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Cultural and Tribal Barriers in Balochistan

By: Huma Fouladi

I always had a dream for women's freedom, rights, equality and equity. In 2009 I voluntarily established a small center (HUNARISTAN) in Quetta city for the Hazara tribe women for skill development, counseling, informal education and link violence cases through different channels, when I heard about different forms of violence. I always try my best to talk more to indigenous women, to understand their issues and to inform them of their rights. Besides, illiterate women, I have found many educated women from different communities still limited within the boundaries of male dominated societies. Cultural barriers don't allow women freedom. Women are oppressed socially, economically politically and religiously. They cannot make any decision on their own and are dependent on males in this society. Therefore, because of these limitations they are disadvantaged in their personal matters and the dependency increases on social institutions like those of patriarchal bases of family and other justice forums like "JIRGAS" -councils of male leaders (a parallel judiciary system).

Arranged marriage is considered as a social value. In many of the social issues women have no say when it comes to family-oriented, personal, professional or any life oriented matters of serious nature. Women are not allowed to choose their professional careers or any other preference in their lives. Due to strict tribal norms, women are forced to abide by the rules of tribal culture to avoid any bad name or shame to tribal prestige. This sometimes leads to honor killing and mistreatment of women, affecting all social respects and honors of women in such society. However, comparatively the overall social condition of women is getting better in Quetta-my provincial capital city as compared to other peripheral areas as the women are involved in different political, economic, religious and social activities.

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