

Negative Socio-Political Gender constructs limit executive domain for Women in Administration. Need for Gender Neutral Management Policies and Practices

*Dr. Farah Masood**

Pakistan Administrative Service, 111th NMC (masoodfarah@hotmail.com)

Introduction

Gender discrimination and disparity is a prominent feature in Pakistani society. Patriarchal values embedded in local traditions and culture limit women's social, economic and political rights which lead to Pakistan's poor performance on various global parameters. Pakistan ranks 150th among 178 countries on Human Development Index (HDI)¹ and it is 148th among 149 countries on Global Gender Gap Index.² The major part of human development gap is because of gender gap as women lag far behind men in almost all development indicators.³ Women face hostility, violence and discrimination owing to the stereotypical assumptions about their inferiority relative to men. Gender imbalance is not only a pressing moral and social issue but also a critical economic challenge. If women - who account for half the country's population - do not achieve their full economic potential, the economy suffers. McKinsey Global Institute estimated in a study that in a "full potential" scenario in which women play an identical role in labour markets to that of men, as much as \$28 trillion, or 26 percent, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025.⁴ In Pakistan women empowerment is viewed essentially as a Western value and it is either ignored or actively opposed.

Statement of Problem

Despite compelling reasons for gender equity and equality, stereotypes about women in Pakistan erode their position in society. The Constitutional provisions and spate of pro-women laws fail to secure equal status for women due to the negative stereotypes about their ability and what is appropriate for them.

¹ Human Development Index 2019, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/PAK>

² World Economic Forum Report 2018 on Global Gender Gap Index

³ Niha Dagia, Zoha Ismail, UN Report Shows Worrying Degree of Inequality in Pakistan, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1634815/1-un-women-report-shows-worrying-degree-gender-inequality-pakistan/>

⁴ McKinsey Global Institute <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>

Women are routinely assigned the private arena of home and men as breadwinners occupy the public space. The number of women is particularly low in public administration. The few women who rise to prominent positions in public service fail to receive strong government support or protection in the face of misogynistic attitudes. The case unfolds in the backdrop of a Sufi Shrine/mausoleum of Chishtiya order. These Sufi Shrines from beginning were open public spaces for people of all creed, colour and gender and their inclusive tradition was in sharp contrast to the cast based hierarchical social order in the Subcontinent. The case highlights these contrasting ideologies and underscores the need for gender neutral practices in public sector in order to promote women empowerment and their leadership role in a discriminatory patriarchal social order.

Setting the Scene

Dr. Farah Masood, the first ever women Commissioner in the country left her office early that afternoon. Bedevilled by stream of conflicting thoughts she sat down to offer Asar prayers. The stress was intense and she mumbled to her husband, "I may not go to the Shrine!" He was quiet. Like her, he also knew that decision was too important to be made by anybody but her. Destiny had placed her in a situation where her decision carried far reaching consequences. By going to the Shrine she would uphold neutrality of the office of Commissioner irrespective of gender and by absenting herself she would fortify the gender based approach in public offices. Right then the phone rang. Secretary Auqaf was on the line. He politely suggested against going to the Shrine. Rather than withdrawing his formal invitation on the basis of Commissioner's gender, he was privately suggesting to ignore it. He indirectly suggested to endorse the role of gender in public duties & advised self-exclusion from officially sanctioned tasks.

Hazrat Baba Farid Masud-ud-Din Ganj-e-Shaker Rahmatullah Alleh (RA) was a great Saint of 12th century. He lived most part of his life in Pakpattan, the then Ajodhen. After his death he was buried in his Hujrah (living quarter) as was the practice of Sufi Orders. His Urs (Death Anniversary) Celebrations are attended by hundreds and thousands of people. One of the doors of the Hujrah is called Bahishti Darwaza (Gateway to Heaven). The opening of Bahishti Darwaza (BD) is a key event during the Urs. The door opens into Hujrah and has enormous spiritual value for the devotees. The door is opened for five nights during the Urs. The opening of door is an elaborate ritual; it is repeated each night for the door to be locked again in the morning.

The Notification of the Auqaf Department specifies the offices and individuals who would be honoured to unlock the door. Commissioner Sahiwal is one of them. Dr. Farah Masood was a Commissioner but she was a female and that led to the conflict. The prerogative to enter the inner Chamber was of men only; women were not allowed. The late Prime Minister Ms. Benazir Bhutto was the only begrudging exception.

As per practice, the Auqaf Department invited the Commissioner to attend the Urs Celebrations and unlock the BD. The official invitation addressed her as “Commissioner Sahiba.” For her female gender what would have been a routine task became an extraordinary proposition and source of great concern for all. Being a woman, she was expected to willingly withdraw and absent herself. As the evening approached the lady Commissioner was wondering whether to take easy path of staying away or take a principled stance for the sake of gender equality. The latter approach could have been difficult and she wondered if it would be worth it.

The Story

Background

The Election Commission of Pakistan had announced 25th July 2018 for conduct of General Elections. The Services & General Administration Department issued posting & transfer orders and a major reshuffle started in bureaucracy. Dr. Farah Masood, a BS 20 officer of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), was posted as Commissioner Sahiwal Division from her position of Secretary Labour & Human Resource Department Punjab. Dr Farah had served in two districts as District Coordination Officer (DCO). Her posting as DCO Hafizabad was special as it came after a gap of around two decades when Ms. Arifa Sabohi served as the first ever Deputy Commissioner in Punjab. In the wake of General Elections, Dr Farah was transferred to Toba Tek Singh (TTS) in April 2013 and she became the first lady to head a district during election days. Based on her two field experiences, she became Divisional Commissioner. The Commissioner is the top of field hierarchy and hitherto an exclusive male domain.

