

Article

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Women and Terrorism: An Ethnographic Study of Women Collusion in Swat, Pakistan

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Abstract

This article focuses on the clandestine role of women in aiding and abetting terrorism in the valley of Swat, Pakistan. It is based in extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the valley. The article investigates how women got involved in colluding with the Taliban when they took over the valley. Focusing on the class structure of the semi-tribal society of Swat Pushtuns, especially the segregation between men and women, the article suggests the Taliban exploited the long-built tension between the poor landless class and the rich landed class to convince the women of the former to collude with them with the promise of ameliorating their condition.

Key words: Aiding and abetting, collusion, patriarchy, Swat, Terrorism, Taliban, women.

Introduction

During our ethnographic fieldwork in the valley of Swat, we came across a number of cases of women involved in aiding and abetting the Taliban. We became interested in the case of killing of a local mayor (*nazim*) Sajjad Ali Khan. We interviewed his wife in the town of Allahabad to understand the prevailing political system and

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women's aiding and abetting of terrorism.¹ Sajjad Khan was a government leader of Awami National Party (ANP), which was central to peace talks between the government and the Taliban.² We talked to his wife discussing social structure, political turmoil, and conflict Swat. She told us about her travails as a wife of a *nazim* and later as a widow with children. Sajjad Khan was target killed after the military operation and intensification of the conflict. By then the target killing of local *maliks* (chieftains) and other notables had become a standard tactic of the Taliban terrorizing the traditional tribal leadership and the government.

Mrs. Sajjad Ali Khan narrated certain events and warnings that resulted in a full-fledged conflict and her husband's death. She discussed the peaceful Swat, the province of Durrani Empire, and Yousafzai State of Swat,³ where elderly (elite/khan) women would sit in the local *Jirgas* (Council of Elders). However, the *Khans*,⁴ weary of agnatic rivalries, invited a non-local to rule and manage Swat, thus changing the old structures and placing Swat under the control of *Wali*.⁵ She mentioned that *Wali* Swat targeted *Khans* too but his rule was not brutal like that of *Taliban*. She discussed the elite women's role in the form of *Bibi*⁶ doing *ghamkhadi* in community before the conflict.

Ghamkhadi is an organization of ideas and practices by *Pakhtun* woman in which joys and sorrows of life are understood as eternal. Therefore, such events are observed and celebrated communally within networks of reciprocal social obligations. The presence at *Ghamkhadi* occasions is culturally considered as women's job. Thus, it is a set of multifaceted activities, which are considered vital to *Pukhtun* identity or *Pukhtunwali*.⁷ It is interesting to note that in such social obligations and interactions, the *Khaanans* and *Bibiyaans* would engage with poor people but not as equals. The local women from lower classes and few from middle class would be there as helpers or volunteers, not as equals, to participate in *ghamkhadi*.

Being the wife of *Khan* and sitting *Nazim*, Mrs Sajjad did her *ghamkhadi*. In addition, she helped and assisted other women in the village in the form of financial help. She also influenced her husband to support certain persons in the local *Jirgas* or take decisions upon the request of women in the village. The women in the community would come to her every morning with their issues. Sometimes, she would meet community women in different functions (marriages,

births, deaths) and listen to their problems. Moreover, she assisted her husband in elections, did politicking for him and built-up support that eventually helped him in winning the elections of *Nazim*. Although, she was never allowed to contest elections unlike the lower and middle class women, she always voted for members identified by her husband or family.

