



Al-Qawārīr - Vol: 03, Issue: 01,
Oct - Dec 2021

OPEN ACCESS

Al-Qawārīr
pISSN: 2709-4561
eISSN: 2709-457X
journal.al-qawarir.com

***Pakistan's 'Aurat March and its Feministic Perspective
A Review in the Light of Islamic Culture
and the Prophet's Sīrah (PBUH)***

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Version of Record

Received: 22-11-21 Accepted: 25-12-21

Online/Print: 28-Dec-2021

ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, the 'Aurat (women) March got massive resistance against the patriarchal structures of the society, bringing about a solid reaction against the participants and organizers of the march. The manifesto of the 'Aurat march (women's March) is released by the organizers every year, which demands accountability and restorative justice against violence on a woman at home, workplace, and in public places. They also demand economic justice, inclusion, and access to public space at all. The 'Aurat March gave birth to the fourth wave of feminism in Pakistan but with its provocative and reprehensible slogans, it put the organizers and participants at risk. There is a clear contradiction between Islamic feminism and the fourth wave of radical feminism in Pakistan in these marches. Aurat March 2020 has NGO-based identities and has donor agendas. A resolution was passed by the KPK assembly, which was moved by a woman parliamentarian, who said that the demands of the women march were "Un-Islamic and shameful". The critics largely targeted the placards that women brought to march along with them. In this context, the efforts are made to elaborate on the Aurat March and its manifesto in the light of Islamic Culture and Seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). This study concludes that violations of rights are there, but secular people present it with exaggeration and make religion Islam responsible for all these malpractices.



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Therefore, we should stand collectively for women's rights and make it possible with the state and society's power. The Analytical and Critical approaches have been adopted in this study. This study is focused on the anti-Islamic ideologies and secular nature of the slogans represented in Aurat marches and the promotion of their western agendas to challenge the very foundation of Islamic society and cultural traditions

Key words: *Feminism, Aurat March, Perspective, Islamic Culture, Prophet's Seerah (PBUH).*

Introduction:

On March 8th women and men around the world celebrate International Women Day to recognize outstanding political, social, and economic achievements of women worldwide. The United Nations first celebrated International Women's Day during International Women's Year in 1975. By 1977, the UN and its member states declared March 8 as an official day for Women's rights and world peace. Since then, this day is being observed over the globe.

Digging the roots of the women's movement/feminist movement in Pakistan would have us go right to pre-partition times. Ladies' cognizance of their oppression and the craving for individual and political liberation developed concerning religious and nationalist movements. The colonial period also laid the foundation for the divide between the "traditional private" and the "secular public". Pakistan, post-partition, saw a fledgling Women's Movement that could barely challenge the existing dogmas.

Pakistan, an Islamic democratic country also empowered women from the day of its birth. Quāid-e-Aāzam Muḥammad 'Alī Jinnāḥ brought a social revolution in the emancipation and empowerment of women. A visible symbol, Fatima Jinnah was always by the side of her brother for advising and her participation in political activities is not hidden from anyone. In 1934, Quaid e Azam created the All-India Muslim Women's sub-committee of the Muslim league. Jahanara Shahnawaz, Begam Salma Tasaduq Hussain, Begum Fatima, Shaista Ikram Ullah, Zari Sarfaraz, and Lady Abdullah Haroon were the prominent public figures in mobilizing, organizing women in Pakistan's movement. Interestingly, when Quaid-e-Azam was invited to the USA for International Herald Tribune Forum in September 1946, instead of any male, Quaid nominated Jahnara Shahnawaz and MH Isfahani for the presentation of Pakistan's case. An intelligence report quoting the daily Dawn report as reported on February 2, 1947, Frontier Women's Provincial Muslim League staged its annual session in Peshawar, which was attended by a thousand *Burq'a* (veil) clad women. In nutshell, from the very beginning, in Pakistan, a social

revolution took place which brings Muslim women out of their homes, schools, and colleges into the streets as activists and effective parliamentarians. Right of women in Pakistan are always being protected and women are given special quotas also. Islam, on the other hand, emphasized the modesty of women. At the time of the beginning of Islam, women were not being treated well, and especially in the Arab, the attitude towards women was very inhuman. The people of Arab were hardened enough to bury their daughters alive. Women's emancipation and empowerment started with the advent of Islam. Islam offers equal rights to genders but with their limits. The fact is that some of the historical incidents interpreted by bigoted minds lead to the current dilemma.

