

**History of Social Welfare and Domestic Violence Shelters called *Darul Amans*:  
A Case Study of Punjab Province Pakistan**

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**Abstract**

This paper presents some of the significant events and issues of the Indian sub-continent that gave rise to the evolution of social welfare education and practice and also the establishment of shelter homes later in Pakistan after independence in 1947. It is important to know the history of social welfare and shelter homes in Pakistan to understand how private and public entities took up the challenge of working on the issue of violence against women. The challenges and problems faced by women shelter home residents in the Punjab province of Pakistan are also examined.

**Keywords:** History, social welfare, Shelter homes, Punjab Pakistan.

**Social Welfare in Indian Sub-continent**

Pre-partition period of Indian subcontinent (before 1947) was influenced by caste system; where the upper caste not only exploited, but also to some extent was responsible to take care of the needs of the lower castes in times of difficulties (Bhattacharya, 2008). Inequality persisted in society through untouchability system (Bhattacharya, 2008). The state was not involved in providing alms or services (Bhattacharya, 2008). During 1800-1900 AD, Indian women and girls were subjected to considerable disadvantage: women did not have right of share in property, there was a custom of early marriages of children, especially girls, there was lack of education facilities especially for girls, widow marriages were not allowed and there was a custom of *satti* where an

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Indian woman was burnt alive with the cremation of her husband (Bhattacharya, 2008).

One of the first charity organization the "*Anjuman Himayat e Islam*(AHI)"(*Anjuman Himayat e Islam*, 1988) was established in 1884 in Indian sub-continent for advocating Muslims rights in province Punjab. Its aim was not only to propagate the religion of Islam in the region but also to provide food and shelter to needy Muslims who were going to temples and churches for alms and charities and were thus influenced to convert to these religions and were leaving Islam (AHI, 1988). In 1886 AHI was the first organization in Indian sub-continent to establish a place of shelter and care for destitute and orphan Muslim women and girls "*Dar ul Shafqat*" (AHI, 1988).

Some prominent Hindu social reformers also emerged at that time to alleviate the suffering of the poor and to aware and educate people of the social evils of the society; famous among them was Mahatama Gandhi who influenced many young people, who, although not trained as social workers, served their communities (Bhattacharya, 2008).

Under the British rule, western education and Christian missionaries the profession of social work was brought to Indian sub-continent (Bhattacharya, 2008). A protestant missionary Clifford Marshal started the first professional school of social work, Sir Dorabji Tata School of Social Sciences, in 1936 in Nagpada, Bombay (now Mumbai). In 1947, the Delhi School of Social Work was established; followed by the establishment of many other similar institutions throughout India (Bhattacharya, 2008).

### **Social Welfare after Independence of Pakistan in 1947**

Following partition the Pakistani state was establish a new system of governance, while catering to the needs of persistent refugees from India coming to the major cities of Karachi, Lahore and Dhaka (Dhaka was then in East Pakistan and now is in Bangladesh). In addition to meeting the demands of the influx of refugees from India, the newly established resource-constrained state had to deal with many socio-economic problems and a severe shortage of trained and skilled labour (Rehmatullah, 2002).

At the time of independence there were several private and voluntary charitable organizations in Pakistan, for example, Khalikdina Hall Library, Sindh Muslim

Madressa, the Jaffer Fadoo Dispensary, the Ojha Sanatorium, the DJ Science College, private schools that provide free education, the Ida Rieu Poor Welfare Association for the Blind and Deaf. Including in the list was *Anjuman e Khawateen e Himayate Islam*, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Pakistan Girl Guides Association, Pakistan Red Cross Society, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and the Boy Scouts and other charitable trusts and endowments established by Muslims, Hindus, and Parsees (Rehmatullah, 2002).

