

Empower Pakistan: Detonating The Minds of Pakistan Females

J. M. (Johan) Ras

Abstract

Pakistani women has a critical role to play in the liberating of their country from violence, religious extremism, terrorism, poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. As the first line of defense between their infants and the challenges of an unknown and uncertain world, they have a God-given duty to nurture, raise and educate their children in the correct manner. It is the women who must take the lead, and through the internal socialization process form and shape their children's minds, hearts and hands. This must be done so that they (children) can assist to liberate the country and direct it away from Muslim religious fundamentalism, extremism and radicalism that are the basis for many of the terror deeds and violence that Pakistan is experiencing.

Keywords

Pakistan, W Terrorism, Women, Islam, Taliban

Introduction

Pakistani women have a critical and vital role to play in directing the country to a more democratic and human rights culture where there is no discrimination in terms of sex, race, ethnic orientation, color, language, traditions or beliefs. No one will dispute the importance of women, since ancient times, in the educational process (De Vaux 1980, pp. 48-50), but it is unacceptable and discouraging to see and to hear that females are blocked and cannot reach their full potential in their own country because of erroneous beliefs, unfair legislation, and a deliberate undermining of women's constitutional rights.

Despite the pushing of Islamic law by Muslim supporters and militants, the patriarchal history and the past developments in Pakistan, and especially neighboring Afghanistan, there is no room for any form of prejudice against women. That does not mean that ladies must not know their limitations and their social place in society, but it will be wrong to deny them any opportunities to actualize themselves and to become what they want to be (Maslow, 1986; 1970; Ras, 1998, pp. 78-87).

Mothers of the Nation

At the same time, as the mothers of the nation, it is the task of Pakistani mothers to teach their young, who still can be molded at an early age, about what is right, what is expected from them, and how they must treat others, and how others must

treat them. Through informal and formal social control (Van Heerden, 1994, pp. 10-12) mothers must teach their children at an early stage on the subject of what is right and what is wrong because they are the primary care givers of children (Papalia & Olds, 1995, p.165). From a security point of view, mothers are the first line of defense between their children and the hostile world outside (Ras, 2010a).

There is no doubt in my mind that any form of militancy, extremism, and any form of zeal that denies equal rights for women at all levels in society, are totally wrong (Ras, 2010a). It was Matthew who quoted the Prophet, Jesus, who once said” “Whatever you want the people to do to you, so you must do to them, because that is the Law and the Prophets “ (Good News Bible, Matthew 7 verse 12). These words are certainly *logoi sophoi* (Greek: λόγοι σοφοί) - words of wisdom, for us who were made of clay (Holy Qur'an, Sura VI. 2 & Ali, 1946, p. 289).

Brief Historical Background

Pakistani women got the right to vote in national elections in 1956. They also could obtain seats in the Parliament and during the reign of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1970-1977) all government services were opened to accommodate them. Gender equality was specially guaranteed in Pakistan's constitution so that there should be no discrimination on the basis of sex. However, many judges have upheld the laws of Islam and deliberately have attached more authority to Islamic rules and legislation than to Pakistan's constitutional rights (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Pakistan).

It was the military General Zia ul-Haq, who, perhaps of military-strategic reasons, had implemented discriminatory legislation against women and who have banned them from participating and from being spectators of sport, and who also have suspended all their fundamental guaranteed rights in the constitution. After his rule, in 1988, Benazir Bhutto has become the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan, and she also has made plans to set up women's police stations, courts and female development banks. However, when Nawaz Sharif became Prime Minister in 1997, he adopted Islamic Law (Sharia) as the supreme law of the country something that, again, degraded the status of women and limited their equality rights. Despite this, the country's first female university was introduced in 1998 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Pakistan).

When President General Pervez Musharraf have passed the Women's Protection Bill, repealing some of the Hudood Ordinances, that grossly have discriminated against females, Islamic leaders and organizations were very much against it. The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment Act) was also passed. President Musharraf especially has committed himself to promote women

in Pakistan, who made up about 50 percent of the total Pakistani population (Keel, 2006; <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=9§ion=0&article=779932d=18cm=2&y=2006>; <http://Pakalert.wordpress.com/2009/07/26/biography-pervez-musharraf/>). In December 2006 female cadets, coming from the Military Academy at Kakul, near Abbottabad, could start with guarding duties because of the important opportunities that have been given to them to move into the military sector (http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=158895642927).