The first Aurat March was held on 8 March 2018 in Karachi. In 2019, it was organized in Lahore and Karachi by a women's collective called *Hum Auratein* (We the Women), and in other parts of the country, including Islamabad, Hyderabad, Quetta, Mardan, and Faisalabad, by Women democratic front (WDF), Women Action Forum (WAF), and others. In Pakistan, The Aurat March, which began in 2018, being organized on March 8 – International Women's Day – saw it grow further with increasing numbers across Pakistan in 2019 and 2020¹. Placards and slogans designed to challenge the patriarchal status quo and underline the stumbling blocks for women's rights in the country were witnessed in all rallies. The issues taken up in the rally included violence against women, girls' right to education, the female body and reproductive rights, workplace divides, sexual harassment, systematic gender discrimination among others. Thousands across Pakistan braved the threats and rallied for women's rights however this year, the Aurat march has received so much criticism and outrage regarding its slogans and play cards. It was criticized that the slogans chanted by the participants have shaken the very foundations of the Islamic republic and were widely curbed on social and national media. Slogans raised by many of Pakistan's leading feminists were seen as a threat to the moral and cultural values of the country.

In 2019, the walk extended to incorporate Islamabad, Hyderabad, Quetta, and Faisalabad into its collection. It is embraced by Lady Health Workers Association and sorted out by Hum Auwrtaīn (We the Women) in Lahore and Karachi. As it extended, assemblages were helped by Women Democratic Front (WDF) and the Women Action Forum (WAF) across the country. In short, the march took attention to be discussed at different forums after having supports from multiple women's rights organizations.

In 2020, Aurat March was held in different cities of Pakistan, and in Islamabad, the Aurat March was held at National Press Club. Students of Jamia Hafsa have also arranged for 'Haya March'² at the same location resulting in clashes between the two marches but the situation was soon contained by the authorities.

In 2021, Aurat Azadi March was held under the threat of COVID19 pandemic nationwide. In Islamabad, the focus of the march was on economic justice and patriarchal violence through the pandemic lens. They are of the view that violence against women increases during lockdown and isolation. Again, march slogans were criticized by every walk of the society and a protest was held against Aurat March on the Srinagar highway.

In this paper, the efforts are made to analyze linguistically and contextually the slogans and feministic perspectives/demands of the March with a fair mindset and will try to critically evaluate them in the light of the study of the biography of the holy Prophet ﷺ.

5.1. New Feminism phase in Pakistan

Feminism and women rights activist are the most controversial terms in Pakistan and invite unnecessary criticism from all factions of society. Feminism is the belief in equal rights for women in economics, politics, and social spheres. While women rights activists are responsible for defining and defending the rights of women. The recent fourth wave of the feminist movement in Pakistan is far more different than the previous waves as new activists (younger generation and other genders) are not only demanding equal rights and opportunities but also challenging patriarchal dominant trends. By using social media and digital platforms, its outreach has increased and created havoc in Pakistani Islamic society and its modest norms.

Auwrtaīn March in 2019, also marks a tectonic shift from the previous articulations of feminism in Pakistan. It would not be far-fetched to say that it has inaugurated a new phase in feminism, qualitatively different from the earlier movements for women's rights. While the past expressions of feminism laid the foundation for what we see today, the radical shift of feminist politics from a focus on the public sphere to the private one – from the state and the society to home and family – manifests nothing short of a revolutionary impulse. Feminism in Pakistan has come of age as it unabashedly asserts that the personal is political and that the patriarchal divide between the public and the private is ultimately false³.

In this context, in Pakistan, various NGOs⁴ and other organizations are working for the emancipation and empowerment of women.⁵

5.2. Women's picture in Islamic Culture

Islam is the religion, which counted women as a mother, a sister, and as a wife, and admire them as "special citizens" in an Islamic state. Islam granted very special status to women in every sphere of life.