In addition, a number of organizations were formed after partition by prominent Muslims leaders to solve the problems of refugees like All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) formed by Begum Raana Liaquat Ali Khan in 1949 (Rehmatullah, 2002). APWA arranged for shelter and food of the women who came to Pakistan from India after partition and who had lost their families during the turmoil of partition and migrating to Pakistan and thus had no one to look after them and were now un-attended (Ghilaman, 2011). Later APWA arranged for the economic needs and placements of these women also (Ghilaman, 2011). The Muslim Women's Association headed by Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah was established in 1949. The international agencies especially from the UN organizations like United Nations Technical Assistance Administration (UNTAA), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) etc. were also present and working in Pakistan (Rehmatullah, 2002).

### **Beginning of Social Work Education and Training in Pakistan**

The advent of social welfare, in developing countries of the global South, is accredited either to their cultural and religious values or the colonial influence (Boyden 1997; Graham, Al-Krenawi & Zaidi, 2007; Rehmatullah, 2002). In Pakistan, from the very beginning of the establishment of a state welfare system, the official rhetoric was that of Islam. However, the reality was somewhat mixed. The country had not inherited any social welfare structures from the British India, therefore, in 1951, the Government of Pakistan sought help from the UN to advise the government on social welfare issues (Rehmatullah, 2002). The UN advisers recognized that the Islamic values and injunctions pertaining to social welfare, such as providing assistance to the poor, care of the indigent, the orphan,

and the realization of Zakat were engrained in the daily lives of the people. The UN advisers, therefore, recommended that these values be translated into the social welfare policy of the country (Rehmatullah, 2002). However, considering the dearth of trained social workers, social administrators and social policy makers, training for social work was given priority over formulation of a national social welfare policy (Rehmatullah, 2002).

The government held a meeting with the UN regional advisor on social welfare and requested United Nations Technical Assistance Administration (UNTAA) aimed at solving problems in a more systematic way (Rehmatullah, 2002). As a result, in 1953, In-Service Training Course was provided to 75 participants, 11 of whom were women, in Karachi at the Civil Defence Training School in the Khalikdina Hall Library (Rehmatullah, 2002). Sixty-five participants completed the five days in class and two days for field work course (Rehmatullah, 2002). Subsequently, a similar course was held at Dhaka for administrators and beginning workers; 44 completed the course, 16 of whom were women (Rehmatullah, 2002). The third course, a six months training course on social work was held in Karachi in 1954, during which 31 participants were placed in a slum area, Lyari, to gain on the job training by involving them in direct services of community projects, medical settings, remand homes and social administration (Rehmatullah, 2002). Twenty-six participants completed the course. This model laid the foundation for future professional training programs at university level in Pakistan and also for establishing social welfare policy (Rehmatullah, 2002).

On November 15, 1954; the first Department of Social Work was inaugurated at the University of the Punjab, one of the oldest university of Pakistan, in Lahore Pakistan in the province of Punjab (Rehmatullah, 2002).

### **First Social Welfare Policy of Pakistan**

On the policy front, UN advisers recommended that the Islamic values of welfare such as providing assistance to the poor, care of the indigent, the orphan, and the realization of *Zakat* [it's an obligatory religious tax to purify our wealth by giving a defined portion to the needy and destitute], which were engrained in the daily lives of the Pakistani people, be translated into the social welfare policy of the country (Rehmatullah, 2002). Thus, the main elements of Pakistan's first social

policy included; community development program, encouraging the establishment of private welfare agencies, to initiate social welfare programs at the provincial and local level, a new housing policy, and an expanded program of labor protection (Rehmatullah, 2002).

However, the first social welfare policy remained buried in official files and consequently for almost 20 years there was no clear social welfare policy (Jillani & Jillani, 2000). During the course of four Five Year Plans (1955-77) and the two Annual Plans (1975-77), a variety of private and public social services were established (National Council of Social Welfare, 1976; Jillani & Jillani, 2000). The National Constitution, adopted in 1973, placed social welfare on the 'Concurrent Legislative List' meaning both the federal and the provincial governments could legislate in this field (Jillani & Jillani, 2000). This however, resulted in a lack of direction and poor co-ordination between the state and the provinces as each was looking to the other to take initiative (Jillani & Jillani, 2000). It was not until 1988, that a full-fledged Ministry of Social Welfare produced a comprehensive policy document to guided the social welfare programs. This policy had a mixed approach to social welfare as it was based on the concept of an Islamic welfare state and the contemporary concept of social development (Rehmatullah, 2002). The third (enacted in 1992) and fourth (enacted in 1994) social welfare policies also reflected a struggle between traditional remedial services and the contemporary concept of social development with a rhetoric of Pakistan being an Islamic state having a given set of welfare-related values and practices (Rehmatullah, 2002).

