

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

In Pakistan, a majority of women live in a world structured around strict religious, family and tribal customs that essentially force them often to live in “*Char Divari*,”¹ submission and overall fear. They are subject to discrimination and violence on a daily basis due to the cultural and tribal norms. Pakistani Islamic law (not the Islamic Law) dictates traditional family values and is enmeshed in the legal system. Men are the decision-makers, especially in family matters such as marriage and divorce. Pakistan’s government, law and society discriminate against women and condone gender-based violence.

In compliance with CEDAW², neither Pakistan has removed discriminatory laws against women nor formulated new laws to protect them from violence and discrimination. Consequently, women rights in Pakistan are deteriorating progressively. Development Advocates and Lobbyists (DAL)³ is a rights-based Pakistani non-governmental organisation (NGO) engaged in several activities including research oriented policy advocacy and lobbying to political awareness and women empowerment. It focuses mainly in rural but remote areas where social fabrics of the society have been damaged significantly and are yet to be enlightened with the modern concepts of development and practices.

In order to realize the actual situation, i.e. socio-economic, political and gender-based issues that affect tribal women’s life, DAL commissioned a study in August 2005. The study was done in Sulaiman mountain range’s tribal areas spread over two districts namely DG Khan and Rajan Pur consisting of eight (8) *Tumans* in provincially administered tribal area (PATA) of the Punjab, a province of Pakistan. This study is being used to build pressure on the state and legislatures to formulate laws to abolish the role of *Punchayat*, repeal *Hudood*⁴ Laws and discriminatory customs and practices promoting violence against women.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted on empirical research paradigm by using questionnaire, REFLECT Circles, traverse walk for direct observation in order to obtain a first hand reliable primary data. Various sources including Tehsil⁵ municipal offices of district DG Khan, Political Agents of district Rajan Pur and the National Census Report 1998 are used to collect secondary data.

Primary data was collected on group and individual (men and women) basis in order to obtain information about an entire village and to know the state of affair of an individual household. The focused person was head of the household or resident of the same household but belong to age group of 18 years or above. It was ensured that 50% respondents of study are female either married, from age group of 18 years or above. A standard sample size, 10% of the total villages of each Tuman was drawn for the study. This 10% sample size is comprised of equal proportion of three categories of households, i.e. villages having households <200-400> or above, <50-200> and 50 or below 50 households. The study was conducted only in 45 villages’ 406 households⁶ having each 30% *Pucca*⁷ and semi *Pucca*⁸ houses and 40% *kutchra* houses⁹. The villages have population from 450 to 3700 persons with an average family size of 13 persons.

3. THE SULAIMAN MOUNTAIN RANGE’S PROVINCIALY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS (PATA)

The focused area lies in approximately 480-Km long Sulaiman mountain range, which passes from three provinces; Balochistan, Punjab and Northwestern frontier of Pakistan. Mostly region of Sulaiman

¹ Literally to mean “the four walls of the house”

² United Nation’s Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

³ DAL mean a group (of people) - strive for a specific but common cause

⁴ Allah’s Limits for Lawful (*Halal*) and Unlawful (*Haram*)

⁵ Sub-division: an administrative unit

⁶ Total 437 villages in districts DG Khan and Rajan Pur

⁷ Totally cemented house or with cemented/wooden/iron beam roof

⁸ A house made of stones, mud and its roof could be of wood, or wooden beam

⁹ A Mud or bamboo/shrub house

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range is 500 meters above the sea level, having famous high points such as *Takhat-I-Sulaiman* (3383m) and *Fort Minro* (1950 m),¹⁰ which form PATA, commonly known as the de-excluded area. In the Punjab, the Sulaiman range passes from two districts Dera Ghazi Khan (DG Khan) and Rajan Pur. Majority of the inhabitants is from different Baloch tribes living here since several centuries and identify themselves by sub-tribes name. However, owing to lack of education among them, no history of their influx in these hills seems to have been recorded so far.

In 1880, the British government in India occupied Balochistan and declared the Sulaiman mountain range area of DG Khan as tribal area and placed under direct control of the Governor General of India. The Governor General introduced *Tumandara* System and administrated it as a special area through various *Tumandars*¹¹ under Patron-Client relationship. The main tribes have been living included Mazari, Dareshik, Laghari, Easai, Khosa, Buzdar, Lund, Gorchani and Khetran. Each tribe had constituted a *Tuman* and its chief called "*Tumandar*" with first class magisterial powers to decide civil and criminal cases under the Frontier Crime Regulations (FCR).

After the independence in 1947, these powers were withdrawn from the *Tumandars*. Subsequently, one Political *Tehsildar*¹² and three Political *Naib Tehsildars* were appointed to administer justice to the public. This also meant a step towards the freedom of Baloch people who were under the yoke of this age long dictatorial system. But, for the practical purpose this arrangement brought no change in the administration of the area. Again in 1950, the special area was declared as "de-excluded area" of DG Khan district. Unfortunately, things continued to happen without any substantial change and *Jirgas* continued in the same manner. Now, the *Jirgas* were presided over by the *Naib Tehsildars* instead of *Tumandars*. In theory, this step meant to do away with the individual influence of *Tumandars*, which they wielded over their tribes during British rule to facilitate mutual interests of the British government and themselves.

In 1959, General Ayub Khan, former President of Pakistan (1958-1969) introduced the Basic Democracies System, and people of this area had also given a chance of electing their representatives. Owing to the social, cultural and economic infrastructure however, they had no choice but to elect same *Tumandars* and the influentials who neither had willingness nor potential to improve the lot of a common person. With the introduction of local government system by successive regimes in Pakistan, the administrative set up of the area has undergone some changes. Yet, the system has not been successful to challenge the monopoly and hegemony of the influentials, *Sardar* (tribal chiefs) and *Wodera* (feudals). Before the present set up of local government (2001), tribal area of DG Khan was under the administration of Union Councils and Fort Minro was the largest Union Council of tribal area. Under the new system, a Tehsil Council has been established. Presently, the Tribal areas falling in Tehsil DG Khan and Taunsa are combined to constitute a single Tehsil Council consisting of five Union Councils namely Tuman Laghari, Mubarki, Barhi, Kach and Tibbi Qaisrani stretching over to an area of 4000 Sq. Km with a population about 0.16 million.

The tribal areas of Sulaiman range falling in district Rajan Pur have almost the same history and backgrounds like district DG Khan. Till June 1982, this tribal area was a part of district DG Khan. Having created Rajan Pur as a new district, it is comprised of Rajan Pur subdivision, Rojhan subdivision, Jam Pur subdivision and the de-excluded area are situated in these subdivisions consists of three *Tumans* namely Tuman Mazari, Gorchani and Dareshik covering an area of 4969, 8896 and 632 acres respectively. These Tumans having an estimated total population about 0.1 million. The biggest Tuman is Gorchani (35 villages) and the smallest is Dareshik (17 villages). After the termination of Tumandari System, now the Border Military Police (BMP) administers this area with the help of Political Assistant.