Spiritually, women are equal to men in status. As it is a common question that men will get partners (*Hūr*) in paradise but what women will get? So, this question is cleared by the Prophet of Islam in his saying which is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Būkhārī

as, “we have created for our righteous believer that eyes have never seen of that, nor ears have heard about that, and one have never thought about that”⁶. In various verses of the Qur’ān, women got special status over men as mentioned in Sūrah Al- Nisa:

﴿وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ﴾⁷

“Reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you).”

Similarly, Allah recommended in in Sūrah al-Luqmān;

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهَنَا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالَهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَى الْمَصِيرِ﴾⁸

“We have enjoined on the human being to be kind the parents (father and mother) in travail upon travail did his mother bore him and in years twain was his weaning”.

A similar theme is mentioned in Sūrah -Al-Aḥqāf Chapter-46, Verse-15;

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ﴾⁹

“We have enjoined on the human beings to be kind to the parents (father and mother) ”.

Islam has granted equal status to both men and women and has made no distinction between them based on sex. The Islamic Sharī‘ah places equal value to the blood (life) of women and men and has defined equal punishment for the killer of both gender”.¹⁰

Allah has recommended, in the Holy Qur’ān;

﴿وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ﴾¹¹

“And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein.

According to a renowned Qur’ānic Mūfassir, Ḥaifz Ibn Kathīr:

(The word "believer" included women as well and the killers are subject to punishment both in this world and in the hereafter¹².

Islam acknowledges women in their individual and personal capacity and has protected their social, educational, legal, political, economic, and other rights the way men enjoy them in society. Islam condemned the evil practice of the killing of female children in the pre-Islamic era. The Holy Qur’an reminds the perpetrators that they will be questioned for the same heinous crimes on the doomsday. The Holy Qur’an says,

﴿وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ﴾¹³

“When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned-For what crime she was killed”

Mawlānā Mawdūdī interprets this verse of the Qur’ān likewise:

As a matter of fact, a great blessing of the blessings of Islam is that it not only did put an end to this inhuman practice in Arabia but even wiped out the concept that the birth of a daughter was in any way a calamity, which should be endured unwillingly. On the contrary, Islam taught that bringing up daughters, giving them a good education, and enabling them to become good housewives, is an act of great merit and virtue. The way the Prophet (peace be upon him) changed the common concept of the people in respect of girls.¹⁴

Contrary to this barbaric behavior, Islam gives respect to women even in her childhood. According to a Ḥadīth of Holy Prophet, “The one who has a daughter born to him and he does not bury her alive, nor keeps her in disgrace, nor prefers his son to her, Allah will admit him to Paradise”.¹⁵

It is an undeniable fact that Islam is the only religion that gives priority over the education of women. The pages of Islamic history are full of evidence that are women's attention in their respective fields in education. If we peel the pages of Islamic History, there are thousands of Muslim women mentioned for their specialty in different fields.

Balādhri in his book *Fūtuḥ-ul-Būldān* writes, “Umm-al- Mominīn Ḥaḏrat Ḥafṣa, daughter of Ḥaḏrat Umar (the 2nd caliph of Islam), learned reading and writing from Alshefa-al-Adwi. The Prophet allowed her to continue learning from the same teacher marrying her.”¹⁶

Likewise, the names of several Muslim women can be quoted who received the education of the Holy Qur'an, Ḥadīth, and Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Besides, some possessed good knowledge and skills of poetry, literature, and medicine. The most important among them was Umm-al-Mominīn Ḥaḏrat ‘Ā’ishah (wife of the Holy Prophet and the daughter of Ḥaḏrat Abū Bakr Ṣiddīque, the first caliph of Islam). Ḥaḏrat ‘Urwah Bin-al-Zubaīr, a prominent scholar of early Islam once said, “In Islamic law (Fiqh), medicine and poetry he has not seen anyone more knowledgeable than Umm-al-Mominīn Ḥaḏrat ‘Ā’ishah. Imām Zuhrī, another Scholar of early Islam has said that “If we measure the knowledge of all Muslim women and compare it with that of Ḥaḏrat ‘Ā’ishah, indeed, Ḥaḏrat ‘Ā’ishah will be the winner. According to Abu Musa, a famous Muslim jurist: whenever our companions were lack of knowledge on certain matters, we asked Ḥaḏrat ‘Ā’ishah, and she always solved our problems¹⁷.