Dr. Farah assumed the charge of new post and held meetings with the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of districts in the Division; Sahiwal, Okara & Pakpattan. They were also newly appointed as a result of bureaucratic reshuffle before elections.

time was short and there was lot of work to do. All preparations for General Elections were to be made and on its heels were Muharram celebrations and the Urs anniversary of Hazrat Baba Fareed Ganj Shakar RA. Amid this was the challenge to keep routine affairs of administration on track. Dr Farah was aware of her unique position as first lady in charge of a Civil Division.

She was conscious to have her leadership accepted and honoured by her overwhelmingly male team. These included the likes of Regional Police Office (RPO), Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Deputy Commissioners (DCs), District & Session Judges and even the Army higher command with whom she interacted for security related matters. She was aware that authority had to be assumed and established over and above legal sanction. She used her expertise, self-assurance & skills to foster trust in her abilities. Gaining respect and confidence of her team was fundamental in meeting myriad challenges of the enormous task of electioneering. The successful conclusion of elections was a great relief and the appreciation and acknowledgment from the superiors made the efforts all the more meaningful.

Urs of Hazrat Baba Fareed Ganj Shakar

The mausoleum of Hazrat Baba Fareed Ganj Shakar RA is situated over a mound. There are huge bazars around it with narrow alleys surrounded by thick residential area. The Urs of great Sufi Saint starts on 5th of Muharram and continue for five days, till 9th of Muharram. Dr Farah deeply cared for the scale and range of facilities required for the large population of devotees who throng the Shrine during the Urs days. Their comfort, convenience and security was a priority. As a conscientious public officer and member of a Sufi family, she wholeheartedly desired best possible arrangements. She held frequent meetings with concerned departments, district administration, security agencies and local politicians. She made frequent visits to the Shrine in order to ensure that security and public facilitation systems were in place. The past two incidents of bomb blasts at the shrine foretold that nothing could be left to chance.

Dr. Farah realised that Urs was a much bigger occasion than Muharram procession in Pakpattan. It attracted people from far and wide. Many of them made the pilgrimage to pass through Bahishti Darwaza (Door to Heaven) which was thrown open for devotees only at the time of Urs. As the legend goes when Hazrat Baba Fareed passed away, Hazrat Khwaja Nizam ud Din Aulyia RA, who was Khalifa (successor) of Hazrat Baba

Fareed RA, dreamt that Prophet Mohammad PBUH visited the grave of the Sufi Saint and entered into the tomb through the Southern door. Since then it was named as Bahishti Darwaza and it became a sacred ritual to pass through the door. As the entry is allowed only to men, they stand in long lines stretching quite a few kilometres to take their turn to pass through it.

The inner Sanctum (Hujrah) of Sufi Saint is out of bounds for women. Dr Farah came to know of this early on when she with her husband visited the great Sufi's Shrine to pay respects. The Auqaf staff stopped her from setting her foot inside the inner chamber of the Sufi Saint's grave. They allowed Dr Farah's husband Mr Pirzada inside and decorated him with rose garlands and green chaddar (piece of cloth) as tabbaruk (Sacred gift). The schism on the basis of gender was too obvious. The access was purely on gender grounds. The lady Commissioner was silent spectator of male chauvinism and tried to ignore the episode.

Invitation for Urs

Breaking the glass ceiling had its challenges. The gender question always lurked in the background & blasted forth in a peculiar way. It all started quite innocuously with the invitation to unlock Bahishti Darwaza (BD). The Shrine was officially under Auqaf's care. In early September the lady Commissioner received an official communique from the Auqaf Department with schedule for BD spanning over five nights. The Commissioner and RPO were invited on the eve of 8th Muharram. It was a standard format for many years. The Commissioner's office received two more invitations; one from the Zonal office and one from the Secretary Auqaf. (Annexure I, II, III)

Notwithstanding official invitations, the Commissioner's gender was perceived as a sure barrier. The Commissioner was torn inside. She believed that the office of Commissioner had no gender and as she had been invited in official capacity and not as a private person, as such her gender would have no bearing. As time passed she gradually realised that her gender identity took precedence over her official identity. Meanwhile an unexpected reshuffle brought Ms Maria as DPO Pakpattan. The district had two women manning two pivotal positions; though able & effective yet not part of male group.

DC Pakpattan was a PAS officer. When Dr Farah took up matter with him he was anxious and cited gender concerns. The Commissioner had to remind him that his role was to clarify this ambiguity and highlight official nature of the task.

The Commissioner considered the issue as settled. Next day the DC returned with Diwan's (unofficial Chief Custodian) objection for woman Commissioner. "The PM Benazir lost her government after she entered the tomb of the Sufi Saint," DC recounted as was told. Women of the household were restricted too, he had been told. "Being woman is not important here. Being Commissioner is: The office has no gender," she corrected DC.