4. SOCIAL SITUATION AND STATUS

In the entire tribal area of Sulaiman range, people live and marry on tribal basis. Every tribe has sub-tribe and normally does not interact with each other however, with few exceptions. For instance, in Tuman Buzdar, Jehanani tribe is considered chief of the Tuman, which has five branches or sub-tribes. Almost in similar way, the tribes in other Tuman live and interact. The men informed that the

¹⁰ The New Oxford Atlas for Pakistan: Oxford University Press-1998

¹¹ Revenue Collection agent – in Persian

¹² Sub-division Officer

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Buzdar tribe was settled here almost 500 years ago at the time of Mir Chakar Khan Rind. The general social situation of women in the Sulaiman mountain range tribal area is as followed.

Education

Education is the most important factor in a study to determine the level of perception of a person or community about any issue. Therefore, information reveals that primary level (5th Grade) educational facilities are available in 50% of the villages only. The 8th Grade education facilities are available in 20% villages, 13% villages have up to 10th Grade, whereas in 17% villages the educational facilities are non-existent at all. Only in 30% villages primary level educational facilities are available for women with an exception of 2 villages namely village Khar of Tuman Laghari and village Methawan of Tuman Qaisrani where women secondary schools are instituted.

The education level of respondents was also obtained during the study. However, less respondents, in total 449 wherein 191 female, informed about their education. The comparison is given in the table below.

Comparison of Male-Female Education Level

Education Level	Gender	
	Female	Male
	Percent	Percent
Illiterate	85%	46%
Grade-5	13%	17%
Grade-8	2%	16%
Matric or Secondary Grade-10	0%	13%
Higher Secondary	0%	4%
Graduate	0%	2%
Post Graduate	0%	3%
Total	100%	100%

Source: DAL Study on Situation of Tribal Areas' Women of Sulaiman Range -2006

With regard to educational level of respondents, 85% women as compared to 46% men are illiterate. Only 13% women have passed primary i.e. Grade 5 against 17% men. Just about 2% women have passed their Grade 8 level examination as compared to 16% men. Unfortunately, no woman has reached or ever attended 10th grade level of her education.

Since the tribal area is hilly, remote and local women are not educated adequately; therefore female staff is recruited from urban areas. The staff for many reasons such as social order, Feudal-Sardari system and lack of transport facilities has least interest in their jobs. Consequently, the schools are either operative poorly or non-operative. In given situation, the locals depend on Masjid Schools¹³, which is one of the main reasons for the under development and poverty in the area.

There are several reasons of low educational level among women given by the people. Mainly, because the non-availability of educational facilities for women in mostly villages of Sulaiman range TA. Women are unable to get education beyond 5th Grade as no higher school facilities exist in the vicinity or are far away and outside the village. In such situation, the tribal customs do not allow women to go far away or outside the village for education purpose. Lack of enough resources to educate girls is another factor. Likewise, initially women education was not considered good and on priority because it was considered investment on other. *There was no use of that money to her family rather to other family where she marries. The son is considered to be a supportive in older age but now some educated families do it. Furthermore, having realized that the daughters of feudal are getting education abroad, now we have started to educate our girls,* a man explained.

An educated woman expressed that education opportunity is not provided to woman though *a woman education is considered ... education of a family and a man education of an individual.* She suggested that women should focus on education to bring change in society, peace and democracy in our area and the country. However, a Tehsil Nazim (men) said that educated women give proper attention to

¹³ Mosque School

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home and children. But he proposed that women might be provided religious education only. It is not necessary that woman do work after education because they up-bring their children.

It is significant to mention here that in village Gul Khanani Kalat the first primary school was established in 1926 by the British government and upgraded in 1935 for Grade-8 level education. In 1954, a new building was constructed that caters the purpose of high secondary school of the village. There are now four government schools and a private English medium school in village Barthi.

Health

The tribal area people of Sulaiman range are very unfortunate in availability of health facilities because, only 4% of the villages have basic health centers or dispensaries. But, there is no female doctor or paramedical staff available in the centers consequently women suffers a lot in case of complication, particularly at the time of pregnancy or delivery. The locals of villages resort to home treatment based on superstitions and tips. Quacks are common, as a result people don't get proper treatment and are suffering from fatal diseases. Due to non-availability of maternity home, child delivery is done at home with the help of female birth attendant which might not be a properly trained birth attendant. Therefore, infant and maternal mortality rate is quite high than the national average. The area is hilly, remote, poor and the non-availability of transport bring further misery to the life of patients. During the study, it was identified that because almost every household has cattle farming on small scale, therefore they need veterinary hospitals as well.

Water-Sanitation and Other Facilities

Proper drinking water supply is available only in 20% villages, while in remaining villages people use water flowing from *Chashmas* (springs) or use polluted water stored in pools and *Johars* (ponds) whereas the same pools and *Johars* are used by animals for drinking water. These resources also become dry during summer or when there is no rain or drought. Women are responsible to fetch water from these springs or ponds, which are normally available in far-flung area from the villages. In few villages, the local body representatives constructed water supply schemes. However, according to the communities, the schemes have proven failure as only supply lines are laid-down and the reservoir tank is abandoned since day one.

Sanitation and sewerage facilities are non-existent in all villages under this study. In few villages people have constructed open drain channels which however ends to a nearby pond or field, therefore are caused of serious health and environmental problems for the residents, particularly women and children. As a result, diseases like typhoid, diarrhea, tuberculoses, Hepatitis B-C, cholera, etc. are common. There is as such no concepts of toilet or bathroom in almost all villages, except for few houses belong to wealthy and educated Sardars. People go outside and use open field for toilet purposes. This act is far problematic for girls and women, as they have to wait for darkness...dawn or sunset for their toilet needs. This situation for women further aggravates when there is a rain or no crop in the field.

Electricity is available only in 75% villages of Tuman Qaisrani and 72% villages of Tuman Laghari. To be precise only 16 villages have electricity, the remaining 29 villages of the rest of Tumans do not have any such facility. Transport facilities are invariably not available in these villages except a few which use pickups or animals for transportation while the people of many villages have to travel on foot for many kilometers to reach such point from where they can get transport to move.

5. CUSTOMS, PRACTICES AND GENDER ISSUES

Culture and tradition are always evolving. Some societies have evolved more then others. Culture is merely a description of the way that any particular society lives their lives. This is often positive, sometimes not and always changing and developing. The conventional customs and practices¹⁴ in under study area are not unusual than what is happening in other parts of the world or the country - Pakistan.

The communities in all 8 Tumans follow centuries old conventional customs and practice greatly, which are major causes of gender issues. These customs are followed due to several

¹⁴ For definitions and history of the customs and practices please see Annex-1

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reasons...illiteracy, absence of basic infrastructure such as road network, electricity, telephone, etc. are among few. Invariably every Tuman of Sulaiman range has traditional society governed by a feudal/ tribal chief without any interference of governmental institutions. Hereinafter, the table shows that how religiously community follow their customs invented or adopted by their forefathers and brings misery in women life.

