

# Rising divorce rate among <sup>society</sup> expat couples <sup>social</sup> 8/9/0

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In past and to some extent even today the young expatriate Pakistanis living in western countries have been in high demand for matrimonial alliances. There are so many Pakistanis living in west, still prefer to choose suitable matches for their children from the families living in Pakistan. Some families imported their nephews and nieces for their daughters and sons from Pakistan. The worsening job opportunities in Pakistan and bright looking future prospects compel the parents in Pakistan to give their sons or daughters into marriages with the expatriate Pakistanis. But what I have observed here in UK that the divorce rate among those couples is rising day by day. In this way the future of so many young Pakistanis is being ruined due to inappropriate decisions of their parents.

There are so many causes of this shocking tendency. First of all majority of the new generation, born and bred in western countries is oblivious of their culture, traditions and Islamic values. Of course there are few exceptions where the children were raised in Islamic culture and they became true practising Muslims but their number is quite low. Most of the Pakistanis who came here are from middle class background who are not so well-educated and lack thorough grounding in Islamic teaching. They have come here only for earning their livelihood. They work hard and some time work day and night to earn more and more money. They have little time to look after their children. The children without proper parental care drift towards undesirable paths which are not only unislamic but also immoral. When the parents come to realise the gravity of the situation it is too late. The youngsters become unbridled and go out of control. In order to do away all the bad habits the parents decide to choose some boy or girl from their relatives or contacts in Pakistan with the hope that their spoiled children would be reformed.

during the weekends. Besides they have to do cleaning the house, washing clothes, etc. as well. So the weekends are sometime busier than the weekdays.

Here the husbands and wives have to share their domestic chores. The boys coming from Pakistan who might have never gone to the kitchen in Pakistan, have to do a lot of things here like dish washing, cooking, etc.

The life partners are at odd with each other in their habits, expectations, way of thinking and above all life styles. I have seen so many sons-in-law who have come from Pakistan are in pathetic condition. The wives think that they have done a great favour to those boys by taking them out of troubles in Pakistan and accommodating them in a developed country. They expect their husbands doing all kinds of domestic jobs including looking after the newly born children, etc. Some of those boys cannot stand the insulting attitude of their spouses and in-laws and fall out with them.

Some patient and discreet boys wait for the time when they are granted their own citizenship of that country and then part their ways. The most miserable condition happens to those girls who come from Pakistan with high ideals. Very soon they come to realise that they have been imported to serve the families and endure all kinds of insulting behaviours from their husbands as well as their in-laws. They are forced to adapt to the new lifestyle. They have to compromise on the waywardness of their life partners. They have no relative or friend in the alien land. They have no social lives. Sometimes they are asked to start the menial jobs and earn for their families. The boys have still the choice to get rid of 'rigorous imprisonment' but the girls who become mothers after some time has to endure the trauma life long or get the stigma of divorce.

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Pakistan  
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On the other hands the families living in Pakistan send their daughters or sons to these countries with high hopes and ambitions. They don't have the real concept of life in these countries. Here everyone is leading a busy life. The people don't have time to frequently visit each other. Hardly anyone comes to other's help. There are no servants.

In majority of the cases there are no close relatives or friends whom one can interact and share the worries and problems. The culture is entirely different. The people leave their homes before the sunrise and come back after the sunsets, since most of the year the days are quite short and nights are pretty long. The people do their most of their shopping

of western  
sometimes they have no liking for their own Pakistani girls do not get attached with their eastern life partners and continue their own 'activities' without having any feeling or sympathy for their Pakistani wives. After the birth of a child the girls cannot think of getting divorce and continue living miserable lives. They even sometimes become psyche patient.

By portraying such a dreadful picture of those couples I don't mean that everyone is like that. There are always exceptions but most of the couples are undergoing bad experiences. So the parents in Pakistan should think several times before taking decisions of choosing their sons or daughter-in-laws in western countries.

# Sex crimes -

IN THE LAST WEEK NEARLY TWO HUNDRED men have been arrested in Australia's biggest operation against child pornography launched by police, who expect the number of arrests to rise to five hundred. Helped by an FBI investigation, police seized more than 380 computers containing about 2 million photographic images of children downloaded from websites in Belarus.

One of the senior police officers involved in the operation commented: "The person involved in the possession of child pornography is Mr Joe Average. He is married with children and a good job. He comes from all walks of life." Those arrested include a policeman, nine schoolteachers and three doctors.

Most Muslims will see in this mere proof of their long-held and much-cherished belief in the alleged moral decadence of the West. However, if this is the scale of child abuse globally, my mind boggles to think about what goes on in the Third World countries in general, and in Pakistan in particular, where the women and children of poor families are at the mercy of feudal lords, tribal leaders, government officials, the rich and the not so rich. Police officials, instead of protecting the vulnerable, themselves perpetrate the worst sex crimes and collude with and protect other perpetrators. In a country where the powerful, state-controlled media treat the issue of child sex abuse as a taboo subject and avoid reporting sex crimes of any kind, it is safe to say that one does not even get to see the tip of the iceberg.