Beginning of Urs & Commissioner's Quest

The Urs started and except for the commotion created by Diwan's special guests on the first night, the ceremonies largely remained smooth. Meanwhile to calm DC's fears the Commissioner shared with him the Constitutional provisions for women's equal rights to access all public places. She also shared the Haji Ali Case, a landmark case in Indian Constitutional history which set aside the restrictions on women at Haji Ali Dargah and upheld gender equality and non-discrimination. "What does Sir say?" he asked pointing to the husband of lady Commissioner, a retired Civil Servant and his ex-boss as Chief Commissioner Islamabad. "Why would he say something? It's my official business," answered the Commissioner.

The Commissioner was constantly hammered with the conflicting thoughts anyway. She gathered all the information she could lay her hands on. She wanted a clear understanding of religious, legal and constitutional aspects to make a well informed decision. Haji Ali case came up in her research for gender based traditions in the Indian Shrines. Hazrat Baba Fareed RA is from Chishtiya Order of Hazrat Moin ud Din Chsihti RA. She recalled her visit to the Shrine of latter at Ajmer Shareef and remembered that women were not barred from entry at the tomb of great Saint. Rather, all people irrespective of gender, race and even religion visited the Inner Sanctum unhindered. The tomb of Hazrat Maulan Jalal ud Din Rumi RA at Konya also allowed all people with no distinction. Her probe confirmed that there was nothing sacrilegious about women entering the tomb chambers. The most illuminating was the Sabarimala Temple Case which highlighted that inner Chambers of Hindu temples were out of bounds for women. "Birds of a feather flock together. We share same history and traditions," Dr. Farah thought wistfully.

Why She Wanted?

What she confronted was more insidious. It was not only the exclusion & inferiority dictated by patriarchy, it stigmatised women to destroy the professional administrative

space. The question was critical. For her patriarchy could be accommodated in personal domain as it hurt the individual; if patriarchy crept into public administration it would endlessly intimidate the top women executives & the demanding job of administration would be damaged badly. She feared absencing herself would be a seal of approval that gender determined the executive's actions notwithstanding the guarantees provided in the Constitution of the country. The Commissioner was clear that she would resist the damage. However at the moment she was unclear about her exact approach.

The Day of Double Bind

She set off for the Shrine. The DC received her with garlands, a protocol practice at Urs. The Commissioner was escorted up the stairs. As they sat in the meeting room amid CCTV Camera screens, DC relayed his apprehensions. For men standing in lines, the turn at BD mattered the most; they would not be distracted, she told DC. Diwan's people may raise voice if they were not properly briefed, she added. The DC turned to his ex-boss, the husband of lady Commissioner. "This is between you and your Commissioner," his ex-boss excused himself. The Commissioner reminded DC, "I'm not here as a woman, I'm here in my official capacity as Commissioner of the Division for a government business." After Maghrib prayers, the Commissioner walked past the courtyard. It illuminated bright & brimmed with men as if Sufi Saint belonged only to them, notwithstanding his women centric mystic poetry.

Across the "Door to Heaven"

At BD Dua had already begun ignoring the Commissioner absence. She made her way to the RPO & DC standing next to BD. Keen to find a middle ground she asked RPO to unlock BD when Dua ended. As the door opened, she stepped inside the tomb to emerge from the other side. The lady DPO hurried behind her. In hardly few minutes the two top office holding women had passed through the tomb, raising the fury of Diwan's men. The devotees forming queues, as the Commissioner had predicted, were almost frozen at their places concerned only with their turn to cross the Door to Heaven.

The few caretakers scurried around in a state of commotion. They threatened the Commissioner in violent aggression. The Commissioner avoided escalation within the Shrine precincts by leaving the Shrine & withdrew to DC office. Later she left for Sahiwal as the situation had calmed. The passage of devotees through BD begun after

small disruption. The infuriated lot gave fresh Ghusal (washing) to the tomb precincts and redid the unlocking ritual. The exercise was meant to purify what they thought had been sullied by women's entry. BD's opening and passage of people also has a commercial value as devotees throng it and offer donations. The protest longer than this was not practically feasible as Commissioner knew from experience.

An urgent call awaited her as she returned home. The Secretary to Chief Minister wanted to know the details and she explained her position. Later she briefed the Chief Secretary about the entire episode followed by a written report. The electronic media showed restraint. The print media splashed the story next day but questioned the irony of demonising women. The Commissioner had refused to succumb to gender stereotyping & felt satisfied in standing her ground for a principled stance. The task of by elections kept the Commissioner busy for the rest of the month. The by-elections ended peacefully and the very next day, on 15th Oct.2018 the first ever lady Commissioner was transferred out after a short tenure of hardly four months.

Analysis

Social Construction of Gender Stereotypes

Ours is a patriarchal society. Since ages, patriarchy has been promoted and legitimised by norms, customs, social laws sanctified by political institutions. Gender stereotypes portray women as weak and dependant and male as superior and skilful. The stereotypes are based on set of traits which are believed to be uniquely feminine or masculine without any objective basis. Male domination & women subordination is considered biologically determined.