Like elite of classical world, she followed the cultural norms and considered the traditional structure of *Pakhtunwali* sacred. Her role as daughter, sister, wife and mother was an honor for the family. It is interesting to know that she criticized the old Swat under *Wali* but trusted old structures of *Jirga* (council of elders) and Swat *Riwaj* (patriarchal customary practices) under the administration of *Wali*, considering it the best system for women. She blamed judicial structures of Pakistani state as it failed to deal with the cases of women in Swat. She felt that state had failed to provide employment, services and facilities to the people that escalated both men and women's issues. She thought if state was kind and had provided equal opportunities to its citizen the *ghareebanan* (poor) would have never supported the militants. Somehow, from her conversation, it was evident that she blamed the state's institution but could not comprehend the class struggle in Swat against the privileged people.⁸

It was during the active conflict that she suffered manifolds at the hands of women colluders; she was threatened by them, which forced her and her family to leave their home and village after their migration from village, the militants took their houses. She also narrated the torment of harassment by the militant commander Maulana Shah Dauran through his aunt. She mentioned that his aunt used to come and threaten her and her families. Shah Dauran's aunt was the main protagonist in this case; she actively participated in terrorizing the *Nazim's* wife and was instrumental in spreading terror amongst the women living in the vicinity. Shah Dauran's aunt behaved like woman of power like *khan's* wife, she assisted the militants in their pious mission by threatening the victims and their families. She approached the immediate family members of *Nazim* in the village and warned them not to support him or his family (Sajjad Khan) as they were considered a part of infidel political party and state. The aunt of Shah Dauran started behaving like a pious woman

blessed by holy men. She was feared, respected and many started calling her *Bibi*.⁹

Nazim and his wife were declared arch enemies as they were both from the landed aristocracy; and Sajjad was a sitting *Nazim* from the party that was targeted by the militants in the settled part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On the request and information of trusted people in the village, Mrs Sajjad migrated from Alahabad to Bilogram and took refuge at her parent's house. Her parent's house was also attacked and the militants carried out search for her husband through these women colluders, leaving them with no option but to migrate to Peshawar for a brief time. During this time, the militants raided and took her house, livestock, orchards and farms in Alahabad with the assistance of women accomplices. Above all, her house was used as a slaughterhouse where the families of militants lived, using their clothes, shoes and other things. It is very ironic to mention that women colluders were instrumental in spreading terror by narrating stories of abductions and slaughtering that were happening at her house with other women living in the vicinity.¹⁰

As a victim of conflict, *Nazim's* wife tried to engage as a negotiator with militants through these women colluders, completely defying her assigned role of *Khan's* wife and a *Pakhtun* woman. She approached Maulana Shah Dauran through his aunt (who was now a pious *Bibi* trying to solve the issues of other women) to spare her husband and vacate their house but it was a futile exercise.¹¹ Instead of consoling her like *Bibi*, the aunt of Mullah Shah Dauran, consumed by the rage like some mythical character, threatened her that they would take her daughters too. It was the most traumatic period of *Nazim's* wife; her husband's life was in danger, her young daughters were not safe, her role of *Bibi* and doing *Khaigara* (doing good) eliminated and she was dependent on her parents for everything. The military operation in 2009 gave them hope and her husband returned to Swat; however, after few months of his return, the militants assassinated him on 13 April 2010. That day, she felt cold, scared, and alone. The comfort of security with military presence was gone and even today she fears that the old Swat of Mullah Fazlullah will return someday due to the presence of women colluders and accomplices in the village.¹²

The main debate and query of this research is to investigate the reasons and causes, which compelled women from poor strata of

society to collude with militants and harassed women from the upper class.

Methodology

We conducted study on peace-building initiatives in the conflict areas and role of Pakhtun women. During research, we came across different women who suffered at the hands of militants' colluders. During research, it was observed that militants in the Swat valley approached women through their women accomplices; there is no denying the fact that radio was a point of contact, but collection of donation, jewelry and other support from the women was done through these women colluders. To explore the question of women's involvement (poor and members of militant families) in 2007-9 conflict, we worked in the Swat valley for six months and conducted twenty semi-structured interviews and two focus group discussions with local men and women at different places on militancy, women's role, class division and patriarchal cultural practices. Focus group discussions included persons from every section of the society. For few in-depth interviews, snowball technique and chain referral method was used to understand the sub-conflict that existed between women of different classes. However, for deeper probing and knowledge about the role of women colluders, an ethnographic method is used. Two case studies were chosen to narrate the ordeals of women victims. Their suffering at the hands of women accomplices was recorded. The main limitation of our study was access to the women colluders, few of them in-directly involved are still living in the areas but they refuse to talk and discuss. Immediate relatives of the militants were missing and locals had no idea about them. However, during focus group discussions, it was observed that few women colluders (lower section of the society) were part of our discussion too and they refused to admit that they played any role in the support of militancy. These women were sympathetic towards the *Taliban* and argued that militants were trying to implement a just system in Swat.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Orly Maya Stern's "The Invisible Women of *Al-Shabaab*" is a unique study that provided a detail account of militants and women colluders in the Somalia.¹³ The Al-Shabaab (The Youth) is a militant outfit, fighting Somali government and foreign military since 2012.