Conventional Customs Practice in Villages of Sulaiman Range

Type of Conventional Practice	Percentage
<i>Aaf and Aas-Crossing Fire barefoot</i>	3%
<i>Divorce</i>	3%
<i>Domestic Violence</i>	27%
<i>Dowry</i>	0%
<i>Early age Marriages</i>	10%
<i>Honour Killings</i>	27%
<i>Karo-Kari</i>	73%
<i>Marriage to Quran</i>	27%
<i>Punchaiyat</i>	40%
<i>Rape</i>	3%
<i>Sale and purchase of Women</i>	23%
<i>Share to women in inherited property</i>	7%
<i>Vani</i>	30%
<i>Watta & Takka (Numrad)</i>	7%
<i>Watta-Satta</i>	67%

Source: DAL Study on Situation of Tribal Areas' Women of Sulaiman Range -2006

The customs of Watta-Satta, Vani, Karo-Kari, honor killing, marriage with Quran...the Holy book of Muslims, early age marriages within close family are in practice without any exception. Interestingly, divorce is very uncommon in the area. Customary practice like *Vani* or *Swara* for settling disputes in exchange of girls and use of girl as compensation for crimes are also reported. It may be important to mention here that most of these informants were female.

Early Age or Child Marriages

In the area, marriage at a very young age is reported in 10% villages. The reasons included religion, poverty and economic situation compel them to marry girls in early age. "It is good to marry girls in early age, otherwise, we poor cannot guard them (from sexual assault)", informed a woman of the area". However, both men and women viewed that girls are married when they reach to the puberty age so that she could not follow wrong steps or become pregnant outside marriage, otherwise she could be killed. The benefit of early marriages that the parents seek is they do not need to spend money on their girl. For instance, if a girl is sick, the expenses are borne by her in laws. This is perhaps the reason that few people educate their daughters after Grade 5. Another reason is that gifts of thousands of rupees are received back from relatives and friends. It is hard to know the number of early marriages, as so many are unregistered and unofficial. Mostly, early marriages are done under Watta-Satta custom. Here, not only women, also the men cannot marry according to their wishes.

Gender discrimination can also underpin in early marriage. Girls may be married young to ensure obedience and subservience within their husband's household and to maximise their childbearing. Girl gets early marriage cannot be dare enough to speak against early marriage. However, neither she knows about her responsibilities nor is she capable to perform it. The child marriage is not good as it creates friction with in laws and the girl cannot talk with them freely.

In the early age marriages, it is a girl, who faces loss and problems including denial of education, as once married, girl tends not to go to school. Health problems include premature pregnancies, which cause higher rates of maternal and infant mortality. A child bride can face greater health risks and experiences real physical violation and trauma as her young body is forced to deal with early sexual activity and the strains and pains of pregnancy and childbirth. According to a doctor, one of the more damaging results of early childbearing is vesico-vaginal or recto-vaginal fistulae. This complication, due to prolonged obstructed birth, leads to loss of full control of urinary and/or rectal functions. Given their lack of access to health care in tribal areas, mostly girls with this condition are unlikely to receive proper treatment. Teenage girls are also more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including

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HIV/AIDS as many are unable to negotiate for protected sex. Further compounding their vulnerable position is lack of knowledge of contraceptive methods and lack of access to reproductive health information and services. Abuse is also common in such child marriages.

In the process of such marriages being arranged by family members, safeguards in the law are often overlooked and minimum age of marriage and need for mutual consent are not guaranteed, thus making the marriage a forced one. In 1990, Pakistan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Child, which prohibits child marriages. In addition, under the Muslim Family Law Ordinance, a girl must have attained the age of 16 and a boy must have attained the age of 18, and both need to consent before the marriage takes place. Historically, there have been no measures taken by the state to ensure that marriages are consensual and in many instances the age of a girl is misreported on her marriage certificate in order to avoid questions over her being underage.

Surprisingly, some women support this custom and say that the custom is right and we are not in favour to abolish it. However, some women proposed that the government should discourage and penalize early age marriages and *Nikah*.¹⁵ This penalty should also be put on the *Nikah Khawan*¹⁶ and that there is a need to make legislation about it.

The custom of early age marriages is not new in Sulaiman range areas. This has been in practice since centuries in the subcontinent and the world. Not only common people but also élites and rulers follow this custom. Arjumand Bano, commonly known as Mumtaz Begum the resident of world's seventh wonder Taj Mehal was just 13 years old, when married to Mughal emperor - Shah Jehan, who was 15 years old. In 1993, Romanian government¹⁷ had opened an inquiry into the marriage of a gypsy King Florin Cioaba's daughter Ana-Maria Cioaba age 12 or 14 years who married to her 15-year-old Roma bridegroom¹⁸. This is just another example of an "arranged" child marriage. The UK dispenses birth control and sex education to teenage (in some cases, pre-teenage) girls and equally popular of supporting under-age sex and abuses own so-called laws and perhaps has the highest rate of pre-16 pregnancies within the EU.

Mismatch or Marriage of Convenience

During the study, a female participant defines Mismatch Marriage: "if a marriage takes place without the consent of a girl". As a matter of fact, it is difficult to define mismatch marriages, which are common and in practice throughout the world irrespective of their social and economic status and in every continent. It could be a forced marriage, arranged or love marriage. In mostly cases, the husband is older than wife is but wealthy and in some, a wife is older than her husband.

There were numerous such examples referred by the people during the study in which a 15 or 20 years old girl or woman was married to a much older man. It, however, could not be ascertained from the discussions that whether the marriages were forced or with the consent of woman. The marriages, which do not have consent of the bride or bridegroom, can be assumed as forced marriage otherwise, it is a marriage of convenience in which either man or woman seeks benefit.

Marriage of convenience is common in other parts of the world. Among such marriages, the famous one is of Princess Diana with Prince Charles of United Kingdom, when married in 1981, Lady Diana was only 21 years old and the Prince was 42 years. Similarly, the legendary cricket player Imran Khan (41) married with Jemima Goldsmith of Briton who was 21 years old when married. Famous Hollywood actress Elizabeth Taylor, also married with men younger than her. However, the populist mismatch or marriage of convenience of the last century was between an American oil billionaire, Howard Marshall II (age 89) and a famous model-cum Hollywood actress Anna Nicole Smith (age 26) when they got married in 1994.

¹⁵ Muslim marriage contract

¹⁶ Muslim marriage registrar/contractor

¹⁷ The BBC's Robert Nisbet 30 Sep 03

¹⁸ The legal minimum age for marriage in Romania is 16

Marriage of Choice - Within Casts

In Pakistan, the most crucial issue for a young man and woman is marrying of his or her choice. The prevailing customs and practices do not give liberty to most of them to marry at their own. Though, this varies according to the norms of a family, tribe or casts, but in general people are not willing to abandon it.