With the passage of 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment in 2010-11, which devolved considerable power to the provinces, social welfare became a provincial matter and the era of national social welfare policy ended. All four provinces of Pakistan inherited a Directorate of Social Welfare, which, traditionally, had been responsible for the administration of social welfare services in the provinces, but, having no experience or expertise in policy formulation. Therefore, it remains to be seen what direction each province take in terms of its social welfare policy, given the great socio-economic and cultural diversity (Rehmatullah, 2002).

### **Evolution of Ministry of Social Welfare**

In terms of social welfare administration, experimental urban community development and medical social services projects began in Karachi in 1953. One example, the Village-Aid program was a cooperation between the International Cooperation Administration of the United States and the Government of Pakistan, are considered the first social welfare services in Pakistan (Ghafur & Mollah, 1968). In 1955 after extensive consultation with the government officials and prominent social workers, the first UN Adviser on Social Policy and Administration recommended the creation of an independent ministry of social affairs. A 1955 national conference on social welfare, held in Karachi also led to a similar demand (Rehmatullah, 2002).

However, these demands were not met, instead, a Department of Social Welfare was created in the Ministry of Works. The administrative structure of this department was in line with the existing bureaucratic system rather than the unique social work and social welfare needs (Rehmatullah, 2002). In 1956, a National Council of Social Welfare was established, followed by provincial councils the next year. Initially, the Council was assigned some policy making and surveillance functions, but, eventually, it became a grant funding agency (Rehmatullah, 2002). As late as 1958, a separate Ministry of Health and Social Welfare was created at the national level. However, soon after, with the promulgation of 1962 Constitution, the Central Directorate of Social Welfare was abolished and the country was divided into two units and social welfare became a provincial subject to be administered through two Directorates of Social Welfare (Ghafur & Mollah, 1968). This bureaucratic social administration however, was almost inaccessible, especially to voluntary social welfare agencies working in remote rural areas (Rehmatullah, 2002). A Directorate General of Social Welfare was established in September 1964 in the then West Pakistan. The Departments of Health, Education and Home were given the development schemes of medical social work, remand homes and schools of deaf, dumb and blind by transferring their control from provincial Directorate of Social Welfare and thus the role of Directorate of Social Welfare remained only to monitor and regulate the community development program and registration of voluntary agencies in the then West Pakistan (Khalid, 2006).

Pakistan was initially consisted of two parts: West and East. Subsequently, West Pakistan was further divided into four provinces and East Pakistan was one province. Both these parts were separated and there was Indian region between them (Khalid, 2006). Thus the East Pakistan received less preference from the leaders of the country and its population lagged behind in progress (Khalid, 2006). On November 22, 1954, the One Unit Policy was announced; all four provinces of West Pakistan were announced as one unit or one province and East Pakistan as another province (Khalid, 2006). But in 1970, the One Unit Policy was disbanded, and as a result all four provinces of West Pakistan were revived and the Directorate of Social Welfare and one Council of Social Welfare were created in each four provinces of West Pakistan and one each in East Pakistan (Khalid, 2006).

A full-fledged Ministry of Social Welfare is a relatively recent development, established in 1980s. In January 1979, a separate Women's Division was established and was upgraded to a Ministry of Women's Development in 1989 (Khalid, 2006). Shelter homes, *Dar ul Amans*, are run under Provincial Ministry of Social Welfare in Pakistan.

### **The Advent of Public and Private *Dar ul Amans***

The history of the emergence of shelter homes in Pakistan is not well-documented. It is limited to historical reports from organizations and project proposal documents from the Ministry of Social Welfare and Bait ul Maal Punjab.