In this study, the researcher has discussed the role of (invisible) women in assisting militant group *Al-Shabaab*. It is focused on several categories of women accomplices: wives and family members as natural ally. Women from lower section of the society were convinced by *Al-Shabaab* on the pretext of bringing just system of *Sharia*. These women played an invisible but potent role in recruitment of young men into the organization and assisted in abductions of young girls from affluent class. They threatened the victim families also.¹⁴ The study is relatable to the Swat case. The women colluders were instrumental in achieving targets for militants by collecting donations, convincing women to recruit their sons in the organization and terrorizing women of victim's families. Interestingly most of the militants' targets were from the upper class.

Kate Manne (2015) in "Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny" discusses misogyny in detail and explains the threatening women. She argues that misogyny is a system that operates within patriarchal social order to sub-ordinate women; however, there are certain women that help and assist men in oppression of women. Manne strongly feels that misogyny is personal but it is most productive as a political phenomenon. In her book, she discusses the cases of misogyny campaigns in the Isla Vista killings and during the election of Hillary Clinton by the women.¹⁵ Her debate of targeting women selectively for certain specific reasons such as social cum structural in-equalities is very relevant in the case of Swat. The women colluders can be classified as misogynist that helped militant men to establish patriarchal order in Swat by using a debate of religion. Moreover, women collaborators felt pleasure in disempowering the women from certain classes too.¹⁶

However, Stern's work on invisible militant women and Manne's logic of misogyny helped us in understanding the class oppression, militancy, patriarchy and politicized misogyny but Mary Beard work "Women & Power A Manifesto"¹⁷ provided an exceptional insight about the women getting power and turning ugly. The most fascinating aspect of her work is that she is using evil women mythological characters (deliberately constructed) to define women's role in all men's world of power. In this book, the writer discusses misogyny from ancient Greece and Rome to present day, and registers the fact that in all men's world, it is not (evil) women

but power structure that needs change. In Swat, women from certain class supported militancy due to class structure and oppression within the society at different levels.

Historical Background

During 2007-9, the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas' Swat suffered war and conflict that not only disturbed the serene Swat district but also the entire region.¹⁸ Unfortunately, several social, political and economic reasons were responsible for the turmoil and upheaval. A glance at Swat's history shows that conflict and disorder was not new to the dwellers of area. It was a princely state; however, in 1969, it was merged in the state of Pakistan and in the same year, it experienced a violent mass peasants' movement, thus disturbing peace of the area. Then the subsequent land reforms in 1970s that resulted in clashes between the landed aristocracy and landless tenants created class conflict.¹⁹ In 1975, the North West Frontier Province government passed Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) criminal and civil codes. Criminal cases were to be decided by the state code and tribal crimes to be decided by the local councils appointed by civil administration, which instead of becoming a tool of justice transformed into another conflict. Then the Afghan war of 1979 gave impetus to the policy of Jihad and uprising by the religious class that resulted in another conflicting debate of replacing oppressive state formal structure with *Sharia* Law derived from *Quran* and *Sunnah*. Thus, in 1990s, religious movement of Sufi Mohammad started demanding *Sharia* Law instead of PATA laws, which later turned aggressive and paved way for the militants like Mullah Fazalullah.²⁰