Gender stereotypes however are social constructs. While sex is biologically determined gender is not;⁵ it is advanced by the beliefs held by societies, communities and families. In Erving *Goffman's*⁶ view, gender is a performance between the individuals and their social environments. *Zimmerman* in his essay "Doing Gender"⁷ describes "doing" of gender by social reinforcement through a complex set of socially guided interactions resulting as expressions of masculine and feminine "natures." *Money and Earhardt* developed the bio-social theory.⁸

⁵ Sociology of Gender, <https://othersociologist.com/sociology-of-gender/>

⁶ A Sociologist who developed concept of dramaturgy and underscored sexist dramas

⁷ Candace West; Don H. Zimmerman, Doing Gender, Gender and Society, Vol. 1, No. 2. (Jun., 1987), pp. 125-151, https://www.gla.ac.uk/0t4/crcees/files/summerschool/readings/WestZimmerman_1987_DoingGender.pdf

⁸ <https://www.brainscape.com/flashcards/gender-biosocial-approach-to-gender-devel-4835399/packs/7169150>

According to this view genes and hormones play a small role but it is the socialisation what most critically influence the formation of gender identity. The research findings by the World Bank and McKinsey Global Institute stress social norm's link to the gender issues. As gender is produced and maintained by social, economic and political institutions across a society, the United Nations places it at the core of its 2030 Agenda.

Women in Leadership:

The space for women in leadership positions is limited in our society. The entrenched cultural beliefs regarding the roles of men and women continue to push women out of public sphere. Secondly, there is a deep cultural resistance to female authority. Even if they move to leadership positions, they are constrained by the power structures revolving around men. Thirdly the executive positions remain segregated by gender. The communication and decision-making style of women, being inclusive and collegial, is seen as incompatible with desired leadership traits of aggression & bullish command. Tendency to give women easy, less challenging assignments is based on the patriarchal notions of their low capacity.⁹ Typical assignments for women are in social sector or they work in supportive roles especially the assignments male managers of equal capability do not want.

The concept of “glass ceiling” has emerged in literature to highlight the limited scope for women at highest positions in public and private sector. The term is commonly used to describe the invisible barrier that blocks women's chances of promotion or advancement to the top positions. The Women who beat the odds face a whole set of new challenges, more importantly if it is a male dominated profession. They face stringent standards and greater scrutiny. While women may not necessarily be working in a radically different way to men, they are nonetheless perceived differently. They are not spared for mistakes that would be easily forgiven to men. They face hostility, sexism and misogynistic attitudes in an organizational culture that supports and extolls men's experience and attitude. The challenges are global.

While discrimination is common in traditionalist societies, advanced countries are no exception either. The male dominated professions like police and law enforcing agencies are particularly susceptible to discrimination against women officers. Compounding it is the phenomenon that has been termed as “high visibility vulnerability link” peculiar to women leaders.

⁹ The benevolent sexism in contrast to hostile sexism.

The recent legal battle of Ms Lilli Handsel, the first Baldwin Park police Chief who won a law suit against the discriminatory acts of the city council mayor, highlights this dilemma.¹⁰

Historical Perspective

Pakistan inherited a patriarchal culture which aggravated after the Islamization of Zia Regime in 80s. The gender divide is prominent across several countries in the “belt of classic patriarchy.”¹¹ From East Asia to North Africa & South Asia, the society is male dominant. The gender-based inequalities date back to the pre-capitalist system in rural areas across this wide swath of land, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Restrictive codes of female behaviour, linkage of family honor with female virtue, sex-segregation and veiling form an integral part of their culture. The mobility and autonomy women enjoyed in the Andes prior to colonialism and modernization stand in contrast to the situation of women in the belt of classic patriarchy.¹²

These cultural practices predate advent of Islam in South Asia. The pre-existing culture was awash with restrictive beliefs and customs which crept in Islamic society.¹³ The India's Sabarimala Temple controversy over women's access to the historical temple throws light on this dynamic.¹⁴ The men vehemently opposed the women's entry in the temple which is forbidden since centuries on account of their beliefs about women impurity. The Kerala High Court gave verdict in favour of women's equal right of free access to the temple in 2017. The Hindu priests and men made violent protests when women made a bid to enter the holy precincts. So far only two woman activists could enter the Temple hiding in the dark of night.¹⁵

¹⁰ Former Baldwin Park police chief who said she was fired because she's a woman is awarded \$7 million, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-former-baldwin-park-chief-wins-gender-discrimination-case-20190326-story.html>

¹¹ Deniz Kandiyoti, Bargaining with Patriarchy, <https://org.uib.no/smi/seminars/newsletter/Pensum/kandiyoti,%20Deniz.pdf>

¹² Ashley Reeves, Transforming Gender Roles in the Colonial Andes: Native Andean Female Resistance to Colonial Spanish Constructs of Gender Hierarchy, <https://www.csustan.edu/sites/default/files/groups/University%20Honors%20Program/Journals/transforminggenderrolesinthecolonialandesareeves.pdf>

¹³ The extremely restrictive codes of behaviour for women stood in marked contrast to much of Southeast Asia where institutions and practices permitted egalitarian gender relations.

¹⁴ Sabarimala: The Indian God who Bars Women from His Temple, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-45901014>

¹⁵ Protests Broke Out When Two Women Enter Temple, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/02/indian-women-form-620km-human-chain-in-support-of-lifting-of-temple-ban>

The government provided full support and security to women but the tradition so far is holding sway. The irony is that the opponents of women's cause also include a large group of hardline women. Having internalised the age old anti women religious traditions they find bid to enter the Temple sacrilegious to the holy deity.