Present Pakistani leader, President Asif Ali Zardari, signed the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill of 2009, on January 29th, 2010. This was recently adopted by Parliament on January 21, 2010. This Bill is the latest to create a more safe working environment for women, free of harassment, abuse and intimidation (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Pakistan).

It is quite clear that, when one studies the history of women in Pakistan, that women definitely did not have the opportunities that existed for Pakistani men. It is also obvious that they still do not have equal opportunities today, although there have been definite improvements in terms of legislation, even though not necessarily in implementation.

Females are still experiencing a lot of discrimination, whether in terms of dress codes, education, workforce participation, land and property rights, or health issues not to mention their children (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Pakistan; Ullah, 2010, pp. 167-174).

There is no doubt that females are suffering and that the country will and cannot move forward in a meaningful manner if women are not treated as equal and with the necessary respect that they deserve. Gratitude must be expressed to those who have paved the way, but much more need to be done in order to ensure that women are totally liberated and have sufficient opportunities to maximize themselves in all spheres of life (Ras, 2010a).

Muslim Fundamentalists

Muslim extremists and religious fundamentalist leaders are very often using the Holy Qur'an and Shariah teachings to deliberately try to keep females in inferior positions. This is an existential-pisteological move that is deliberate and always narrow-minded.

Their religious belief-systems (pisteology), that are driven in a fundamentalist way, together with their patriarchal-historical past, enables them to always favor males instead of females. In their engagement with the ancient Arabic-Islamic texts, they are very often selective and frequently quote those passages that favor typical male prejudice. This wrong approach easily lead to hermeneutical fallacies, incorrect assumptions, and practical *eisegesis* (reading into the text that is not there). Sound exegesis, of especially historical and legal texts, are lacking (Ras, 2009).

Any text is a historical-generated text (Afrikaans: “n histories-geworde teks”), that must be read and understood in the light of its time. Differently put, any textual reading and interpretation must take cognizance of the historical-political, socio-economic, and also the cultural-linguistic events, the original *Sitze im Leben* (German: “original place of setting”) of its time. In short, the intention of the author with his text, aimed at a particular audience (the first readers), need to be identified in the light of the particular historical circumstances of his (the author's) time.

In praxis, Pakistan is not living today in the time or the *Sitze im Leben* of the Prophet Muhammad. The socio-economic history in Saudi Arabia, during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (570 to 632 A.D. - Praamsma, 1979, pp. 242-247; Anderson, 1983, pp. 92-102), during which the traditions / text of the Holy Qur'an or the *Al-Kitab* (the Book), according to Muslim beliefs, came into existence, is not the same as what people, especially Pakistani women, are experiencing nowadays. The history during the time of the Prophet Muhammad has impacted upon him, just as the current history of Pakistan impacts upon all Pakistani women and men at present (Anderson, 1983, p. 93; Ras, 2010a).

The God of history is a dynamic God. He is not static, apathetic and frozen in time as if His truths are absolute truths that are gnomic and universal applications that can be downloaded into the mainframes of every country at any given time. Sayings in the Holy Qur'an, just like in the Bible and any other religious text like the Bhagavat Gita (Ni-cholls, 1983, pp. 139-148), constantly need to be re-interpreted (engaged hermeneutics) in the light of changing circumstances and be made applicable to different situations in the light of our time. In a nutshell, *explication-applicatio*, that is, “first explain, then apply”, needs to be taken into account something that is totally lacking in radical Muslim circles (Ras, 2009).

A wrong interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and the Shariah laws, when it deals with issues surrounding women, lead in practice to a situation where females are simply derailed and marginalized to an inferior social and legal position. Muslim clerics are very quick in imposing man-made burdens upon Muslim women, that they erroneously perceive as “Godly decrees” (Allah's will). The same is done at times by legal experts when it comes to Shariah applications (Johnson, 2010, p. 5).