The beautiful Swat valley was turned into a hell by Mullah Fazalullah and by his *Tehreek-e- Taliban* Pakistan. The violence meted out to the people of Swat by his pietistic movement was in different forms. He used a religious debate against the landed aristocracy within the communities and recruited young men from the poor and middle class in the brutality. However, the goriest violence against the Swat's society was involving women in the militant activities.²¹ He used the appeal of religion, patriarchy and unjust class structures to convince women from different section of the society to support him. His point of contact and influence with women was radio and donation was collected through their women

colluders. It is interesting to observe that militants won the loyalties of the Swat women of all the sections of society by airing messages regarding their empowerment in the religion and abolishment of unjust system. They were encouraged to donate money for a noble cause and asked to pressurise their family men to join the *Tehreek* (movement), and in some cases, women gave away all their jewelry and money. In extreme cases, several women urged by militant Shah-e-Dauran of Qambar forced their husbands and sons to join the movement and do Jihad.²²

The militants in Swat used a unique strategy; they espoused the role and importance of women in religion. They stressed that pious women have social and economic rights in Islam. They said pious women stay at home and raise devoted children committed to Jihad. This resulted in many women from the lower middle class joining militants. These women colluders performed certain activities i.e. helped militants by spreading their propaganda, reported on men and women movement in the village, conveyed messages to women, terrorized their family men, assisted militants in siege, provided shelter and food to them and in some extreme cases became a part of physical violence too.²³ While exploring Swat, an interesting phenomenon was noticed, many women accomplices were either militants' relatives or single women from poor class taking care of their families while their men were away to earn in different cities of Pakistan or abroad. Both were easy prey, as one was a part of violent structure and other was vulnerable in the absence of responsible man to share her family responsibilities.²⁴

It is interesting to discover that militants had better understanding of *Pakhtun* culture and landed aristocracy in Swat. Therefore, they made women from the middle class important by using the debate of religion and their inheritance rights. However, women from lower middle class were elevated in the Swat oppressive society by using a discourse of equality. Thus, women from both classes felt powerful; though, they had no idea that they were getting involved in conflict and would end-up challenging the state.²⁵ The tragic part was that women (mostly heading families and from lower -middle class) and women relatives of militants became staunch followers of the *Tehreek-e-Taliban* ideology without comprehending the situation. Majority of them were unintentionally colluding with militants by terrorising both men and women through

their skewed ideology. Several women forced men and children in their families to conform to the transmitted militants' ideals.²⁶ Many research works and policy papers have explored the militants' ideology supported by women; however, such works have failed to address the fact that militants got the support of women due to these colluding women, who overtly and some covertly convinced local women that they (militants) were empowering them (women) against patriarchy and unjust class system.

Swat Women –Class Structure - Culture

In *Pakhtun* society, woman's role was not to engage in any legitimate or illegitimate violence like men. However, in exceptional circumstances, if they did become a part of violence they were considered aberrations. Thus, women involved in the Swat's violence are not only an anomaly but also shocking for the communities. Therefore, many cases of women victims who suffered at the hands of women colluders/militants are muted in the media, academia and by practitioners. However, in this paper, instead of muting negative women, specific issues are discussed to connect the debate with the cultural and class oppression, as it is very difficult to accept, recognise and describe *Pakhtun* Pakistani women in negative roles during the conflict.

It is observed that in *Pakhtun* society, the conventional role of women is to serve families. They are assigned certain social responsibilities. We understand that in Swat, militants created these (negative) women (mostly from lower strata of society), used them for their nefarious activities by manipulating their social status, and made them feel empowered and important despite the fact that they had no power or recognition in militant's network and movement (*Tehreek-e-Taliban*).²⁷ It is also ironic to say that those radical and patriarchal militants from *Pakhtun* culture and society in Swat readily gave power to local *Pakhtun* women (negative/abusive) for their gains; however, these women ended up expressing their rage towards *Pakhtun* women of a particular class. This peculiar behaviour of militants and women colluders was not only anti-culture but also unimaginable.