The Haji Ali Shrine, a Muslim Saint of fifteenth century buried in Mumbai (India), witnessed a similar case where women were debarred from entering the Shrine by the Matwallies (Caretakers) of the Shrine. The bar was lifted after a three years long contest in High Court. The Haji Ali Dargah Trust, filed an appeal before the Supreme Court. The case concluded in October 2016 upholding the right of women to enter the inner sanctum. Like Sabarimala case, part of opposition to women's cause came from their own gender. Aligning with patriarchal tradition they denounced the sacrilegious and impious demand. When the ban was finally lifted under a Court order they insisted that they would not be comfortable accessing the sanctum sanctorum owing to the tradition.¹⁶

3.4 The Sufi Tradition and Feminine Imagery

History has recorded names of several women who attained the status of mystics and Sufis. Hazrat Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya of Basra, was a great Sufi Saint in eighth century who was highly respected by the Sufis of her time. The verse about Rabia Basri quoted by Jami- who was in general not so inclined to women- says it all.

*If all women were like as the one we have mentioned. Then women would be preferred to men For the feminine gender is no shame to men Nor is the masculine gender an honour to the crescent moon*¹⁷

In Indian Subcontinent Islam spread by the long chain of Sufis. Their teachings of brotherhood, peace and harmony stood in sharp contrast to the strictly hierarchical cast based Hindu society. The openness and flexibility of Sufi tradition allowed it to embrace people of diverse creeds and faith and had great appeal for people. Chishtiya order was founded by Hazrat Moin ud Din Chishti and became the most widely followed Sufi order in India. Hazrat Baba Fareed RA in particular welcomed people from different religions and fraternities. Following the Prophetic tradition. He was kind to women and poor. He used Punjabi language in mystic poetry to convey his profound message of equality of humanity and devotion to God.

¹⁶ Haji Ali: Two Years on, Women Entering Sanctum Freely, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/mumbai-haji-ali-dargah-women-entering-inner-sanctum-sabarimala-supreme-court-5408259/>

¹⁷ Annemarie Scimmel, Mystic Dimensions of Islam, Sag-e-meel Publications, 2006

Sufi poets expressed love and longing for Murshid (Spiritual Teacher)¹⁸ or God in feminine imagery. The tragic heroines of mystic poetry - like Hir, Sassi, Sohni- depict¹⁹ human soul in search of the beloved God. In fact the Sufis longed for union with God and the symbolism helped express delicate sentiments of love, yearning, fear and hope. The term “Urs” comes from the word “Aroos” meaning bride and the Urs festival symbolically represents a marriage, when the Sufi (bride) finally becomes one with the Divine (bridegroom). The intense devotion of Sufi to Murshid (master/teacher) is part of “Tariqah” (Path) towards ultimate union with God. It is ironic that the feminine element remains an enduring feature at the Shrines. Sama (Qawalli) is a special form of musical recitation of feminine mystical poetry at the Shrines for an exclusive male audience. The tragedy is that the Sufi shrines which challenged the conventionalities of religion, have completely reversed their culture to patriarchal notions undercutting the essence of Sufism. The ultimate focus of Sufis was on Transcendent reality; the Shrines now pay far more attention to rituals. The tenth century Sufi *Fatima* of *Nishapur* noticed slight shift in absolute attention on ultimate reality when a fellow Sufi Saint *Dhu n Noon*, refused her gift being a woman. “A true Sufi is who does not look at secondary causes -in this case a female - but only at the Eternal Giver” She remarked.²⁰

Role of State

Gender equality is part of global agenda and the current impetus in women's movement has pushed countries to make reforms.²¹ Pakistan's performance on women related issues is alarmingly low. The patriarchy persists despite outwardly modern forms of the contemporary family and society and has been termed as "Neopatriarchy."²² In neopatriarchal states women's wellbeing and welfare guides the government action but they are denied autonomy and independence to make life choices. The welfare function of state is largely substituted by extended families and governments find it conducive.

¹⁸ Hazrat Amir Khusrau and His Murshid Nizamuddin Auliya

¹⁹ Image of love between two men in Persian mystic tradition got replaced by a woman longing for beloved longing

²⁰ Annemarie Scimmel, *Mystic Dimensions of Islam*, Sag-e-meel Publications, 2006

²¹ Constance Grady, *The Waves of Feminism* <https://www.vox.com/2018/3/20/16955588/feminism-waves-explained-first-second-third-fourth>

²² Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, Oxford University Press, 1988

The interface of formal and informal institutions produce social order where some groups draw more benefit citing custom or tradition. Powerful groups who benefit from patriarchy resist any change and deploy various mechanisms to maintain status quo. Low capacity, reluctance and lack of sensitivity by the government departments compound the problem and reinforce discrimination. Amartya Sen, the Indian Nobel laureate sees women change from passive recipient to active participants to lead social transformation in order to ensure wellbeing of women and men alike.²³

Pakistan has made pro women laws and the Constitution gives women equal rights. Pakistan was among the 189 governments which in 1995 signed the Beijing Platform for Action and committed to taking measures to ensure women's equal access to power structures and full participation in decision-making. Since 1996 Pakistan is signatory to Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and is also signatory to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). However the World Economic Forum Report 2018 on Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) shows Pakistan among six countries²⁴ where the gap is still 90% or even more. The report shows that world over women occupy only 34% of managerial positions and among the professionals female strength is only 22%. As per Report Pakistan along with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, is one of the four worst-performing countries with share of less than 7% women at managerial positions.²⁵