In western countries, protection of women and children is accorded the highest priority by the state. Violence against women is not tolerated and children get special protection. Dedicated telephone hotlines and many government agencies and departments are available for women and children in distress. Yet,

there are many instances of the abuse of women and children, which are reported, discussed, investigated and vigorously pursued. Offenders are routinely prosecuted and punished. Great shame attaches to sex crimes. In the present instance, four of the accused in Australia committed suicide within two days of being questioned, although they were merely accused of the illegal possession of child pornography, not of child abuse as such.

Contrast this with the exposure of an established pattern of child abuse in a Pakistani government school, that too in NWFP, a province under the administration of a self-righteous alliance which has promised the citizens an Islamic utopia. When in September 2003, it was revealed that some teachers and staff of a school in Peshawar were sexually abusing students, the provincial government — which claims to accord the issue of morality the highest priority — took a nonchalant attitude, to the consternation of the female members of the Provincial Assembly.

Chairman of the parent-teacher committee that investigated the abuses said that the teachers allegedly blackmailed the students into having sex with them by delaying issuance of their provisional academic diplomas and character and sports certificates. Child abuse at the school had reportedly been taking place for 25 years, yet the culprits were merely transferred to other schools, where they could prey on a fresh crop of children. At about the same time, the family of a five-year-old boy who had been sexually assaulted by the *maulvi* of a mosque in Lahore was pressured to withdraw the case even though the DNA tests had conclusively identified the accused.

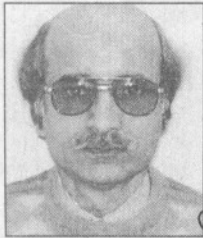
For our ruling and religious elite, comprised essentially of that male, relatively affluent segment of society which perpetrates these abuses, the plight of poor women and children is a non-issue. Some

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## THINKING ALOUD



RAZI AZMI

*In a society where men kill their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters purportedly to preserve their own and their family's 'honour', it is hardly surprising that there is an open season on women. The perverse notion of honour engenders a pervasive culture of shame and secrecy which compels almost all abused women and children to suffer in silence*

meantime, the life of poor women and young boys and girls is miserable beyond comprehension.

The first reported case of a woman being stripped and forced into a nude march by an irate feudal lord, with a meek crowd in attendance, occurred in Nawabpur in southern Punjab in 1985. In a highly-publicised case in June last year, a tribal council (*jirga*) in Meerwalla village "sentenced" a 30-year-old woman to be gang-raped as punishment for her younger brother's alleged affair with a woman from a tribe considered higher in the tribal hierarchy. After a public outcry, police took note of the incident and registered a complaint. During the trial it was alleged that the victim's brother had been sodomised by tribesmen who then invented the story of his illicit relationship.

It is no exaggeration to say that, for every single reported case, there are hundreds of unreported ones, but even so it is instructive to look at the statistics compiled by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). According to incomplete HRCP figures, in the Punjab province alone during the first seven months of this year, there were 177 reported cases of sexual abuse of children, involving 186 victims, of whom 103 were girls. Seventeen of these children were killed after being raped or sodomised. Only 19 accused were arrested. One sociologist who interviewed 100 boys in Lahore found that over 15 of them had been sexually assaulted.

In 2002, there were 23 reported cases of women being stripped, 472 abducted, 434 gang-raped and 804 raped. Forty-two women were deliberately set on fire, 59 were victims of acid attacks, while 128 were reported to have suffered serious burns from what were euphemistically called "kitchen mishaps". Ninety-three of the victims died, but only 12 men were held for the crimes. During the same year, 290 women were the victims of so-called "honour killings". The murderers included 17 fathers, 100

brothers, 86 husbands, 11 in-laws and 12 sons!

In a society where men kill their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters purportedly to preserve their own and their family's "honour", it is hardly surprising that there is an open season on women. Such a perverse notion of honour also engenders a pervasive culture of shame and secrecy which compels almost all abused women and children to suffer in silence. Extrapolating from the occasional reported cases and from anecdotal evidence, it is not hard to imagine what goes on within the confines of the proverbial "four walls" of homes and in offices, factories, workshops, hotels, restaurants, schools, *madrassas* and, worst of all, in our prisons and police stations.

Not only has the state utterly failed in its basic duty to protect the weakest segments of society from violence and abuse, it is shocking that no religious or political parties ever highlight these issues. At the recently-held World Conference of Jamaat-e-Islami in Peshawar, its chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad accused the West of "conspiring to destroy the very basis of Muslim family unit in the name of women's liberation and gender equality in order to weaken and degrade our society". According to him, "women's liberation was being promoted [only] by those trying to subjugate the values of decency".

With such stark statistics on crimes against women and children in Pakistan, it is amazing that the conference chose to dwell on the scarf and *burqa*. Unfortunately, the Qazi's views on women and gender equality are typical of Pakistani (male) opinion, rather than the exception. So are his strictures against the West — which is simultaneously our destination of choice as well as the favourite whipping-boy.

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propose the panacea of an elusive Islamic system, where the fear of God and stoning to death are supposed to banish sex crimes from society. In the