One of the main reasons why Pakistani women are suppressed in Pakistan is because of Muslim clerics and fundamentalists who are using their sacred texts to instruct men about the submissive role that females have to play in the name of Allah. It is clear that even political leaders, in the past, have bowed the knee to Muslim religious clerics, in order to restrict the self-empowerment, development and self-actualization of Pakistani women.

This situation is unacceptable and simply wrong.

Allah and Female Wombs

Any truth, dogma or tradition in the Holy Qur'an must always be understood in the light of its time (its origin). A careful analysis of the text clearly indicates that God (Allah) did not allow men to treat women in a degrading and deliberate inferior manner. For the purposes of this paper, it is suffice to say that the Holy Qur'an in Sura IV. 1 states: "Reverence God, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for God ever watches over you." Yusuf Ali, in his commentary on this text says: "The mother that bore us must ever have our reverence." He adds, "The wife, through which we enter parentage, must have our reverence" (Ali, 1934, p. 178).

This textual passage, quoting "God", is quite clear: The author (Muslims believe it is God!) himself calls upon all men and women to acknowledge God. He also calls upon them to acknowledge all mothers because God Himself expects that! Women need respect because it is expected from God. The same respect that mankind must show to God must be shown to women who are bearing children!

Although God is the "Superior One" in the text, He clearly demands here the same respect for women as what He is expecting for Himself. Just as God is expecting respect from men for Himself, so He expects that men will respect women. This is a clear example that women cannot be treated in an inferior or discriminatory manner. If we (men) want to do what is right, then we must treat women in the same manner as we would treat God that is the bottom line.

According to the Holy Qur'an, the four most important women were Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh, Mary, the mother of Jesus (Usmani, 1987, pp. 28-29), Khadija, the wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Praamsma, 1979, p. 243), and Fatima, his daughter (Holy Qur'an, Sura LXVI. 11-12 & Ali, 1934, p.1573). There is no doubt in my mind that all Muslim men will treat these four women with the greatest respect and will in no manner whatsoever discriminate against any one of them or will treat them in an inferior manner. With that in mind, think again of Sura IV.1: "Reverence God, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for God ever watches over you."

To make the above-mentioned principle applicable to Pakistani women: there is simply no person who can discriminate against any women, in any manner, whatsoever, because that is unacceptable for God! We must treat and respect women in exactly the same manner as we have to treat and respect God!

Paedagogy

In the ancient east it was a custom amongst Semitic nations (like Israel, Arabia Unger, 1980, pp. 96 - 99) that during his early years, a child was left to the care of his

mother or nurse. It was the mother who gave her children the first rudiments of education (paeda-gogy), especially their moral formation. Most teaching was done by word of mouth (De Vaux, 1980, pp. 48-49). This custom is not an exception in Pakistan. Pakistani mothers have the obligation to see to it that they teach their young (Ras, 2010a).

Although it is a custom in Pashtun society that the village Maulvi will teach the Holy Qur'an to the village children (Ghani, 2010, p. 100), Pakistani mothers need to intervene. What is taught must be assessed, evaluated and be weighed. The wrong teachings (like violence, hatred, extremism, inequalities, male dominance, etc.) may harm the cognitive processes (mind) of the child, but the right teachings (love, peace, religious tolerance, equality, etc.) will bless him / her, instill in them sound democratic and human right principles, and a disciplined and exemplary life, that is fit and proper for those who know they need to develop themselves, their neighbors and country.

It is critical that Pakistani mothers, even if they are displaced because of the armed conflict, will do the right thing, and that is to instruct and teach their children moral values and beliefs that are just the opposite of what Al-Qaeda and the Taliban stand for. Any form of teaching that recruit children to become foot soldiers and suicide bombers (Ullah, 2010, pp. 171-172) are not from God and must be resisted in the strongest terms. If Pakistani women need to put the pens aside, and to take up Kalashnikovs, in order to win their "child soldiers" back, and to resist those who zealously compete for their young, then they must do so without hesitation. Good people cannot do nothing when their own children, that they brought into the world, are wrongly recruited to go and blow them-selves up in the Name of Allah in order to become a *shaheed* (Ras, 2010b, p. 113).