The discussion taken place on this delicate issue with different community of Sulaiman range area, tribes, cast, age group and gender, whether educated or uneducated, the consensus was that after agreeing parents, men could marry outside the family. But girls cannot marry outside the family. Thus instances are that literate woman have forcibly married with an illiterate man from within the family. The reason is that to marry girl outside, family wealth - property will go outside or because women in family observe veil and in such case there would be a problem. To marry a girl within an educated but outside family or cast, there could be a demand of dowry or conditions beyond their economic status to fulfill. Moreover, marriages of own choice (by man or woman) are difficult to accept in many. Rather, family tries to make couple's life difficult through different means and acts. In Sulaiman range, men or women refuse to marry or select a partner against the wishes of their parents are often punished or even killed by their families in so-called 'honour killings.'

In some areas and tribes, the faith of a girl is decided in a cruel custom called "*Pait Lekhai*" (pledging the fetus) which is very painful for a mother. And, if a girl is born to her, it is more cruelty as the girl is normally married to an older man. The men fears that if a woman marries after runaway from home and the law protects her, it will create many social evils/problems in the society. According a woman, who married to a person of her choice after fleeing from home, however refused to accept when her daughter did the same. This behaviour is not something strange, as in an American TV programme OPRAH when former US President Bill Clinton was asked that *how was his feelings when daughter Chelsea told about her boyfriend*, "not good", he replied.

Neither Islam nor society permits a woman for marriage of her choice, a man pointed out. This is a wrong notion, however Islam gives a woman full liberty to marry of her choice. In Islam, marriage is a legal and social bond and contract between a man and a woman. The holy Quran ask that women consent should be sorted out at the time of marriage so that they do not flee from home. Therefore, *Nikah* - the signing of marriage contract, actually means both are agreed.

Bigamy or Second Marriage

Bigamy or second marriage is popular in some parts of Sulaiman range tribal area, including Rajan Pur. The reason may be people of the area work in Gulf States as laborers, etc. where it is a common practice. However, there may be other reasons like; wife is not bearing offspring, as Watta-Satta marriages are common and consent is not taken, therefore man go for second marriage but in such cases, the other also follows him. Second marriage may be popular because the greedy people think that new bride will bring adequate dowry or wealth. In case of second marriage by husband, the woman faces difficulties. For instance, husband does not take responsibility of the children neither he pays expenses. Some women commit suicide when their husbands go for second marriage, says a woman.

The men in the tribal area of Rajan Pur consider that only a man can do second marriage not a woman. Although, the Shariah stipulates that a man may take up to four wives, if he can do all kind of justice with his wives, however, this is uncommon in most Islamic societies, including Pakistan. In case of second marriage, the family law in Pakistan specifically ask to get permission from the first wife, but women of the tribal area told that here, women are not asked when men go for second marriage.

Marriage to Quran

Women marriage to Quran is another custom that is practiced in Sulaiman Range Tribal areas however, in few families. People marry their daughters to Quran in order to keep wealth or property within family. It is normally practiced in rich or feudal families if match is unavailable within the family for daughter. People not having money for marriage or dowry for girl also practice and marry her to Quran.

Watta-Satta

Watta-Satta or exchange marriage custom is widely followed in tribal villages of Sulaiman mountain range. There are different reasons of following this custom. An old woman said that girls are considered burden on family because of their marriage problems. *What can we do? We have to marry our daughters and it is very difficult to find a match for a girl.* Another woman stated that without Watta-Satta custom, our girls would never get married whereas outside families demand dowry and it saves them from dowry curse. In such situation both families give dowry according to their capacity and do not write anything in the *Nikah Nama* except *Mehar*. Otherwise, dowry is demanded or given on equal basis. It is done so that the girl's in laws could not quarrel and she lives with dignity and prestige if not, they consider the girl a bad character and do violence. Therefore following the custom, male's sister also gets punishment so he thinks several times before doing violence on his wife. One major reason of following the custom is property so that a stranger may not get share of his wife's inherited property. The marriage under the custom is done with a notion/understanding that whenever men like can marry again. However, if a man go for second marriage, the other also and if not the relatives outcast him from the tribe. Consequently, the woman comes back to parents or brothers' home who take care of her.

There is a clear difference of opinion between men and women regarding Watta-Satta. Men opinioned that ... there are no harm but security in marrying a girl under the custom. The positive aspect is two girls get married and the negative is upon divorce to one, the other follows. Women say that the custom is a way of compromising and to end relationship between the families. But also it escalates women battering and rate of divorce, which is given on petty issues. It is practiced in all families including educated and people have successful life. Mostly follow it with the consent of parents thus it is right. However, some men opinioned that if the custom is abolished the poor will not be able to arrange jewelry and amount for *Mehar* and therefore cannot marry children. Those do not have match (sisters or daughters) would not get married.

In addition to Watta-Satta, there is another custom, which is followed in some parts of Sulaiman mountain range called "**Watta and Takka**" or **Numrad**. In the custom, to get marry a woman, money is also demanded from her parents. Some people consider Watta-Satta an issue of poor people who are more engaged in it. However, new generation is against it, yet they are aloof before the family elders and relatives. A young girl said that upon talking about the customs, our elders (men) including educated threaten us to stop our education. When a religious scholar's opinion sorted out, he said that Watta-Satta is a non-Muslim tradition but it is followed in our area and is a crime without *Mehar*.

Dowry

Begging for dowry from bride's family by the bridegroom's is a calculated, planned and well-executed day light robbery that is practiced in the name of tradition and prevails greatly among the socially elite as well as the destitute in the community. Mostly people are either active participants or willing accomplices in this horrendous custom. In some areas where this is practiced, the size of dowry is directly proportional to the groom's social standing, thus making it virtually impossible for low-income group women to marry into upper income families. In some cases where a woman's family is too poor to afford any dowry whatsoever, she is simply forbidden from ever marrying.

Surprisingly, community in tribal area of Sulaiman range denied at all that dowry custom is practiced. However, they said that dowry is gradually becoming an issue for the parent's honour. The women of the area viewed that a woman must get dowry... this gives protection to her, without dowry she faces problems in her entire life and feels inferiority complex. There is a ban on dowry by the government but people give it to show only their wealth. Some tribal community people consider dowry a part of share in inherited property.

Dowry however is not an Islamic custom nor Islam encourages such ludicrousness but practices of other religion and nations are being followed. For instance, in late-medieval and early sixteenth century Spain, convents were pursued the payment of dowries, maintenance allowances, and inheritances on behalf of their nuns when they filed lawsuits in the secular courts¹⁹. On her marriage to Louis, Marie Thérèse, daughter of Philip IV of Spain, had renounced her rights of inheritance in

¹⁹ Convents As Litigants: Dowry And Inheritance Disputes In Early-Modern Spain, Journal of Social History, Spring, 2000 by Elizabeth A. Lehfeldt

return for a large dowry. Blaming Spain for having failed to pay the stipulated dowry, Louis declared war.²⁰ Also, British King Henry-VII married to Spanish princess because she brought dowry along her. Therefore, it is said that in the sub-continent, dowry custom flourished during the British rule.