*Anjuman e Himayat e Islam*, established the first female *Dar ul Shafqat* (place of care and shelter) for orphan, destitute and un-attended girls and women in 1886. Their purpose was to prevent the Muslim destitute women to go to temples and churches to get alms so they are not influenced to convert to other religions. Therefore *Anjuman e Himayat e Islam* main purpose was to promote Islamic values and beliefs and to help the destitute women so they don't look for help from other religious places (*Anjuman e Himayat e Islam*, 1988).

Shelter homes have played a major role in the prevention and intervention of VAW. *Anjuman e Himayat e Islam* in 1963 established a *Dar ul Amanin* Lahore for destitute women and women victims of domestic violence (*Anjuman e Himayat e Islam*, 1988). These *Dar ul Amans* provided basic needs like food, shelter and

clothes to the women residents, although most efforts were directed towards reconciliation between victim and their immediate families (*Anjuman e Himayat e Islam*, 1988).

Approximately ten years later the Government of Punjab (GoP, 2004) under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women Development and Bait ul Maal established eight "Rescue Homes" for women who were victims of violence, had left their homes and needed immediate shelters. Rescue Homes were first established in the eight former divisional headquarters of the Punjab (Lahore, Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Multan, Bahawalpur and D. G. Khan) (GoP, 2004). In 2002, with the enactment of the Devolution of Power Plan where the powers were delegated to the local tiers from the national form of governance, the divisional headquarters were devolved into District Governments increasing awareness of VAW and women's rights in Pakistani society. The Ministry, now the Ministry of Social Welfare and Bait ul Maal, Punjab, established 27 new women's shelter homes, this time called "*Dar ul Amans*" in the remaining 27 districts of Punjab bringing the total to 36 women's shelter homes in each of the 36 districts of Punjab (GoP, 2004).

Women in distress or facing violence (physical, psychological, or sexual) are referred to shelter homes by court or NGOs or come by their own volition. A woman can stay in a shelter home for a maximum of three months, which may be extended under some circumstances, such as when she has no safe accommodation or if the case is still in the court. Shelter home residents are provided with basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and training and other services provided by volunteer lawyers, physicians and psychologists. The majority of shelter homes do not provide after care or rehabilitation services like finding work, housing, or short term financial aid (Siddique, Ismail, & Allen, 2008). The shelter homes have a manager or in-charge that is responsible for administrative affairs; along with a skill teacher and a religious teacher (GoP, 2007).

Shelter homes provide temporary refuge to women fleeing domestic violence and most of the solutions are in the form of reconciliation, divorce or re-marriage. Also, there are no follow-up services for women. This lack of follow up concerns women's right activists and organizations as in most of the cases

women are forced to reconcile with their husbands or the perpetrators of abuse (Siddique, Ismail, & Allen, 2008). In most of the shelter homes women are permitted to bring their daughters, however no more than two and are not allowed to reside with their male children over five years of age. Leaving behind children with their abusive husbands, creates further anxiety and worry for women seeking admission to shelter homes (Shirkat Gah, 2012).

All shelter homes in Punjab province are mandated to provide residence for a maximum period of three months to women who leave their homes after facing violence by their family members and are referred either by court, police or any women's advocating organizations such as NGOs or in some dire circumstances a woman might come herself (GoP, 2007). While residing in shelter home, women shall be provided with free shelter, food, medical and legal help and skill and religious training and the three-month residency can be extended in unique cases where a woman's circumstances do not allow her to go back in the society (GoP, 2007).

#### **Private Shelter Homes in Punjab Province**

In addition, there are a few private shelter homes in the Punjab province, the most famous of which is *Dastak* (meaning knock). It is an internationally funded organization, started by renowned lawyer sisters and women's rights advocated Hina Jilani and Asma Jahangir (Siddique, Ismail, & Allen, 2008). It provides similar services as other shelter homes, however, women are not restricted in their mobility; they are allowed to move outside according to their needs but are advised to take care outside the walls of shelter home (Siddique, Ismail, & Allen, 2008). There is no distinction on the basis of religion; all destitute women belonging to any religion are given shelter on request. Women residents in *Dastak* are allowed to go to their jobs and can stay for several years until they find a secure housing (Mahmood, 2009).