Modern Day Pakistan

While the Taliban especially have targeted girls' education, trying to destroy as many girl schools as possible (Ullah, 2010, pp. 167-174), Pakistani mothers and women cannot sit still. This is their offspring that are targeted and killed. It is their toil and sweat that are blown away through bullets and blood. It is time that Pakistani mothers and women stand up and fight the Taliban, Muslim clerics, members of Al-Qaeda, and anyone who take pleasure in killing innocent children and victims in the Name of Allah, even if it means they have to face their own death.

Individuals will not be able to achieve anything. Mothers must unite and say "No!" to Talibanization and the evils of religious extremists. Young men that are involved in Al-Qaeda and the Taliban to wage *jihad* and to do warfare and deeds of violence are misled.

Although tragic historical circumstances have left hundreds of thousands of people in a state of illiteracy, unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment, it is still wrong to kill other innocent people, to recruit children as soldiers, and to think that Allah approves it.

Just as the police, the military, the intelligence, and concerned Pakistani inhabitants and even outsiders, are drawing the line to immediately stop any form of violence, so Pakistani women need to stand up to the occasion and find legitimate ways to effect change.

The Right to Fight Back

Peace and conflict resolution is everything. No one wants war. The war must stop. That is not negotiable. I believe that Pakistani women are holding the keys to a lasting peace and stability in their own country. To use a metaphor just like a hand grenade detonates, and fragments are scattered in all directions, so the minds of Pakistani women need to be detonated in terms of a radical and immediate self-transformation.

While many Pakistanis are looking to the outside to find a solution to their challenges, I am of the opinion that women are the real ones who can transform Pakistan. They must liberate the country from all the terror. They make up half of the total population, they have voting rights, they can make a difference, and they do have a direct say in the education of their young during the first critical stages / years of their children's lives. Their primary task is to ensure that children internalize the right informal and formal social control measures (Van Heerden, 1994:10-12).

Self-realization and Self-actualization

The self-realization that every Pakistani woman is holding the key to peace, development and transformation through self-empowerment, child-education, and becoming an immediate role model and activist that link up with like-minded women who also want to effect change, can be life-transforming. Self-introspection, a self-talk, the discovery of the "real self" that must effect the change that "I myself want", is critical. Women must realize that they themselves, their minds, need to be transformed radically. From a psychological perspective, one cannot actualize oneself without realizing that it is me, my-self, that is responsible to make all the changes that I want.

Just as Al-Qaeda members have and develop a zeal to see an Islamic Caliphate materialized (Ras, 2009), so Pakistani women need to develop a zeal and passion for equality, lasting peace and to develop a lasting solution to end to all the wars and displacements. The dream to have peace, where the AK 47 is exchanged for a spade,

and the RPG-7 rocket launcher is put aside for a water pipe to do irrigation, must not only be a far distant dream. It must become a reality. In short, women need to take responsibility against all odds. With all the millions of people in Pakistan, stand up and move the masses. No one else will do it. In South Africa we say: "If you strike a woman, you hit a rock!" (Ras, 2010a).

Struggle Icons

During times of war, women have become part of the struggle to liberation. Many areas of Pakistan are war zones. Where are the women who can change it? Whether one fights back through the pen, by mouth, through caring and sharing, what you have, with others, by assisting in a hospital, through helping others, by carrying the burdens of others, or simply through educating the neighbor's children, you have to do it!

The war on terror is not a male war. Terrorism is not distinguishing between men and women. In fact, the enemy (Al-Qaeda / Taliban) target women and children to create people that are so desperate for peace that they will accept any peace offering that they will bring to the table. This is typical of psychological warfare.

Now is not the time to run away. It is now the time to stand and to fight back. To move from the defensive to the offensive. Females cannot any longer sit on the periphery and allow innocent children, offspring from their own wombs, to be scattered away through roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or hand grenades. The draconian religious beliefs, imposed by religious leaders upon young men's minds, to become *shaheeds* can only be stopped if an united front will confront and stop them.

Target the religious clerics if they are sitting behind all these violent deeds, confront them and expose them if necessary. It is about your future, your children, your country. Academics worldwide believe in knowledge dissemination. Part of knowledge dissemination is knowledge empowerment. This is important because lives will become more meaning-ful, better, more goal-directed, more people and community oriented, more globally-minded, searching for new solutions, and trying to better and to develop the lives of those around you. In short, reach your God-given potential (Ras, 2000; 2010a).