Divorce and Women Rights to Divorce

Divorce is part of marital life of man and woman. It is common in mostly countries and tribes all over the world. This issue was discussed in detailed with the community of Sulaiman range. The community from all villages, men-women admitted that divorce is quite common, practiced on petty issues and now escalating gradually. Watta-Satta is the major reason of divorce. Couple married under the custom, if face any problem, give divorce and parents take home their respective daughters. To give divorce, it could be any reason - true or false. For instance, a woman was divorced after 20 years of marriage cause she was suspected with her younger sister's husband. If wife is raped, her husband divorces and snatches children. Women bettering and daily disputes are other reasons are promoting divorce. Mismatch or partners of parents' choice also cause divorce. A woman said that it is better to be divorced rather than living in a hell.

A divorced woman faces many social problems, because the society in Pakistan does not consider her a good character woman. It is generally unacceptable for a divorced woman to live alone (as is usually also the case with unmarried women). The family (parents), most of the time, does not cooperate and accept her. However, in some cases the woman parents bear her expenses somehow.

On the question to **rights to divorce** people, men and women gave quite interesting views, in favor and against. A woman said that upon getting rights to divorce what would be the difference in western and our society? Women will become liberal. She can get divorce from the court. It is a matter of courage. Another woman believes that woman is emotional therefore she should not be given this rights, otherwise she will divorce on petty issues and children will affect the most. A man responded: "rights to divorce to women...*servant does not have rights to kick out the master! Perception cannot be taken as perfection.* None of the religion gives rights to divorce to woman and if there is any we accept it. He inquired that does Islam give rights to divorce to women? It is given only to men. We cannot give it to woman in any case. A man is the head of a family therefore he is eligible to divorce - not woman. Having got it woman will deprive herself, as a divorced woman does not have any respect in the society and people consider her as bad character woman."

Islam allows divorce; however, it is not to be sought readily. In majority of Islamic states, it is much easier for a man to divorce his wife than a woman to initiate divorce proceedings against her husband. If a woman does not want to live with her husband due to any reason, Islam however gives women rights, which is called *Khula*. A woman, who is not happy with (the behavior) her husband, she has rights to ask for it. But, for getting *Khula* she can go to the court and ask for it, yet the procedure is quite lengthy.

Share to Women in Inheritance Property

In majority of the villages of Sulaiman Range, women do not get their share in the inherited property. There was a mix response from both men and women on the issue. Some men said that few women get their share in property. Some informed that daughters have never got their shares in the inherited property because she marries to other whereas son is the heir of family. "We give substantial dowry to women as part of their share in the inherited property but not share in the inheritance property. It is inappropriate to give daughters more shares and write a deed from them for not asking further any share." The women, when get or ask share in the property, are deprived to go to their brothers' home. Women consider that getting share in inherited property is a vicious act but they do because their husbands demand it. The husbands ask for the share in cattle as well, if the women parents don't have good landholdings. Sometimes the husbands marry in desire of the property and upon getting kill wives. Women in Rajan Pur tribal area of Sulaiman range told that they don't get even cloths and

²⁰ War of Devolution, 1667-68, undertaken by Louis XIV for the conquest of the Spanish Netherlands. also, Dowry - Roman custom in antiquity, as reported in 1875 and Greek Weddings - dowry and marriage in ancient Greece

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money from their husbands. In our tribal custom, widows do not get share in *Zakat*²¹... how come dowry, property or cattle as our share. Referred the verses of Quran,²² a Molvi (priest) opinioned on the issue that only Islam gives share to a woman in the inherited property - no other religion does so. However, the people do not give the rights to daughters - are sinner.

Domestic Violence on Women

Like other societies of the world, violence on women is also perpetuated in the Sulaiman range tribal areas. According to the women situation in the area is quite miserable as 90% women are not allowed by their men to wear shoes so that they keep looking down. Although, it is the responsibility of a woman to fetch water from far-flung and takes cattle for grazing but if a goat is died, even the skin of goat is not given to them except a pair of shoes in a year. Women can not wash their cloths for three months or so, but are given either one goat/sheep or Rs. 2000/- as their *Mehtar*.

The people told several reasons, which cause quarrel or beating to women. The elder women said that women do more mistakes and upon arriving home they quarrel with their husbands. However, men quarrel just to show the masculinity. Women do not spend according to their men's income. Because of the low income, family needs are not met as one earns and the entire family eats, therefore I give hard time to my husband, says another woman. A wife told that husband does not give expenses and asks everything but when I demand expenses, he beats me. In case male is not earning (unemployed) then there is quarrel. Some people get marries their sons just to make them responsible and the parents of girls are simply inspired to their wealth. These men spend income of their wives' brutally and this is another reason of the quarrel. *Mehtar* and property are other factors behind disputes.

Role of Mother and Sister in Law

Some women of the area view that most of the domestic quarrels are initiated because of mother-in-law and sister in law, which cause beating and violence against women. Mother-in-law provokes her son against daughter-in-law and he then angrily beat her. High *Mehtar* and inadequate dowry is another reason of quarrel as the mother and sister in laws makes life difficult of the bride, the women told. It is very difficult situation for a man to whom he should support when his wife complains. However, some said that normally it is a woman (wife) who quarrels because when he (husband) lives together with family (parents, brothers and sisters) then as such no quarrel takes place. In contrast, when a new woman enters in the family, quarrel begins. Nevertheless, if a man equally treats all relations then one can avoid it.

The mother-in-law also quarrel upon not having an offspring. A woman complained that having failed to bear child after 4-5 years marriage, the mother and sister in laws use to physically abuse both husband and wife, eventually they remarried their son. Another woman, who was not married under *Watta-Satta*, told that the mother in law asks her son not to sleep with me.

A man stated that in our area, "if a man do wrong, the woman does not have rights to stop it. However, if woman goes against her husband's decisions then she gets punishment that may be divorce. The woman suffer violence though she serves the men at her best and if she refuse to go - she is murdered". Do we keep the women in swing? Do the men become slaves of women and not cry even if she beat him? "It is a Baloch custom to keep woman under dire stress. We give food to women and keep them at home with honour whereas the men is made to work outside, earn and the honour (woman) stay at home", said another man. However, a woman stated that "in our society whether or not man fulfill his home requirement or food for wife, he loves to buy weapons, but women don't say anything. If men do mistakes then we do also have some fault we should also look upon ourselves. Many women told that they don't get even cloths and money from their husbands. Our husbands go outside for earning or work and do not send money for domestic expenses.

²¹ It is one of the five pillars or obligations of Islam. A Muslim (adult) has to pay 2.5 % of its annual wealth if wealth is equivalent to 77 grams of gold or more - its price today stand approximately Rs. 66,000 (US\$1100) – "*Ushar*" (1/6th of the agriculture produce). This goes to the really poor – only the most needy actually take it.