Furthermore, According to Imam Bukhari (RH); Umm-e-Dard‘a was a science expert. Umme-scholar), 'she has taught 32 different scholars. Nafisa bint-e-Ḥassan

bin Zaīd bin ‘Alī (RA), she was the wife of Ishāq bin Imām J‘afar. According to Historians, she was the teacher of Imām Sh‘afī, founder of one school of thought. Faṭimah bint Qaīs was the great debater of the era. She had full command of Fiqah. According to Historian that once Hażrat ‘Ā’ishah and Hażrat ‘Umar (RA) was debating with Faṭimah bint Qaīs over a technical issue, the debate proceeded for the whole day but the ruling of Faṭimah bint Qaīs could not be challenged and altered¹⁸.

In the matter of honor, Islam has protected women from false accusations and introduced exemplary punishment to protect their honor. The Holy Qur’ān has declared that all women are chaste and forbidden not to drag themselves in dirty issues. In case any woman is charged or committing adultery, the man must produce four eye righteous witnesses to prove the charges.

If he fails to do so, will be given a punishment of 80 stripes. Furthermore, he will be debarred from giving testimony forever in any case. The Holy Qur’ān says

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾¹⁹

“And those who accuse clean woman and then bring out four eyewitnesses, scourge them with eighty and accept not their testimony forever. And these! They are the transgressors²⁰.”

Moreover, Muslim women are entitled to make their own independent decision to choose their partner and decide the terms of marriage agreement with him, as mentioned in Qur’ān, Al Baqarh, “when they have fulfilled their term (attained majority), there is no sin on you if they (the wives) dispose of themselves in a just and honorable manner (i.e. they can marry).

Likewise, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) has said, as Imām Muslim reported in his Ṣaḥīḥ;

Sufyan reported based on the same chain of transmitters (and the words are): A woman who has been previously married (*Thayyīb*) has more right to her person than her guardian, and a virgin's father must ask her consent from her, her consent being her silence, at times he said: Her silence is her affirmation.²¹

In the above Ḥadīth, it is explicitly mentioned that woman is entitled to reject a marriage, which is arranged without her will and consent. In the Holy Prophet's time and afterward the same has been practiced. In another Ḥadīth of Abū Dawūd, Hażrat ‘Abbas (RA) narrates that a (grownup) girl came to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and told her that her father has engaged her with a man whom she doesn't like. The Holy Prophet allowed her to make her independent decision. Similarly, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) had sought the consent of his daughter Hażrat Faṭimah, before her marriage to Hażrat ‘Alī al-Mūrtaḍa (RA).

The marriage proposal of Bībī Khadījah to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is yet another example of a woman's right to this effect that how a widowed woman chose her husband. In contrast to this, women are given the power of Khula. Any woman can exercise this right of Khula whenever she desires so. She can go to avail the same right on medical, ethical, and religious, and any other ground, which might evolve after marriage or in a situation when she feels her inability to fulfill the rights of the husband.

Furthermore, a woman as a mother, sister, daughter, or wife enjoys a special status in Islam. As a mother, she enjoys trust, respect, honor, good treatment, fairness, and provision of food, cloth, shelter, special old-age care, and other daily necessities of life. Qur'ān narrated the special status of the mother, as mentioned in Sūrah Isra:

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا﴾²²

"And that you be dutiful to your parents"

In another place of Sūrah Luqmān, Allah stresses;

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهَنَا عَلَىٰ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالَهُ فِي سِنِينَ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ﴾²³

*"And we have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents.
His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness"*

Likewise, in the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, there is clear guidance to the rights of mothers. It is mentioned in Tibrānī that one day a person came to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and said, "I would like to go for *Jihād*. The Holy Prophet asked him whether his mother was alive, the person replied, yes. Then the Holy Prophet told him to Go and serve her! Paradise lies beneath the mother's feet!²⁴

In addition, women, as daughter is very important as Almighty Allah said in Al-Shura;

﴿لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ يَهَبُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ إِنَاتًا وَبِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ﴾²⁵

"He bestows female (offspring) upon whom He wills, and bestows male (offspring) upon whom He wills."

