



The Problems for Women in Pakistan are NOT the Result of Lack of Gender Equality but Due to the Absence of Islamic Rule

Pakistan has been ranked the second worst country in the world for gender equality for the second year in a row. The World Economic Forum's global gender gap ranked Pakistan at a dismal 143 with a 0.556 score. Pakistan ranked just above Yemen among 144 countries, performing way behind India and Bangladesh which ranked at 87 and 72 respectively. War torn Syria performed better than Pakistan with a score of 142. ([Express Tribune](#))

While discussing women's issues, gender equality, women's rights, empowering women or strong independent women are the most commonly used terms we hear in the Pakistani society. A picture is drawn where men are portrayed as beasts waiting in the dark corners to attack women ignoring the fact that poverty is the core of suffering for both men and women. Domestic abuse is highlighted, and the cause usually given is that men in our society have power and authority over women due to conservative Islamic values, even though a lot of domestic violence is caused by the problems created by poverty. The West sets standards for us as Muslims that we are supposed to meet, such as the concept of 'Gender Equality' which is a western construct born from the western experience of oppression by women under the Western secular system. Then they judge whether we are progressed or backward, oppressive or just, civilized or uncivilized based upon whether our societies conform to those western constructs. This is rather than questioning whether these western concepts themselves are sound ideas by which to judge a people, or whether the lack of these ideas are the true cause of the problems of a nation, or whether these ideas themselves have innate problems that they sow upon a state.

These surveys tell that in Pakistan, women face the world's worst inequality in access to health care, education and work and usually it is linked to Islam as Pakistan is a Muslim country. The question is whether these surveys really do justice to the problems faced by our women. Here the important thing to note is that the main cause of women's suffering is the absence of Islam from society, not them and their men being Muslims.

Problem 1) Women have no right to Education:

A general impression is that due to Islam, Pakistani women are not allowed to attend schools and colleges and only a small number of women enter professional colleges and even if they become doctors and engineers, once married they are not allowed to pursue their careers, instead they are forced to remain imprisoned at home where the sole purpose of their lives is to bear and raise children and serve their husbands.

Answer: Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and people sacrificed their lives as they wanted to live under Islam but sadly that never happened. Another important factor of women remaining behind in education is that appropriate measures were never taken by the country's successive secular governments. The necessary educational opportunities for girls and women were not provided, and families either felt that it was not safe for their girls to go out or they could not afford it. As men are considered to be the main providers in a family, so parents think that it is better to educate their sons rather than their daughters so in future they are able to fulfil the needs of their families.

Problem 2) Women are provided with very poor health facilities

One woman dies every 37 minutes in Pakistan from complications during childbirth, indicating poor maternal healthcare in the country. According to the Population Council fact sheet 2015, it is estimated that every year on an average 14,000 mothers die in the country. However, out of these, 4,500 maternal deaths can be easily prevented through strengthening the healthcare system.

Answer: Overall health care facilities in Pakistan are poor. One reason women and children suffer the most is the lack of health facilities regarding childbirth. If the government spends half the time and money on this, instead of a foreign-imposed birth control agenda, it will save many

lives. The government needs to understand that the solution doesn't lie in curbing the population but in providing them with the facilities which are their basic rights provided by the Almighty.

Problem 3) Discrimination at the workplace and fewer jobs

The feminists and secular organisations claim that women are not given the freedom to work due to Islam. In addition, if they do work they get paid less than men and often they face harassment from male bosses and colleagues.

Answer: If we see the women working in cottage and small industries we will know they are not just capable but also get support from their men to work. The reason of their sufferings is not staying at home and working, but the exploitation they face by their employers, who not only pay them very little but put restrictions on them where they cannot work independently, that restricts their chances of growth and prosperity. These women are dependent on their employers for receiving work as they do not have access to the market. All this is the result of Pakistan's capitalist system and echo the problems faced by women in other capitalist states – East and West.

The precious and important role of raising the next generation is portrayed by secularists as a burden. Furthermore, recent economic pressures due the failing capitalist economic policies of the secular Pakistani state, force them to go out of the house for work. In contrast, Islam gives financial protection to women obliging that they have to be provided for always – either by the husband, male relatives or the state. It is not because they are not capable of earning but no one can force them to work and if they work no one has any right over their money. As far as harassment is concerned it is the atmosphere where they are forced to work. Discouraging Islamic dress code at work place is also common which turns women into mere objects and open mixing between men and women encouraged by the country's liberal values promoted by the media, education system and other sources, also leads to further problems at both home and work. Allah did not create man and woman to compete with each other as promoted by gender equality but to help and support each other so they can form a society according to the Ahkam of Allah (swt). Only comprehensive Islamic rule can ensure this.

﴿إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾

“Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.” [33: 35]

Islam is the religion that provides men and women with their due rights and gives them freedoms within the boundaries of Allah (swt) and only Islam will help them rise and embrace their dignity again. Only the Khilafah (Caliphate) on the methodology of Rasool Allah (saw) will bring a society where men and women will work in support of each other, will respect and trust each other as each will know and understand the purpose of his/her life. Making women suffer is neither in the nature of Muslim men nor the norm of Muslim society but it is the evil capitalist system that has turned our men and women into miserable beings. Now is the time to know and understand your rights and responsibilities and to work to bring back Khilafah which will eradicate all evil from the society and men and women will receive their due rights.

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