²² The Quran: Chapter-4 Women verses 7, 11, 12 and 176, (See Annex-2)

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According to a teacher, mostly women do not tell their parent about the violence on them. Upon complain to parents about husband's rage, they say, that we are also dishonored. You are getting bread and butter by performing domestic work then who will do it. Children are snatched from the woman who raise voice against the atrocities of her husband. Upon refusing to go back to violent husband, woman's parent and brothers favored her and husband's family was sent out of the area. The husband's family then killed her brother. In another case, a woman got pregnant and due to mishandling or lack of health facilities she and her fetus died thus enmity begun and both families killed each others male members resultants now there are only women left.

An old woman said that a man is a ruler by nature whether he is a father, brother or husband. The women from good families can live in every condition. In our area, old women consider their husband spiritual god. Some women consider their husbands (whatsoever habits he may have) and children above all things. Some women wed their husbands whereas in village *Ghulam Rasool Dareshak*, husbands force their wives to bring women for their lust and they obey. A woman inquired that if quarrels are due to poverty, then why do rich people quarrel? The reason given of quarrel in wealthy people was because educated men are married with illiterate women.

Because of poverty men work/live outside the area or country (Dubai or Saudi Arabia) for 2-3 years. This is a violation of wife rights. Is it a human behavior? Islam does not teach violence on woman, rather, it asks love and affection with her. It says do not accuse a woman until you confirm it. Woman can ask money even if she nurse her baby as ordains in the Quran, a Molvi argued. He said that the centuries old customs could not be removed at once. Quarrels can be minimized if the marriages take place with the consents of man and woman and education - economic empowerment is given to women. She would then kick-off the man from home. Member parliaments could be asked to talk about women rights with the area people.

Karo-Kari

Karo Kari was among the main topics, which were discussed in detail with the people of Sulaiman range tribal area. The people provided extremely terrible information on how and why it is practiced and who face the burnt of this custom which is practiced widely in Baloch dominated areas of the country.

Mostly, innocent women are killed by declaring as Kari. The main reason of Karo-Kari is to gain financial benefits i.e. not to payback the loan taken from the alleged man or the victim or his family. Some do Karo-Kari because of poverty, some for greediness and some to disgrace other male and blame their own female. Kari (woman) is also sold and the family of Kari gets an amount (Rs. 50,000-500,000) in penance from the family of Karo.²³ Upon a natural death of a woman, the husband or in laws have to tell the neighbours or people of the area so that she could not be blamed as Kari. The parents declare their girl Kari upon finding the photograph of a boy. Husband considers his wife of bad character, if she takes bath during the day and abuses her. They can not wash their cloths for three months or so. However, a woman can be blamed after her death. According to a woman, men do more than one marriage and after having more children throwaway one wife declaring her Kari. Also that, a Panchayat declared a dead woman - Kari with an alive man after two months and got penance for her husband from the alleged "Karo" - man.

It is an old Baloch customs in which women are killed on doubt of Karo Kari. These are the customs of our forefather we do act of Karo-Kari just to show each other, explained men of a village. Kari corpse is thrown away (in the river) after chopping. Normally, last prayer or *Duaa Mugfirat* (forgiveness pray) is not offered. Neither they accept nor like condolence of such women. The main reason of Karo-Kari is not to payback the credit taken from the man of the victim. Ultimately it is a woman who faces the music or dishonoured. In Karo-Kari, the Karo (man) has to be killed also. However, in most of the cases, the Karo somehow leaves the area until Panchayat takes a decision about his faith, if not the Karo is killed. But after the decision, two-three hundred thousand rupees are paid and they eat together. Therefore, it is a matter of money, nothing else. Those are died under these customs and practices are buried without showing/telling to the doctors and police. Because of the reason honour cases are not get registered with the police and decisions are made in Panchayat. People give rupees

²³ Though in the area poverty level is high but it is not revealed that how these poor people pay Rs. 50,000-500,000.

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1.5-2 million or women in penance in case a Wodera or Sardar is killed. This penance is up to rupees two hundred thousand for poor.

Because of the economic problem, the women are responsible to fetch water and take cattle for grazing day long in far-flung areas and jungle. Men work in the field. This develops their relationship, which is a cause of Karo-Kari blame. Women are not allowed to go each other's or neighbors' home albeit we fetch the water from as far as 10 kilometers, a woman expressed her feelings. Furthermore, in our area these incidences take place once a while in a year and after very three kilometers but if one asks men, they deny it. Kari (woman) is also sold. They kill a woman or sale her in other parts of tribal area as punishment. In addition, they also get money or land as penance from the relatives/family of the Karo and as Vani they get a woman, informed a woman.

While telling the brutality of the custom, a man in Rojhan asked that declaring a four years girl Kari is right but not for a 70 years old woman? In tribal area, a man refused to accept the accusation of Kari against his wife. The Wodera asked him that the woman must be sold to another tribe or leave the area, hence, the person decided to leave the area. Another man supported killing under Karo-Kari and said it is right in our society, no body kills his innocent woman.

Because of these practices neither we go to the court nor a justice be sorted out in the tribal area. One Molvi explained that witness is needed to prove Karo-Kari act but we consider it against our honour and custom. Here people take penance against Karo-Kari and do business with this *Haram* money. According to him, men are not aware of the Islamic rules and regulation; otherwise they perhaps do not practice Vani and Karo-Kari customs. It is wrong by virtue of Shariah. People and the government have to abolish it together. Only an educated Wodera, Sardar or member parliament can abolish it, if they like. Vani and Karo-Kari can be abolished if the Islamic scholars and Molvis debate against these issues in Madaris and Mosques. One person or tribe cannot abolish these customs unless the entire society is not changed. The educated people can help in abolishing this custom of Karo-Kari and *Numrad* particularly, if there would be educated women then it was possible to bring in changes in the society.

Vani

Vani or *Swara* is practiced in many tribal communities of Pakistan, including Sulaiman mountain range where in 30% villages people informed about the practice of this custom. Normally, it is followed because of Karo-Kari. It is outrageous particularly for young and unmarried girls and many poor spoil the life of their sisters and daughters by selling them under the custom. Some people are compelled to practice Vani custom and give their daughters in penance or follow Karo Kari. The reason to give woman as penance in Vani is told that people think that otherwise the rivalry would increase so its better compromise through custom. People revealed several incidences during the discussions on the issue. A woman told that a person killed his sister and in exchange he got three matches (girls) vis-à-vis Rs. 50,000 from the family of alleged Karo-man. However, in another village men denied it and said that neither girls are given in case of murder nor do we take money. But, if the accuser comes to victim's home, put his turban on the foot (family elders), accept mistake and ask amnesty then it be granted in the name of God.

Some women asked that the murderer gives two or three sisters or nice as penance in Vani. What is their crime? The dispute is between men and many women are presented for reconciliation. How come a woman is safe at enemy home? This is the weakness of our youngster and educated people and only Punchayat patronize it. Another group of women admitted that Vani is absolutely wrong and vowed that we will raise voice against the decisions made under Vani custom.