Moreover, various authentic Ḥadīths are reported in this connection, "don't dislike daughters, no doubt they are (for parents) more caring and loving. In other Ḥadīth, He said, "Those are blessed women who give birth to a daughter first.

On the other hand, women as a wife have also a unique status. This status is divided by experts, however into two categories. Firstly, financial status, *Nafaqa* (daily food), and secondly social statuses like support, justice, and good treatment. Allah has said in the Qur'ān;

﴿وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُنَّ شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا﴾²⁶

“Live with them honorably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing through which Allah brings a great deal of good”.

Similarly, Haẓrat ‘Ā’ishah reported, “the best among you is those who are good for their wives and among you, I am good for my wives”²⁷. In brief, Islam has always bestowed women with the paramount principles of equity in their ways.

There is not a single norm of life which hasn't been addressed by Islam in detail with understanding and logic. As far as women's rights are concerned, Islam has given them rights that were never seen to be prescribed by any other religion in history. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights told women about their status and rights whereas Islam told the same and even more before 1400 years ago. As a mother, the heavens are told under her feet, and as a wife, she completed the life of her better half. From exercising their right to hold property to having the right to accept or deny the mate for herself granted them by Islam before any declaration or any convention even existed and the history before Magna Carta is self-explanatory in this regard. Islam acknowledged Women as an important factor of society as Men indiscriminately of any regard.

The example of Haẓrat Khadījah RA as an exemplary businesswoman at one place and the example of Haẓrat ‘Ā’ishah RA as a jurist at another speak for themselves as how much importance Islam has extended to women. Islam desires the female to be the queen of the house whereas the contemporary slogans of feminism desire the female to suffer.

5.3. Content analysis of Aurat March’s slogans in the light of Islamic Teachings

These slogans ranged from the popular “*Akelī Āwārah Āzād*” (Alone, aberrant, and free) to “*Khūd Khānā Garam Kar Lo*”, (Heat your food) “*Merā Jism, Merī Marzī*” (My body, my choice), “*Khānā main garam karoongi, tum bistar Khūd garam kar lo*” (I will heat food, serve yourself) and so on. Some posters also had the saying “men of quality will never be afraid of equality”, and “if you like the headscarf so much, tie it around your eyes”, and yet another one of a girls sitting with her legs spread out, and the slogan “Lo baith gayī ṣaḥīḥ se (Loo! I sat)”²⁸.

The manifesto slogan of the 2020 march, “*Merā Jism, Merī Marzī* (My body, my choice)” is contradictory to the basic norms of Islamic culture. In the Holy Qur’ān, Allah (SWT) ordered:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً﴾²⁹

“Enter to Islam completely”.

This means that one should surrender his will in front of Allah. No one has any right over God-given things, whether it is body or life. From the verse of the Holy

Qur'ān, we can infer from this that being a Muslim, we cannot use our bodies according to our will (both male and female). Then how do they raise such stereotypic and anti-Islamic slogans in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan? As per the debates and explanation by various scholars over this term, the time demands that the organizers of the March should mull over this manifesto and should change it to the slogan which is understandable by the common mind, and it will free from prejudice towards the basic doctrines of Islam.

After arousing controversy on the slogan *Merā Jism, Merī Marzī* (My body, my choice), the participants of 'Awrat March started the explanations of the term. Sophia Hasnain, holding one of the many posters proclaiming this, asserted that the slogan meant that women had the right over their bodies and can refuse physical intimacy when they want. "No one has the right to force themselves onto us," she insisted³⁰.

Another participant explained, "*Merā Jism, Merī Marzī* literally means that women want bodily autonomy and have the right to make decisions concerning their bodies³¹."

Freedom of expression and freedom in her choices of women is depicted from the Sīrah of the Prophet. The famous Ḥadīth, named Ḥadīth Barīrah. "When Barīrah (RA) got freedom in the hands of 'Ā'ishah (RA), she used her right to freedom and left her husband, Moees (RA). When the matter was proposed in front of the prophet (SAW), the prophet (SAW) requested her. She replied is it order or suggestion? He ﷺ replied, a suggestion so she said I do not need that³²."