It is observed that many women in Swat like women of *Al-Shabaab*, stressed by poverty and oppressed by patriarchy felt important and pious when they started contacting the powerful and

religious men in Swat valley through radio although it was against established cultural norms and prescribed religious values. Several women donated their jewelry and coaxed their young sons to join the holy movement, thus sacrificing their precious relationships with their sons and husbands. Even today, we can hear the muted voices of colluding women in different protests and movements for missing persons. In pursuit of power and status, they lost their dear ones and lives.²⁸

In addition, many women in Swat, whose husbands were working abroad, joined militants by assisting them financially to become a part of piety and power. They squandered and abused their husbands' hard-earned money and trust to feel elevated in the village. They might not be striving for kingdom or any political position but it is observed that they enjoyed being powerful and respected in the communities, which their patriarchal husbands never accorded to them.²⁹

Swat women's involvement in the terror related crimes were testimony of the fact that the militants projected women with violence but deprived them of true empowerment. Today, if some women from Swat are considered brave and role models by the society and state, then simultaneously many are reported for assisting militants in the terror crimes.³⁰ It is analysed from the in-depth interviews with the victims that female relatives of militants and accomplices transformed into negative protagonists for power and status, targeted the most vulnerable women (poor, widowed, husbands working abroad, victims), and convinced/forced them to be a part of piety movement.³¹ Hence, due to either power or fear, many women provided food/shelters to the militants and assisted them while travelling through check posts. They terrorised the local women victims and specifically those whose husbands, sons and brothers were working with the government machinery or part of government.³² It is observed that many women heading families and in the absence of their husbands, fathers and sons had the money and independence but for power, they abused their positions and aligned with negative forces.

The women associating with negative forces for power can be linked to the class and cultural oppression. Amineh Akbar Ahmed in her doctoral thesis has discussed in detail the role of the Swat's elite women and their interaction with women from poor strata of

section. Although, she has not touched upon the class division and oppression but the debate and discussion of elite *Pakhtun* women doing *gham- khadi* (funerals and weddings) has reflections of class divide.³³ The social role of elite *Pakhtun* women in Swat and their interaction with the community also created contempt against them in the middle and lower middle class women. The poor women of Swat not only envied the elite women's privileged lives but also felt resentful towards them.³⁴

Patriarchy was another reason and catalyst in convincing women that militants were right and their men needed to be pious to give them their religious rights. Therefore, when women were made powerful, they abused the power to take revenge of centuries' old grudge against class and cultural oppression. To map out the behaviour of women victims and women colluders, we have discussed two cases. In both cases, an ordeal of women victims is recorded and we have tried to understand the class structure and culture. The limitation of these case studies is that it was not possible to interview women who were involved in the terror related crimes as some refused to talk and others went missing during military operation.

Women Involvement in Challenging Security Apparatus of the State

During our research work in Swat, we also came across a gory murder of newly appointed sub-inspector, Arshad Ali, by the militants in Matta. It is ironic to mention that his case is not widely reported in the media; therefore, we felt strong desire to interview his family and record his murder. In this case, we also observed that women were actively involved in instilling fear in the community as well as threatening the victim's family. The Tehsil Matta, Swat, was once a stronghold of militants under commander, Ibn-e- Amin. Unfortunately, Arshad Ali was a newly appointed sub- inspector at police station Matta. The active conflict was so intense that many locals in the police services either left or refused to serve in Swat. It would not be wrong to say that he was the first casualty in the conflict, was part of the state security apparatus and a *Khan*. His father has also served as a police officer in different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.³⁵

Recording interview with a slain police officer's wife was an extremely traumatic experience. She was recalling events that were building up the conflict and ultimately led to brutal beheading of her husband in 2009. It was not only painful but also tragic to observe that brutality broke down both the state machinery and society. Mrs. Arshad Ali chatted about the situation in Swat before, during and after the conflict. Her father was a college principal in Swat but she was not allowed to study or pursue any career. Hence, she was married at the age of sixteen and she assumed her responsibilities within the family and community. When she was asked about her role and duties within the community, her response was similar to *Khan's* wife of doing *ghamkhadi* in the community. It is observed that affluent women also known as *Bibiyana*y from the well-off families in Swat gather to commemorate death, marriage, birth and all other such events, and through *ghamkhadi*, they have maintained the fabric of social life by sustaining inter- and intra-family or clan relationships. She as a daughter-in-law of retired police officer and wife of police officer with some land enjoyed the status of *Bibi*. The community women used to approach her on different issues related to police station or other related matters. Ironically, she paid for all the *ghamkhadi* in the form of brutal murder of her husband. The targeting of police and other government personals fed the conflict and made it crueler. Above all, the women from the militant families terrorised them after the death of her husband and father in law.³⁶