In a murder dispute between Buzdar and Khaitran tribes, a dignified person refused to resolve under the Vani custom and finally the tribe agreed the decision on getting money. He says that I hate Vani and its use against women. It is wrong but in practice in our area. How could it be abolished? What can we give to the affected appellant in penance? However, when we give an unmarried woman against the penance, three types of injustice are done with her:

1. She is innocent and being given against the penance without her consent,
2. She is not an adult, and
3. When she reaches the appellant home, he or his family does violence on her in jealousy.

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The ability of individuals to bypass the law without any fear of repercussions has also perpetuated in such customary practices. While the formal laws in Pakistan do not condone these practices, the courts do little to address them, allowing informal justice systems to implement a law of their own. There are national laws such as the Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 and the Pakistan Penal Code (articles 310 & 338-E) that prohibit the sale and underage marriage of girls. However, these customary practices are difficult to prevent unless laws are introduced that explicitly outlaw the customary practices of Vani and Swara and are rigorously implemented and those breaching the contract are dealt with strictly under the law.

In 2002, the Chief Justice of Pakistan declared Vani and Swara as un-Islamic and expressed concern over the rising number of these cases. The Chief Justices of high courts were all given instruction to ensure that trial courts do not allow for a woman to be given as compensation.

According to press reports, the Law and Justice Commission stated in March 2004, that all individuals who contract a marriage by Vani and Swara through a Jirga or Panchayat should be liable to rigorous imprisonment. The Commission also came out with a draft amendment to article 366-C of the Pakistan Penal Code, which states:

“Whosoever takes part in reconciliation or Panchayat and thereby requires any person to offer or accept, and whosoever offers and accepts in marriage a woman (defined as having reached the age of 16) against her free will, or a female child in lieu of any concession to an accused person, or as a compensation for an act when such an act is an offence under the law, or as a “Badl-i-Sulh” shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may be extended to ten years and shall be liable to a fine”.

This amendment has not yet been passed from the parliament.

Aaf & Aas (Fire Walking)

The Custom of *Aaf & Aas* (Fire Walk) was reported by the participants from Rajan Pur tribal area of the Sulaiman range. According to them, under the custom the accuser has to cross barefoot from the burning fire in order to prove him/her innocent. A seven feet deep trench is excavated. A Baloch Molvi, while reading some verses, adds green leaf of Barry. The accuser performs ablution then s/he walks barefoot through the fire. Upon receiving signs of vesicle in skin, the accused is considered a sinner otherwise the accuser has to pay the penalty, which could be the hand of a girl, among others.

Sale and Purchase of Women

Sale and purchase of women has been a practice in many countries even today. Apparently, we are living in 21st century but if we look at the customs and practices followed in the area where study was conducted, it seems that we live in Stone Age since people give different perspective. According to people of Sulaiman range tribal area, women are treated like commodities and are sold like cattle or are considered as child making machine. They have no voice to ask for their rights. The table shows that in 23% villages of different Tumans of the Sulaiman range people reported that women are sold. The Pathan²⁴ sell their girls... good price means good character girl, less price means the character is doubtful and no price means there is something wrong with the girl or she is of bad character. Sometimes, a woman is sold several times.

Intoxication and gambling is common in the area and because of the poverty they do sale and purchase of their women. High levels of economic hardship and social inequality is another reason which often lead families to sell their young daughters into marriage as a means of earning money. An old woman informed that poor girls are sold to get money. Upon death of men their women are sold. Some people sell their daughters and lose the amount in gambling. They give their girls in exchange of loan whether it is Rs. 10 only to be paid back. Some people give property to their son and sell out daughters. Upon non-availability of match (daughter) in exchange of son, the bride is purchased from outside. These sales are illegal and are not done with the consent of the girl. In some cases, the decision is made by one member of the family without consulting any other members.

²⁴ Inhabitant of NWFP: Pukhtoon

In some discussions, women showed their angers and demanded to stop sale of women as it is against the Islamic values. Women should not be considered as “a Commodity on Sale”, if preference is not given to her then please give only those rights which are bestowed her by the Islam. These are un-Islamic customs and practices but Wodera and Sardars support it and could be abolished upon their death. Therefore, there is a dire need to make strong laws against selling of women.

Punchayat System

Punchayat or traditional and informal council of ‘male elders’ of a village/tribe to resolve disputes is centuries old system, which is being followed in the sub-continent. The members of the councils called “Punch” are responsible for taking decision according to their wisdom and wishes. However, it is practiced in all the areas where the study was conducted.

The people in all villages discussed about its functioning - pros and cons. Mostly people do not trust on Punchayat system and say that it is not based on justice. According to some men, in the past members of Punchayat were though, illiterate but honest and scare to God. Now, Punchayat are made of people who are not only illiterate but are also incompetent, biased, adulterous and intoxicated thus are not eligible enough so make wrong decisions. Although, the decisions in Punchayat are quick but there too, they take-care of the wealthy person and decisions are made in favor of the powerful strata or bribe them well.

Customs like *Vani* and *Karo Kari* are being patronized and flourish under the Punchayat system. A man stated that brave people take revenge instantly whereas the covert goes to Punchayat. Many women argued that if courts provide justice in time then people would not trust on Punchayat and its verdicts. A woman told that the women who are died under various customs and practices are buried without informing to doctors and police. The cases don't get registered in the police station and the decisions are made in Punchayat, which may not be vindicated but one has to obey and agree. However, people seek their decision from Sardar in fury. Women generally do not go to Punchayat and are afraid of it. During the study a woman of a village inquired that did ever Punchayat call women before taking a decision against her? Women can defend better and stop decision against her, if they are part of Punchayat, the women suggested. Some women believe that Punchayat gives right decisions about women. This system provides cheaper justice but it decides according to the wishes of Feudal.

Domestic conflicts and antagonism are promoted by Sardar and feudal because people take every petty issue to them. Some Sardars maintain private jails in which disobedient people are kept and abused. Tribal enmity is remain in fashion and according to many people of the area, sometimes lead to killing of innocent people. The enmity last for a longer period, in some cases it is reported for decades. Therefore, people buy and keep sophisticated weapons. According to a woman, whether or not we have something to eat, our men love to buy and keep weapons due to the tribal enmity.

Role of Police and Judiciary

Although role of police and judiciary in promoting conventional customs was not explicitly included in the study. However, it emerged from the discussions with the people during the entire study. Therefore the views have also taken into account and are presented.

According to some men of different villages, our country has become a police state and having received rupees five thousand or so the police can indict anyone in a false case. But, police does not ask the landlords. No one hears woman in Police station and court rather she is sent back after abusing. The law is like a joke in our police stations and courts. In mostly cases women do not go to the courts - reason being either they do not have confidence on police and judiciary system of the country or the corruption that prevails or delaying the justice. A woman does not get justice therefore agrees for a reconciliation. Justice needs friends and wealth so that lawyer's fee can be paid, if laws were properly implemented then there would not be law and order situation.