Women represent half the population and participation in public life is their basic right. As per UNDP's Gender Equality in Public Administration (GEPA), the number of women manager decreases as they advance in career and at the very top internationally mandated 30 % participation rate is hardly met.²⁶ The Pipeline theory argues that women representation in leadership positions will increase with time as more women will advance in careers. However such an automatic and smooth flow to the top has been rejected by the Tipping Point theory.²⁷

²³ Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, Picardo Publishing 2006

²⁴ Syria, Lebanon, Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Pakistan

²⁵ The Global Gender Gap Report 2018, World Economic Forum

²⁶ UNDP <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Women-s%20Empowerment/GEPA%20Project%20Brief.pdf>

²⁷ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Little Brown & Comapany,2000

As women continue to hit glass ceilings and glass walls and there is attrition in numbers, active government support is necessary to ensure critical mass of women at senior levels

Religious Dimension

Islamic injunctions are used to legitimise male domination. The fight for equality in patriarchal setting requires search for true will of God for women. The search begins with two questions. Does Islam teach or condone sexual inequality or oppression? And does the Quran permit and encourage liberation for women? It is the core discourse of Islam for prominent women scholars like Leila Ahmed, Margot Badran, Asma Barlas, Fatima Mernissi, Riffat Hassan, Ziba Mir Hosseini, Barbara Stowasser, and Amina Wadud. They have argued that the cultural practices oppressive to women are misidentified as Islamic. Quran does not elevate men over women & God does not proclaim to have a gender. One of the arguments by Professor Amina Wadud²⁸ is that patriarchy is a form of *shirk* (making partners to God) because by placing men above women it contradicts the Qur'anic vision of equal and reciprocal relationships and violates the requirement that God is supreme. She also contends that unity of God is reflected in unity of humanity.

Challenging or “unreadable patriarchal exegesis” of the Qur'an, the author Asma Barlas, presents her book as an attempt to “recover the scriptural basis of sexual equality in Islam.”²⁹ In several books, including *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* and *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, she explores in-depth how the male normative experience and the cultures of the time affected interpretation of Quranic text and restricted the egalitarian Qur'anic message.³⁰ Islam is an enlightened religion and had a basic reformative spirit towards women's rights. Quranic scripture needs continuous reinterpretation to highlight the emancipatory thrust over outmoded traditionalism. Such interpretation calls for seeing sacred texts in their historical context and adapting their message to the needs of the age.³¹

²⁸ Women In Islamic Societies, A Selected Review of Social Scientific Literature, A Report Prepared by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

²⁹ Asma Barlas, "Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 203.

³⁰ *Beyond the Veil* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1987; orig. 1975); *The Veil and the Male Elite*

³¹ Leila Ahmed' “Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate”

The most important point to understand is that the false notions about women are part of juristic interpretation relating to Muamalat (human affairs). Unlike Ibadat (prayers) where juristic rulings are immutable, the rulings in case of Muamalat are subject to rationalisation and reinterpretation as time changes.³² Equal position of women has been repeatedly emphasised by the Holy Quran.

“And who performs the good deeds whether male or female, provided he or she is a believer, such will enter paradise and they will not be harmed the dint in a date-stone.” Surah Al Nisa (4;124)

“Muslim men (who surrender to Allah and Muslim women (who surrender) and men who believe and women who believe and devout men (who obey) and devout women (who obey) and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth and men who persevere (in righteousness) and women who persevere and men who are humble and women who are humble and charitable men (who give alms) and charitable women (who give alms) and men who fast and women who fast and men who guard their modesty and women who guard (their modesty) and men who remember Allah and women who remember Allah often- Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and great reward.” Surah Al-Ahzab (33:35)

In God's eyes women are equal to men because they are rewarded or punished exactly in equal measure and they have equal access to God's grace and beneficence. Above all Islam's eternal law of equality is expressed in equal responsibility before God. During Prophet PBUH's time there was little constraint on women's access to public space or their participation in political and social affairs of the nascent Muslim community. Women took the oath of allegiance to Prophet PBUH as men did, fought in wars and prayed alongside men in mosques. And like men they visited the Prophet's grave in Hazrat Ayesha's Hujra and prayed over him.³³ Significantly many of the Quran's progressive reforms came about as a result of social demands expressed by women to Prophet in Medina. The active roles of Hazrat Khadija and Hazrat Ayesha is proof of the equality and agency of women in Islam. Several wives of Prophet PBUH after his death took on the important roles of teachers and jurists in the community. There were many saints and jurists among women in early days of Islam. However the further we move from the time of revelation the more women's voice are marginalised and excluded from public life.

³² New Directions in Islamic Thought, Exploring Reform & Muslim Tradition, edited by Kari Vogt, Lena Larsen, & Christian Moe, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd,2008

³³ Martin Lings, Muhammad, Sohail Academy Lahore, 2009

Conclusion

Negative stereotypes of women are deeply rooted in Pakistani society and the patriarchal set up is hard to dislodge. The deep entrenched patriarchy can be traced back to the divisive cast based hierarchical social order in the Subcontinent which damaged the egalitarian spirit of Islam. The misogynistic attitudes stem from the distorted ideas and are perpetuated on the basis of tradition, custom and religion. State policy is weak and incoherent to meet the challenges of a modern progressive society where women's voice and role is duly integrated in social, political and economic spheres. The lack of clarity in state policies and poor capacity of government in protecting their rightful place in society as equal and independent citizens runs counter to its international commitments under UN Conventions and violates basic constitutional rights of women in Pakistan.

