marriage is decided before arrivals in this world.

There is also an other side of this tradition in the Sindhi Society. Two brothers decides that we have to get marry of our sons and daughters within our own family as our relations may long lost and remain forever, although the cousins do not like each other but girls is forced to marry with the uncle's sons.

Here this coercive tradition which forces the girl to marry with his uncle's son if she is not agree then she has negative choices coercive power tradition, if she runs away and get marry with other boy then she will be murdered in the name of honor killing or she has other choice to marry with uncle's son whom she does not like but she is compelled, has to accept her father's decision.

She has two negative choices which are linked with coercive power which are linked. So this *pet Jo sang* tradition is coercive tradition in the Sindh which has lot of influences in the Sindhi society of the rural areas in which girl and has always negative and coercive choices. There is coercive power and Sindhi society for the women who are always subjugated on the gendered bases due to the male dominance the Sindhi society.

Conclusion

This paper was based on traditions which exist in our own Sindhi society in rural areas such as Sati women (*Sati mae / aurt*), compensation in the form of girl (*Sang Chati*), *Saam* tradition (*shelter*), Bride price (to sell the women for sake of earning money) (*takan te sang wathan*), *chhokari jo pet dayan*. . Still there are few communities in Sindh's rural areas where these rituals and traditions exist and that has been continued since generation and had been honored for those communities to sustain these traditions. There are no schools, health facilities, community centers and vocational institutes for females in the rural areas of the villages, however there had been slightly declined of these traditions because many communities migrated from the villages to cities due to heavy floods, insecurity, and scarcity of water for cultivation. Government does not have sustainable plan for the remote and rural women's for education, health and jobs, and there is also male dominated patriarchal society which always discourages the women progress. Government must launch the major project and programs to uplift the

rural village's women as they can contribute for their family, children and their nation building.

Recommendations

- Girls' Schools should be opened in all remote and rural areas.
- Every girl must be enrolled in the School
- Male must be sanitized to promote the girls education
- Government must start the development project for the women
- Girls Vocational institute should be opened into village level
- Women should be made an independent for earning their butter and bread
- Health facility ought to be provided women at door steps
- Girls should be encouraged for higher education
- Women must be given priority for the jobs at all level
- Women should made self-made and decision maker.

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