The judiciary is corrupt and gets several hundred thousand rupees to pressurize the heirs to resolve the dispute and leave culprits unpunished though there are witnesses against them. Courts seldom decide in favor of poor, therefore, the decisions are done at the Sardar home or Punchayat. Upon pursuing legally, the high official demand money and poor cannot afford it. Everywhere, the wealth

plays an important role including in the judiciary. How could one get the justice if the cases will remain pending for forty years in the courts? This is like justice delayed justice denied. Because of not getting justice the society has become immoral.

It was surprising to note that the majority participants in all villages were not aware about the Hudood Laws affecting their life. The people demanded that there should be followed one law only either Islamic or western. Police tout system should be abolished as almost in every police station there are people who buy them.

6. ECONOMIC SITUATION

Mostly villagers are either unemployed or self-employed - run small shops or cultivate a small piece of land without a proper irrigation system and modern concepts of farming. A few of them do jobs in outside cities as schoolteachers or clerks or they get recruited in the Border Military Force of the tribal areas where they are forced by Sardars to let loose oppression on their own people.

Almost every household woman and girl is involved in small-scale cattle and poultry farming to meet their domestic needs from the production. This is mainly the responsibility of women to take cattle for grazing and farming poultry. Normally, dairy and poultry products are not sold but are used for domestic needs or barter trading. In this way women never earn any hard cash for their own use or other needs. Women are very good in embroidery and tailoring but almost all perform this for their own family, informed the women of many villages. The calculated per capita income of the area is Rs. 24,000 or US\$ 375 which is far less than the national per capita, i.e. US\$ 650²⁵.

7. POLITICAL SITUATION

As the people at large in the Sulaiman range area are illiterate or poorly educated, they lack social and political awareness. They have no concept of a community or lack information about their basic human rights usurped by the feudal or tribal chief. Either they don't aware about responsibilities of the state for providing them basic facilities, or if they do, they don't possess the capacity to evolve a proactive community and raise their voices against such a state of affairs.

In most of the villages, the common person has no political affiliation with any political party but is devoted and faithful to his/her Sardars. In some villages, people have expressed their affiliation with the political party to which Chief of the area is associated. During the study, it has been noted that no common person takes any interest in elections either. Only Sardars and feudals have to contest the elections, hence it was identified that people are required by them to get registered as voters but they do not have any choice except to vote for the influential. The ratio of registered votes is almost 50% of the total population of villages. Women are normally not allowed to get registered their votes. Women having registered votes either belong to influential families, priests, Sardar or Wodera or their subordinates called "*Muqadam*".

Until 2001, there was no reserved seat for women under the constitution of Pakistan for local bodies' election. In a very few villages female voters are let to cast vote, while in mostly villages the men of family cast vote in proxy of women. Thus, there was no women representation at the local level. But, in some areas like Barthi, the Mullah or priests have succeeded in electing their wives. However, these women cannot participate in the local councils meetings without the permission of her spouse. Having discussion on the issue, it was revealed that during the Local Bodies' election of 2005, the men of these villages under the direction of respective Sardar did cast their women's vote in proxy.

8. CONCLUSION

Human make some principles to live accordingly. Some customs and practices are borrowed either from new settlers or followed from their forefathers and neighbours. If development is not defined by the gradual improvement of the quality of lives as defined by a particular society for its majority, then there is no logic to the expression. This does not mean following the same paths as Western nations (just look at Japan) or conforming to Western standards, just developing. Individual's freedom could therefore be sacrificed for the perceived good of the whole society and that cultures and traditions should change with the passage of time.

²⁵ The Economic Survey of Pakistan 2005

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Nevertheless, the study reflects the worst social, political, economic and gender-biased situations in Sulaiman range. In the 21st century where the world is progressing towards the evolution of a single community and through globalization advancement of media communication, the international community has virtually become a global village, these two districts DG Khan and Rajan Pur still include a tribal area. This tribal area, though, geographically part of the said districts but practically it is a separate entity where the administrative structure and the laws of the provincial government have no interference. This mountain area either has a little or no social, political and physical infrastructure thus people are backward and deprived. Not only the public sector and its policies are neglecting this area also no civil society organisation has ever initiated development work. Perhaps, one of the reasons is most of Pakistani NGOs and its workers refrain to go in remote, hilly and tribal areas like this. The most affected are the low-income communities' women - or households having earning between the poverty line and national average thus vulnerable to fall below the poverty line.

The area is subject to traditional customs, which are the main source of privilege and hegemony of feudals and Sardars, allowing a very negligible status to ordinary persons; especially a system of severe deprivation, subjugation, and oppression of women is prevailing since time unknown. Moreover, the Stone Age customs under practice are neither good for them nor for their present and future generation, particularly for women and by no mean can bring change in their socio-economic condition. The customs, honour, the people consider they borrowed, possess, respect and follow from their forefathers are making their own life miserable due to many reasons outlined above. Woman, whether belong to NWFP like Samia Waheed killed in her lawyer's office for seeking justice or Mukhtaran Mai of Punjab, ganged raped upon the decision of a Panchayat. It is Shazia Almani of Sindh, forced to take political asylum in Norway in the crime of love marriage or Dr. Shazia Khalid of Balochistan raped forcibly and did not get justice eventually forced to leave the country to get asylum, all are the victim of these brutal traditions and customs. It does not mean however that people, particularly women are not aware at all. The discussion in various villages of Sulaiman range tribal area reveal that they are not only aware of the fact, also know the solution to it. This is perhaps the reason that overwhelmingly community members both men and women, educated or uneducated, who participated in the study have realized, recommended and demanded that:

- The prevailing traditions and customs in Sulaiman range tribal area are centuries old. Neither these customs are in compliance with Islamic education nor people measure the adverse affect, which directly entangle their women lives, but they remain follow.
- It is the poverty and illiteracy, which is the mother of all fossilized discriminatory customs and is great in practice against women of this area.
- All the fossilized customs and traditions like Karo Kari, Vani, Early-age Marriages and Panchayat systems are hurdle in women development therefore these should be abolished forthwith. Also, mobilize the policy makers and legislators for making pro-women policy and laws in order to reduce miseries of women living in tribal area of Sulaiman mountain range.
- Education should be made essential for all including women.
- Women recommend that the government should discourage and penalize the early age marriages and *Nikah* with a penalty be put on *Nikah Khawan* and make legislation about it.
- Inform Sardar and Wodera that such a brutality and customs are illegally in practice in tribal area of Sulaiman Mountain Range.
- The Hudood Ordinance be repealed immediately.

DAL has reached to the conclusion that these conditions require immediate attention of both the government and NGOs. Therefore, it is pertinent that responsible civil society organisations (CSOs) should extend and implement their developmental programmes in Sulaiman mountain range of PATA.

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