She mentioned that, in Swat, women's (she meant women from *Khan's* families) issues would never go to the court or police station but would always be settled within the families or communities. A woman approaching the court or police station was never considered decent and those who approached state's legal structures were always from the lower middle class (*ghareebanan*). It is interesting to note that the women from the *ghareebanan* were not empowered in terms of money and status but had the freedom to approach police, courts, and even took part in the local government elections.³⁷ It also establishes the fact that it was easier for militants to access women from the lower strata of section due to certain freedoms given to these women by the system and class structures.³⁸

She mentioned that her life changed with the conflict, she and her family never envisioned that they would be the victims of conflict. In 1991-92, her father-in-law Khurshid Ali, a retired police

officer, developed good terms with Sufi Mohammad during his duty in Dir jail. Therefore, local *Taliban* and commanders respected him. Even today she failed to understand why her husband was targeted. We asked her about the warnings and indications before his killings or women in this conflict; she said her husband used to talk about the deteriorating law and order situation and the late night dacoits and lootings, which was beyond the control of the local police. He also mentioned that some women were also involved in such crimes but due to cultural restraints, they (local police) were helpless. Before his abduction and killings, the District Police Officer Swat called him for the meeting. In those days, the police persons were instructed to travel in plain clothes for safety. To attend the meeting with the higher official, he handed over his uniform to a coach driver (his village man) and he followed on the motorcycle. On one of the randomly formed check posts,³⁹ *Taliban* stopped the coach and during checking found his uniform under the passenger seat. The people in the coach told the militants (*Taliban*) that the uniform belongs to sub-inspector Arshad Ali and he is coming on the motorcycle. When he reached the spot, they seized him and took him prisoner. He was kept in confinement for two days, later paraded in the Matta bazaar as a symbol of disgrace and humiliation and then brutally beheaded. After several days of negotiations and persistent begging and requests by his father Khurshid Ali, the body was given to the family for burial.⁴⁰

This case had chilling facets; one was that the local people, specifically women from the community associated with commander Ibn-e- Amin, were directly involved in his brutal murder. Secondly, it was an indication that Swat *Khans* and communities were not only divided but broken down in the face of brutal force. The police officer's wife explained that when her husband was leaving for duty, a local woman helper (staunch follower of Ibn-e- Amin as she would praise him constantly and would curse the local police system) was around and she suspected that she reported the movement of her husband. Ironically, women colluders and people involved in his brutal murder grew up together and lived together as one community in the village. After the brutal murder of Arshad Ali, the family further suffered house arrest, starvation, threats via militants' wives and sisters, and the whole community for them transformed into Clytemnestra, driven by self-indulgence need for revenge. The

mythical Clytemnestra wanted to avenge her daughter but changed into all consuming rage for power. While women colluders wanted to change the old oppressive system through piety movement of *Tehreek-e-Taliban* but ended-up by taking revenge on the elite women and their families. Wife of slain Arshad Ali mentioned that the women (colluders) in the vicinity behaved like militants and that they did not let them out for weeks and they were saved when security forces reached out to them.

Even today, due to such violence and atrocities, fear and trust deficit is still present in the community. The wife of Arshad Ali mentioned that her father in law and family has pardoned his enemies, which is the noblest act in *Pakhtun* society. However, it seems that they have pardoned all those involved to avoid future rivalries. She repeatedly said that pardon is the noblest act and she has faith in the divine justice and does not want her children ending up in any kind of trouble.⁴¹ Unfortunately, women relatives (colluders) of militants and some men are still living in the same vicinity; hence, the post-conflict situation has not improved.