Pakistan is a beautiful country with beautiful people. It is a country that can become a leading country in the world. The challenges are numerous but nothing is impossible. During the apartheid years in South Africa, many struggle veterans have said: "Nothing is impossible with God!", but they also have said: "God helps those who help themselves!" Do the same (Ras, 2010a).

Female Minds, Female Hearts and Female Hands

If the mind can change, then the heart can change, and this again, will change the hands, and the hands will start to do because it likes what the heart wants to do because the mind is thinking right. During the Second World War Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan, has started to do nursing work, giving injections and first aid. She recruited other females and they later were also taught rifle drills, to decode cipher, to type and to assist with work that were traditionally allocated to men (<http://www.jazbah.org/raanak.php>).

Her active involvement in the betterment of other women, and by putting her nose in her country's affairs, she has served as an inspiration and as a role model for many in times when there was almost no hope. As the mother of Pakistan in 1950, she also took on General Zia ul-Haq when he has started to impose Islamic laws. Pakistani women need to take up her example. Why not follow in her footsteps? Who said you cannot do the same?

The tackling of health issues are especially imperative. Women cannot allow other women and children to die because of inadequate health care (Pakistan. Woman's Health Project, 2010). Rise up, stand up, and fight back! Yasmeen Lari, is regarded as one of Pakistan's most respected architects. She started to find solutions that would be practical and economical when it comes to development, slums, and cultural heritage. Her example inspires people to become proud of who they are, where they come from, and what one can achieve. Whatever you have, use it as a tool to change Pakistan. From a logo-therapeutic point of view, find meaning in what you have and do, and use it as a tool to affect and to change others (Frankl, 1963; Ras, 2000).

From a Franklian point of view, use your past experiences as a logo-anchor and attach meaning to the lives of other people (Ras, 2000, pp. 59-60). Be an inspiration and a beacon of hope. If the Karavan Karachi Festival in 2001 was successful and an example of social cohesion (Kazmi 2003), then use it as social glue and unite the people in the streets around common causes. Unite people against the Taliban and against Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. Do not let circumstances dictate your life. Like right-minded people, dictate your circumstances.

Respect and Honour

It is the task of women to again bring back some respect and honor to Pakistan. There is respect, and there is honor. There are thousands who are shining examples, but, as Hina Jilani has said: "The right to life of women in Pakistan is conditional to their obedience to social norms and traditions (Hayat 2008). This conditional state of affairs, needs to be changed today.

Every woman must stand up and make a difference today. The goal of empowering women can be achieved in different ways, *inter alia* through legal measures, national action, and international cooperation in fields like economics, social development, education and through social support. The same can be said when it comes to safety and security, the police, the military and intelligence. If there are no women involved, or if they are not offering opportunities at a much larger scale to try to get in and start working there, than Pakistan will continue to experience violence and terror attacks.

Women must unite in order to stop the violence against them whether it is rape within a marriage, an acid attack, roadside bombings, or whatever the case may be - start to fight back. If it needs to be done in a restraining manner, by using guns and bullets to stop other blazing guns and flying bullets, let it be. It was Ecclesiastes who correctly pointed out that everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses:

“He sets the time for birth, and the time for death, the time for planting and the time for pulling up, the time for killing and the time for healing, He sets the time for sorrow, and the time for joy....” (Good News Bible, Ecclesiastes 3:1-4). Now is the time to fight back. Pakistan does not need its children to become child soldiers or suicide bombers. It does not need psychologically traumatized children, men or women because of the terror deeds of Al-Qaeda or the Taliban. Just like many of the Pakistani men, women need to commit themselves to bring peace. At times, love needs to be cruel, in order to be kind. Suicide bombings and terror attacks will not disappear through prayers alone. God works through prayers and people (military, police, intelligence, ordinary folks). I also believe, he works through Pakistani female minds, female hearts and female hands.

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Prof. Dr. J. M. (Johan) Ras is Head of Department Criminal Justice and Vice-Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Zululand, South Africa