The social norms develop at the interface of formal and informal institutions and the groups that benefit from these social norms resist any change and deploy all mechanisms to maintain the status quo. Women's presence in public sphere is the best antidote to the patriarchal exclusion and discrimination. Government must design systems that open up public spaces for women which were historically inclusive and egalitarian. It is important that public places are protected from the acts of male hostility and patriarchal displays. Awakening critical engagement with Islam about the anti-women beliefs is important. For a modern Islamic state in the contemporary world enabling Muslims to better confront the range of gender related issues should be a prominent policy imperative.

It is a vital responsibility of state to remove the structural barriers, discriminatory social norms and gender biases that impede women's ability to engage economically, politically and socially in public life. Part of this will be accomplished by demonstrating the ways in which women's representation at the visible and prominent positions is endorsed, sustained and confirmed. A clear policy action to ensure gender neutrality in government offices is absolutely necessary which will have positive ripple effect in all dimensions. A fair and non-discriminatory atmosphere complemented by neutral policy action will build the context for a positive role by the families, communities and society. Shifting social norms around gender roles and women's abilities is particularly critical to promote women's empowerment. This process can be complex and slow, but government can change the costs or benefits of complying with prevailing norms by positive interventions.

Recommendations

Government must uphold a clear gender neutral approach in public sphere backed by its resolve to eliminate gender as a limiting factor. The commitment must ensure that government offices are not gendered on the lines of sex and this must reflect in government's approach and strategy. The distinction between the tasks of private and public nature must be made an integral part of the policies relating to matters of governance. No office should have an ambiguous approach to this larger agenda and contradictory approaches should be strictly avoided. Government's clear and coherent policy coupled with a consistent approach will help people accept the broad principles of gender neutrality in public offices even if private sphere is slow to change.

As the field assignments are mostly in remote areas it is important that government prepares a long term plan to support and protect public policy action by the women officers in relatively conservative parts of country. Government should not allow any kind of discrimination, sexism or harassment in matters related to work. It is not only violation of the basic rights, it also damages the governance structure by diluting government authority. The management is an art of perceptions. The discrimination on the basis of negative stereotypes weakens the control and authority of the women officer having ripple effects on the administrative machinery.

It is fundamentally crucial that government by its action does not reinforce the deep held patriarchal notions in society. The women's right to agency is mostly not so well understood and default choices are generally in favour of status quo. The training for capacity building may be given to male counterparts who happen to resist or retard the gender-neutral initiatives.

While successful women are often perceived as obvious role models to break male hegemony, a paucity of positive female role models exists in public sector. Government may set concrete goals to meet its diversity commitments, hold system accountable to achieve gender parity, create visibility for women executives and take every opportunity to communicate these commitments to all the stakeholders.

There are unspoken rules and unwritten arrangements that govern culture and gender dynamics at workplace. These elements of organizational culture are subjective yet powerful. They have the potential to undermine women's experience at the workplace or limit their opportunities for career advancement. Government should design systems to achieve the critical mass of women officers at leadership positions.

The women empowerment agenda must not merely restrict to women's wellbeing projects seeing them as passive recipients of favours. Instead women must be made active partners in social transformation by designing inclusive systems. The government should ensure that women's voice is genuinely incorporated in decision making in political, economic and public life. Women participation must be ensured in all consultative bodies to get genuine women perspective and the exercise must go beyond meeting mandatory requirements under international commitments.

The constitutional right of equal access to public places is hindered by misreading of historical facts and religious edicts. It is necessary that anti women traditions be recrafted and public spaces be made open to women. The Shrines come under the Auqaf Department which failed in its responsibility to correct the retrogressive norms. It is necessary that steps be taken to restore the inherently egalitarian tradition of Sufism at Shrines

Revealing the diversity of Muslim interpretations and laws renders religion accessible, debatable & open to reinterpretation. In order to preserve the cultural spaces in a modern world, this change should be welcomed. It is government's responsibility to spearhead meaningful debate on issues where religion is misquoted to preserve patriarchal traditions.

Groups and coalitions are a means of exercising collective agency, which is much more powerful than people exercising individual agency. Government may support women groups to build narrative and raise awareness.

Social change is a slow and gradual process. The task of changing pervasive anti women sentiments would require a wholesome multifaceted approach by finding change leaders among both men and women. Government can use unusual events to spearhead incremental change. A beginning can be made by evaluating such incidences from the perspective of emerging thoughts in literature of administration, anthropology and sociology to draw lessons for future.

Bibliography

Ahmad, Amin. "Pakistan among Worst Performers in Gender Equality" *The Dawn*. 19 December, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1452284>

Ahmed, Leila. "Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate".

Ali, Haji. Two Years on, Women Entering Sanctum Freely.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/mumbai-haji-ali-dargah-women-entering-inner-sanctum-sabarimala-supreme-court-5408259/>

Andrew, Rippin. "Muslims Their Religious Beliefs and Practices", 3rd Edition. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Ashley Reeves, Transforming Gender Roles in the Colonial Andes: Native Andean Female Resistance to Colonial Spanish Constructs of Gender Hierarchy, <https://www.csustan.edu/sites/default/files/groups/University%20Honors%20Program/Journals/transfor minggenderrolesinthecolonialandesareeves.pdf>

Barlas, Asma. *Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

Beyond the Veil. The Veil and the Male Elite. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1987; orig. 1975

Brodeur, Vanessa. "Female Law Enforcement Officer's Experiences of Workplace Harassment". California State University San Bernardino, Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations, Office of Graduate Studies 3-2018, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1698&context=etd> (accessed 12 October, 2019).