Concluding Thoughts

It is observed from these case studies that the women from the under-privileged class of Swat ganged up against the privileged *Bibiyamay*. In Swat, even in doing *gham-khadi*, one can detect class differences. The rich and the landed were in the important position of power even in the social interactions that created envy and resentment amongst the women from lower strata of the society. The class differences not only created male militants but also gave birth to the sub-conflict amongst women within the active conflict. Although, this sub-conflict was not visible in the broader context of Swat's conflict as it was shrouded with other discourses and piety movement; however, it became visible in victim's stories. One can observe that it was very cruel as both victims and assailants were women from the same areas and communities.

Even today, the Swat community is divided into two categories; *Khanan* - *Bibiyamay* (the landed) and *Kasabgarrs* - *Ghariban* (immigrants and native occupational categories). It means that *Khanan* and *Bibiyamay* (elite) saw and still sees themselves as landed aristocracy, organised in clans and having roots tracing back to the epical ancestor Yousafzai. In contrast, the *Ghariban/Kasabgars*

(poor) are identified as landless, without clan and mostly poor people with small businesses and skills. *Khanan/Bibiyanay* have prejudiced belief in their tribal and kinship unity while *Ghariban/Kasabgars* (the under privileged supported militants) are manipulated by the system and poverty.⁴² In addition, Pakhtun patriarchal culture also played its role in forcing women to join the militant's brigade to challenge the oppressive culture.⁴³

While transcribing and analysing the women victims' interviews and behaviour of colluders in the case studies, it institutes that both class structures and patriarchy are responsible for women colluding with militants to oppress and terrorise women. In Swat and generally amongst *Pakhtuns*, women are considered inferior to men. The most disturbing fact is that in Swat, women from lower strata of the society are relegated to the position of sub-humans by both the *Khanan* system and *Pakhtun* patriarchal culture. Hence, when these women gained position of power and agency through militants, they felt empowered. The aunt of Mullah Shah Dauran is a classic case; she was a victim of both patriarchy and class. Being a woman from lower class, she had no rights in the system and was dominated by a cohesive – self-interested society of oppressive landowners, while at her home; she was again positioned second to the men of the family. Thus, when her nephew was deputed a commander of militants then her status changed and she enjoyed her (short-lived) power like *Bibi* of the elite class. It is observed that such women are historical individuals too, positioned against multilayered power relations ranging from familial to regional and the national to the global, and hence their irrational behavior situate their experiences with the conflict in their lives and given circumstances.

In both cases, the women from poor backgrounds got associated with militants to acquire power, started behaving like elite women in social interactions, and the role-play was reversed. The militant's female relatives also did *ghamkhadi* and tried to emulate the elite *Pakhtun* women, hence accepted and respected in the communities due to fear and some due to piety. However, they ended up women characters with destructive power. They behaved like elite *Bibiyanay*, in fact forced themselves to accept them as women of status and power by using fear and piety interchangeably. In media and academic works, many cases and incidents of violence were reported, however many of us failed to understand the elusive role of

these women in such occurrence of violence. From gender studies perspective, women accomplices always play a role of violator of law and norms by joining terror machinery and conflict to become important and powerful in oppressive patriarchal and unjust class system. For Swat's poor women, it was empowering when they terrorised the women (*Bibiyanay*) of victims' families without understanding enormity of situation.⁴⁴

In analysing the interviews of victims, it is observed that active conflict has also changed the role and behaviour of the elite women in Swat, who were once a part of close-knit society and try to resolve the issues of each other socially irrespective of class and clan. The rich were helping the poor in *Jirgas* and police stations while the poor would come and help them in household chores in funerals and weddings. The conflict and militancy broke down the old cultural values of the community and it is an indication that the conflict might return if certain steps for the re-construction of community are not taken. The limited role of elite women in doing *gham-khadi* has transformed now, the trust deficit and fear has made them cautious, less participative and less social within their communities. Women once interacting freely with each other are now very cautious around even the militant's distant female relatives. The issue of *Khan* and *Ghareeb* is still around and if state failed to provide services and facilities then it can re-occur in some other form or conflict too.