In Islam woman is free in her decisions, as when Abūl 'Aāş asked the hand of Prophet's daughter, Zāinab, "He said let me ask from my daughter". She smiled and agreed to the proposal, so then the prophet Muḥammad (SAW) agreed³³.

Another most hateful slogan about veil (Pardah) is "if you like the headscarf so much, tie it around your eyes"

Islam is the religion of equality. The order of the veil comes first for men. As mentioned in Sūrah Al-Nūr; Verse 30

﴿قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ﴾³⁴

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do".

This verse of the Holy Qur'ān debunked the so-called feministic narrative that Islam only emphasizes the modesty of women, but by the content analysis of the Holy Qur'ān, Islam is the only religion on the globe which equalized both genders in every conduct of life.

The role model of Muslims, the Holy and beloved Prophet ﷺ is the perfect example, as reported by Abū Sa‘īd Khūdrī (RA) that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was modest like vestal³⁵. Like men, Allah (SWT) also order Muslim women to clad their body for her identification³⁶, as mentioned in Al-Aḥzab, verse 59.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزُوجَكِ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَمَهُنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا﴾³⁷

“O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their Jalābīb over their bodies. That will be better that they should be known so as not to be annoyed”.

It is further explained that it is like the Izar used today. Al-Jawhari said: "The Jilbāb is the outer wrapper." ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭalḥah reported that Ibn ‘Abbas said that; Allah commanded the believing women, when they go out of their houses for some need, to cover their faces from above their heads with the Jilbāb, leaving only one eye showing. Muḥammad bin Sīrīn said, "I asked ‘Ubaīdah As-Salmānī about the Ayah: "يُدْنِينَ عَلَمَهُنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ" (to draw their Jalābīb over their bodies). He covered his face and head, with just his left eye showing³⁸.

Mawlānā Maūdūdī, a renowned Islamic scholar states about the intensity of the Parda System in Islam as, “In the Islamic economic system, interest is forbidden (*Harām*), similarly in its social system immodesty is forbidden (*Harām*).³⁹

In the light of the above verses and Ḥadīths, Is Pakistani ‘Awrat March is a stage for women's rights every year? And is it according to the Islamic culture? The majority of participants of the march do not even wear Pakistani cultural dresses but their dressing is completely contradictory to the teachings of Islamic Sharī‘ah. For the good impression and forceful demands, they were expected to be clad in proper Islamic and Pakistani cultural dresses. This deficiency coughed criticism, instead of attention by most people in the country.

According to Sājidah Tabasum, a research scholar, “the only purpose of this March is sexual and economic freedom. West wants to snatch the Demureness, how to destroy their family system, and how to bring out women for economic purposes? To meet these ends, they started moments like ‘Awrat March in the Muslim world⁴⁰. Up to some extent, a prudent mind can understand the hidden motive of the March, which creates ambiguity in the mind of an authoritative person, which may ultimately lead to an increase in the against of people to them, which has directly affect on the fulfillment of their demands.

The women who are leading and protesting such kinds of Marches, some great Muslim Scholars give them unique terms, among which some are; Mawlānā Amīn Aḥsan Iṣḥāḥī, used the term *مشرحات* means who are more interested became like men

symbolically⁴¹. Mawlānā Maūdūdī used the term *مکشونات* and *ناعورت* (no-woman)⁴². Now the question arises that whether these terms are equally applicable to the women who lead the same March, but according to the Islamic and Pakistani culture, is debatable. According to our understanding, these women's leader is exempted from the terms.

Another placard that was displayed by the Protestant painted with the slogan, "*Akelī Āwārah Āzād*", (means roaming alone in streets free like men). This poster was a clear indication of identity, not equality of women with men. This poster is the token of identical, which is condemned by Islamic culture. Surayya Batul wrote, "Islam is not in favor of women who dress like men, talk like men and walk like men"⁴³.