Constance Grady, *The Waves of Feminism*

<https://www.vox.com/2018/3/20/16955588/feminism-waves-explained-first-second-third-fourth>

Dagia, Niha, Zoha Ismail, UN Report Shows Worrying Degree of Inequality in Pakistan, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1634815/1-un-women-report-shows-worrying-degree-gender-inequality-pakistan/>

David, Kelleher, Carol Miller. *Gender at Work, "Theory and Practice for 21st Century Organizations"*. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Deegan, Mary Jo. "Goffman on Gender, Sexism, and Feminism: A Summary of Notes on a Conversation with Erving Goffman and My Reflections Then and Now". <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/symb.85> (accessed 10 November, 2019).

El Fadl, Kaled Abou. "The Great Theft, Wrestling Islam from the Extremists". Harper Collins Publisher, 2007.

Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice. A World Bank Policy Research Report, Oxford University Press, 2001

Former Baldwin Park police chief who said she was fired because she's a woman is awarded \$7 million, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-former-baldwin-park-chief-wins-gender-discrimination-case-20190326-story.html>

Gender differences in employment and why they matter. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/chapter-5.pdf> (accessed 4 November, 2019).

Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference". Little Brown & Company, 2000.

Harvard University, Police Department. "Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy". <https://www.hupd.harvard.edu/sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-policy> (accessed 16 October, 2019).

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2199/081c454b7ce22ef0540f7cb9ec7065b98a2d.pdf> (accessed 27 October, 2019). <https://www.brainscape.com/flashcards/gender-biosocial-approach-to-gender-devel-4835399/packs/7169150>

Human Development Index 2019, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/PAK>

Kari, Vogt. Lana Larsen & Christian Moe, "New Directions in Islamic Thought: Exploring Reform and Muslim Tradition". London: I.B. Tauris, 2009.

Khalid, Haroon. Women not allowed: How patriarchy rules Pakistan's Sufi shrines that also celebrate the feminine <https://scroll.in/article/897043/women-not-allowed-how-patriarchy-rules-pakistans-sufi-shrines-that-also-celebrate-the-feminine>

LRIS, Ex-Baldwin Park Police Chief Wins \$7 Million in Gender Discrimination Lawsuit Against City <https://iris.com/2019/03/27/ex-baldwin-park-police-chief-wins-7-million-in-gender-discrimination-lawsuit-against-city/> (accessed 16 October, 2019).

Martin, Lings, Abu Bakr Siraj Ad Din. "Muhammad his life based on the earliest sources". Lahore: Suhail Academy. 2009.

McKinsey Global Institute <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>

Meier, Megan Michelle. H.B.A. "Doing Gender" or "Doing Policing?" Gender Identity and Gender Role Beliefs among Police Officers by (Thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of Texas State University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science in Criminal Justice with a major in Criminal Justice December 2013)

Mies, Maria. "Patriarchy & Accumulation on World Scale, Women in the International Division of Labour". Zed Books Ltd 1998.

New Directions in Islamic Thought, Exploring Reform & Muslim Tradition, edited by Kari Vogt, Lena Larsen, & Christian Moe, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008

Protests Broke Out When Two Women Enter Temple,
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/02/indian-women-form-620km-human-chain-in-support-of-lifting-of-temple-ban>

Sabarimala: The Indian God who Bars Women from His Temple,
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-45901014>

Scimmel, Annemarie. "Mystic Dimensions of Islam". Sag-e-meel Publications. 2006.

Sharabi, Hisham. Neopatriarchy A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society. Oxford University Press, 1988.

Sociology of Gender, <https://othersociologist.com/sociology-of-gender/>

Negative Socio-Political Gender constructs limit executive domain for women in Administration

Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2018–2021)

<https://www.unodc.org/documents/Gender/UNOV->

[UNODC_Strategy_for_Gender_Equality_and_the_Empowerment_of_Women_2018-2021_FINAL.pdf](#) (accessed 4 November, 2019)..

The Global Gender Gap Report 2018, World Economic Forum, UNDP

<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Women-s%20Empowerment/GEPA%20Project%20Brief.pdf>

UNDP. “2017 Gender Equality in Public Administration Pakistan Case Study, UN Women”.

<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/Democratic%20Governance/GEPA%20Report%202017.pdf> (accessed 4 November, 2019).

West, Candace. Don H. Zimmerman, *Doing Gender*, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2. Jun., 1987.

https://www.gla.ac.uk/0t4/crcees/files/summerschool/readings/WestZimmerman_1987_DoingGender.pdf

Women in Islamic Societies. A Selected Review of Social Scientific Literature. A Report Prepared by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

Women in Leadership and Management in Public Sector Undertakings in India.

Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_632553.pdf

World Bank, *World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development*, Promoting Women Agency, chapter 4,

<https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/chapter-4.pdf> *Gender Gap Report 2018*, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf (accessed 12 October, 2019).