When it is written about the women victims and women colluders, we understand that Pakistan contains class, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other overt and covert tensions that limit or decrease its ability to deliver justice, political goods and gender equality. However, the case of Swat is very critical in Pakistan (still brewing with visible and invisible conflicts); it provided very little political goods or gender parity. In addition, state instead of providing space to the poor and oppressed women from Swat, left them at the mercy of class and society oppression, and non-state actors that resulted in violence and crises. Hence, it is pertinent to address rampant poverty and marginalization of women to avoid future conflict and crises in the Swat society.

Notes

¹ She willingly shared the information, her experiences, and did not hide her identity for the interview.

² Tavernise and Shah, "Killings Rattle Pakistan's Swat Valley."

³ Locals call Miangul Abdul Wadud as Bacha/Badshah sahib.

⁴ Khans locally known as *Khanans* had serious issues on properties and lands due to absence of land record that led to change in the leadership and administrative structures.

⁵ Rome, *Swat State (1915-1969) from Genesis to Merger*, 40–55.

⁶ Woman from the landed, well-off families in the regions of Swat and northern Pakistan.

⁷ Ahmed, "The World Is Established through the Work of Existence."

⁸ Khan, Sajjad. His Wife in Conversation with the Author, November 2, 2018.

⁹ Local women in conversation with the Author, November 4, 2018.

¹⁰ Khan, Sajjad. His Wife in Conversation with the Author, November 2, 2018.

¹¹ In Pakhtunwali and Pakhtun culture, women's request even from the enemy side is honored, however the Swat militants and women colluding with them violated the local values and culture too.

¹² Khan, Sajjad. His Wife in Conversation with the Author, November 2, 2018.

¹³ Stern, "The Invisible Women of Al-Shabaab."

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Manne, *Down Girl*, 31–40.

¹⁶ Local Elders, In Conversation with the Author.

¹⁷ Beard, *Women & Power*.

¹⁸ Majeed, *Insurgency in Swat*, 5–9.

¹⁹ "Afzal Bangash Speaks," 14–18.

²⁰ Hopkins and Marsden, *Beyond Swat*, 112–40.

²¹ Majeed, Tabassum. Lecturer at Swat College in conversation with the Author, November 10, 2018.

²² Brohi, "The Anatomy of a Rumour in Disputed Legacies."

²³ Local men and women in conversation with the Author, November 2, 2018. They refused to disclose the identity of such women but mentioned that they were our tenants.

²⁴ Khan, Sajjad. His Wife in Conversation with the Author, November 2, 2018.

²⁵ Men, Focused Group Discussion.

²⁶ Brohi, "The Anatomy of a Rumour in Disputed Legacies."

²⁷ For detail on women colluders, see the two case studies.

²⁸ The Express Tribune, "Swat Missing Persons."

²⁹ Women, Focused Group Discussion.

³⁰ Wagha, "Armed Conflict and Women's Agency."

³¹ Local Journalist, In Conversation with the Author.

³² Khaliq, "Swat."

³³ Ahmed, "The World Is Established through the Work of Existence."

³⁴ Bibi, Woman from Khan's family in conversation with the Author, November 3, 2018.

³⁵ Nasir, "In Pakistan, Swat Valley Police Give up in Face of Taliban Attacks."

³⁶ Family, His Wife in Conversation with the Author.

³⁷ Brohi, "The Anatomy of a Rumour in Disputed Legacies."

³⁸ Ahmed-Ghosh, *Asian Muslim Women*, 3–95.

³⁹ Taliban would barricade the road and would randomly form a check post to terrorize local population.

⁴⁰ Men, Focused Group Discussion.

⁴¹ Family, His Wife in Conversation with the Author.

⁴² Lindholm, *Frontier Perspectives*, 30–55.

⁴³ See, Habib, *Riwaj Nama Swat*.

⁴⁴ Ahmed-Ghosh, *Asian Muslim Women*, 3–95. See also, Aragon and Miller, *Global Women's Issues*.

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