**Aurat March is not misunderstood**

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March 27, 2023

According to the Global Gender Gap index report, Pakistan is ranked as the fourth most dangerous country for women, 153/156 for women empowerment, 145/156 for economic participation and opportunity, 135/156 for educational attainment, and 143/156 for health and survival. If you search anything about gender discrimination in Pakistan, you will uncover this country vying in the last row. Still, people dare to question the Aurat March which is the only substantial non-governmental and non-profit organization working on women’s rights in a country where women aren’t considered equal citizens.

On the 8th of March, people marched to demand fundamental women’s rights which are their essential human rights. I have followed the Aurat March on different social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to see how it has progressed. Usually, I ignore the videos of different Youtubers who deliberately try to cover the March to ask nonsense questions of the participants to humiliate or gaslight them. They come with the agenda of an anti-Aurat march. They consider themselves as journalists even though they are not but they believe that any person with a camera and mic is a journalist. But journalism has morals, and these so-called YouTubers do not have basic etiquettes. This time around, I gave their videos a shot to understand their opinions regarding the Aurat March. There are a few things that I noticed in all of them; they all belong to a robust patriarchal background and they have no regard for the rights of women. Essentially, they don’t care how brutally women are being treated in this country, and they think of themselves as the honourable devotees and defenders of Islam.

[President Alvi condemns Israeli aggression against Palestinians](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Apr-2023/president-alvi-condemns-israeli-aggression-against-palestinians)

Let me scrutinize their thoughts. The most conspicuous issue they have with the Aurat march is slogans. Most of the time they come up with the most famous slogan of Aurat March, my body my choice. It is a slogan used in Aurat March to grapple with the issue of sexual harassment, forced marriages, marital rapes, and reproductive choices which is a health issue. Any sane individual will not find this slogan problematic, but people with small minds will interpret it as they like. This segment of the population has no conception of consent. They are not fond of hearing “No”, and when they hear it they end up doing marital rapes, domestic violence, or beheading their wives, and burning them.

But if we look at the chronology of this slogan, it emanated from men during feudalism who were enslaved by their masters. Today it is the slogan of feminism so men shouldn’t consider it controversial because it was started by them. Another thing which they come up with is that Islam has given women all the rights then why are they marching? To answer this, Yes, Islam has given women rights but have you let them practice those rights? What I notice in them is that they have only read one thing from the entirety of Islam and that is women should cover their bodies. I ask them when have you seen women roaming naked on the streets? Not being biased I have never caught a glimpse of any woman wandering unclothed on the streets and I know you too haven’t. So, it is a baseless allegation that women do not cover their bodies. Anyway, wearing jeans and a shirt isn’t considered a stripped dress code but the religion of some insecure people comes under threat when they see women wearing these attires, but their Islam doesn’t come under threat when Zainab was raped or when Noor Mukaddam was brutally murdered. Yes, where were you then who preach Islam every year in the Aurat march?

[Foreign vets give new lease of life to ailing elephant at Karachi Zoo](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Apr-2023/foreign-vets-give-new-lease-of-life-to-ailing-elephant-at-karachi-zoo)

Aurat March isn’t a threat to Islam or any other religion. It is a baseless assertion that people who participate in this march aren’t religious. People from different religious beliefs can participate in this March and they will be treated equally. It is a citizens’ voice, quelled citizens of the country due to the stronghold of patriarchy in the country. These citizens demand “EQUAL RIGHTS” not less, not more. Another argument that they come up with is that Aurat March nurtures homosexuality. First of all, homosexuality exists in all parts of the world, and it is a reality. It has a long history. Secondly, scientific evidence supports the idea that homosexuality is a natural and intrinsic aspect of human sexuality, rather than a choice or learned behavior. Research has shown that sexual orientation is tenacious by a complex interplay of genetic, hormonal, and environmental factors. But if you carefully witness, the Aurat March it supports the rights of the people. It has nothing to do with anyone’s personal relationship. The patriarchal social structure is so potent in this country that it is indeed strenuous to smash free of all the agents of this structure who are frequently being the reason for remorse for themselves and the country. Patriarchy has never let them thrive in their evolution period. It has a definite link with the policies of General Zia who is not alive today, but the country is still suffering in every realm because of his policies.

[Imran decides against appearing before IHC tomorrow](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Apr-2023/imran-decides-against-appearing-before-ihc-tomorrow)

Zia boosted a hidebound and patriarchal version of Islam in this country, and it has curbed the participation of women in public spheres. In 1979, Zia introduced the Hudood ordinance which introduced strict laws and punishments for crimes. However, these laws primarily discriminated against women and it had made it difficult for women to report sexual assault. If they report them, they become the victims of character assassination and ended up being avenged even for their rapes. Aurat March is a ray of hope for the women of this country who are continuously being mauled since the inception of Pakistan. This movement is very peaceful and not misunderstood. It is only misunderstood by the populace who fear the pre-eminence of women. As long as we continue to march, our voices will only grow louder, our movement will only get vigorous, and the destiny we dream of, where women are truly free, will only get nigher. And remember, the Aurat March is not just a once-a-year event, it’s a powerful reminder that women’s rights are human rights and they deserve to be acknowledged, esteemed, and protected every day.