Edhi Homes are privately funded shelters established by Abdul Sattar Edhi, a volunteer social worker. There are 18 Edhi Homes in Pakistan, three of which are in the Punjab province (Lahore, Islamabad, and Multan districts). Edhi Homes do not have a maximum limit of stay and, in addition to sheltering women victims of domestic violence, orphan and abandoned boys and girls, shelter-less and destitute men and cognitively and physically disabled people are also sheltered (Siddique, Ismail, & Allen, 2008).

Bali Memorial Trust was founded as tax exempt charity organization in 1997 by a couple who lost their son (nicknamed Bali) at a young age. The organization initially provided free educational services and currently has two schools, two hospitals, many dispensaries, two old age homes, an orphanage, a women's crisis center, and a helpline for needy (Aurat Foundation, 2012). Also, Bali established a women's shelter home in Lahore in 2006, which provides shelter, food, health care including counseling; vocational and in-formal education training so women can be financially empowered and can find employment upon leaving the shelter home (Aurat Foundation, 2012).

### **Challenges Faced by Women from Shelter Homes**

There are massive barriers in women seeking help to save themselves from violent relationships including a lack of information and awareness of their legal rights (Critelli & Willet, 2010). Although the state has acknowledged the need for shelter homes for women fleeing violence, there are few services for women in distress (Bari, 1998; Critelli, 2012; Jilani & Ahmed, 2004).

According the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP, 2009), privately run shelters are considered better in quality of services and rules of administration compared to public or government run shelters; government-run shelters are often overcrowded, have poor facilities and lack trained staff. Most shelter homes aim to reconcile women with their families as it is a taboo that a single woman lives alone in the society (HRCP, 2009). According to 2008 HRCP report Public shelter homes, *Dar ul Amans* are of poor quality. Shelter homes do not provide a gender sensitive environment (HRCP, 2009) and staff are also not equipped with the necessary skills to deal with the women victim of violence (Médecins du Monde, 2007).

Also, these shelters have been criticized as operating like a detention center offering a mixture of both protection and prison (HRCP, 2009). Women residents are not allowed to leave the home and have restricted access to outside world while staying there (Medicine Du Monde, 2007; Zaidi, 2002).

Shirkat Gah, another NGO working on women's rights in Pakistan, indicated that the quality of the free legal aid services offered by public shelter homes is questionable; mostly the cases of women are not handled properly and also volunteer lawyers providing services at public shelter homes complaint that they are not provided access to women for free legal aid (Shirkat Gah, 2012). Police

stations are unsafe for women, who face being raped and abused while in custody (Bari, 1998).

Few interventions are offered for women survivors of domestic violence; shelter homes only provide a temporary refuge to women fleeing domestic violence. Staff of public shelter homes encourage women to reconcile with their perpetrators as women cannot survive without a man in Pakistani society, and lone women are unable to rent accommodation (HRCP, 2009). Thus, most solutions are in the form of reconciliation, divorce or re-marriage. In most of the cases women are forced to reconcile with their husbands or the perpetrators of abuse. Also, there are no follow up services for women after leaving shelter homes, which has been raised as a concern for women's right activists and organizations.

It is extremely challenging for women victims of violence to access shelter homes due to their reputation. Both public and private shelter homes are considered as places of bad reputation, where only 'bad' women go who have ran away from their homes (Khanum, 2009). In most of the shelter homes women are permitted to bring their daughters, however no more than two and are not allowed to reside with their male children over five years of age. Leaving behind children with their abusive husbands, creates further anxiety and worry for women seeking admission to shelter homes (Shirkat Gah, 2012).

### **Conclusion**

Although legislation, shelter homes and services have been established in Pakistan, there remain serious concerns in meeting the needs of women victims of violence. Women continue to face extreme difficulties in accessing services, receiving effective interventions and follow-up services. This situation serves to disempower and silence women who perceive violence in their lives as part of their fate.

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