In Pakistan, women are enjoying not only their rights but some other special rights that are given to them by the Religion of Islam. Islam is the only religion on the globe which defines each and everything about how to live. Similarly, it also defines how to sit, walk, and talk to both genders. In Islamic culture, women (*'Awrat*) is the name of a sacred thing, which must have to be hidden from evil eyes. So culturally, women are directed to set like a queen with modesty. But some are there who do not want to be queen and behave like a queen. So, they wrote their inner self on the poster with the words, "*Lo baiṭh gayī ṣaḥīḥ se*" (*see! I sat rightly*) Linguistically, there is nothing in this slogan, but culturally they are challenging the dogmas of Islamic culture which are set for the queen (women). There is no room for leniency for such kinds of women. As stated in Tirmazī,

44("مَثَلُ الرَّافِلَةِ فِي الرِّبَةِ فِي غَيْرِ أَهْلِهَا، كَمَثَلِ ظُلْمَةِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ")

*"A woman who is walking among the strangers with coquetry is like
darkness on doomsday".*

The woman who doesn't show womanhood in her affairs is metaphorically used as "Darkness".

Islam stresses that males and females should work in their respective zones? Islam does not allow a female to copy the style of a male⁴⁵.

"*Apnā Khānā Khod Garm Karo*", is another provocative slogan of the placards. They think that cooking is imposed on them by Islamic Culture, but they are unaware of the Islamic teachings and Sharī'ah that if she demands a servant for cooking, Islam emphasizes the fulfillment of this demand. Similarly, about the children they have painted the sketch of the female part, symbolically representing why should I feed your child, and why should I give birth to a child? So according to Islam, the wife can ask for the remuneration of feeding the child from her husband. the so-called March for the rights of women is not highlighting the actual issues of the women, rather they just stress sexual matters and stresses on abortion

and even “No to children”. According to Sabir Abu Maryam, Secretary-General Philistine foundation Pakistan, that in this March we have witnessed more placards on sexuality than the real issues of the women.

5.4. Patriarchy & the Backlash

In March, on the roads of Karachi, a funeral was seen by our eyes with a placard, "*Pidar-Shāhī kā janāzah (funeral of patriarchy)*". The terms like “pidar-shāhī” (patriarchy) have been widely circulated, thereby developing a language with which to communicate the physiognomy of their minds. The ‘Awrat March has also used language to subvert patriarchy, by taking slogans that attack deeply entrenched relations of power within the household, the family system.

Islam roots out indecency from society and considers fornication as evil for society. Islam emphasizes for women to love their male and direct man to adopt an affectionate attitude towards their women. Islam is a family and chastity system because in its protection and augmentation of generation is a religious duty⁴⁶.

Pakistan is an Islamic country, of which the very foundation is the family system which is usually led by men. Their target is to tear out the family system in the name of "Pidar-shāhī". One participant displayed the poster with the words, "tired of dictatorship", which means we are against patriarchy (Family system), the question is why the family system is on target, so the reason is purely economic. It's an economical fact that united families have fewer demands, so to increase the demands, they want to divide the family.⁴⁷

In the words of Sajida, "For children and mothers, shelter is compulsory, which will be provided by the man. So, the woman becomes the queen of the house and the man handles the external matters⁴⁸."

Another placard, “*Chār diwārī Tumhāin Mūbārak*” is stereotypes⁴⁹ of Pakistani ‘Awrat March against the verse of the Qur’ān, Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb, and verse 33.

﴿وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ﴾⁵⁰

“*And stay in your houses*”

Stay in your houses and do not come out except for a purpose. One of the purposes mentioned in Sharī‘ah is prayer in the Masjid, so long as the conditions are fulfilled, as the Messenger of Allah said:

﴿لَا تَمْنَعُوا إِمَاءَ اللَّهِ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ وَلْيَخْرُجْنَ وَهُنَّ تَفِلَاتٌ﴾⁵¹

“*Do not prevent the female servants of Allah from the Masjids of Allah, but have them go out without wearing fragrance*”.

Regarding this Ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ, a renowned feminist Asra Nomani comment.

- 1) Women have an Islamic right to enter a mosque.
- (2) Women have an Islamic right to enter through the main door.

(3) Women have an Islamic right to visual and auditory access to the Mūṣallah (main sanctuary).

(4) Women have an Islamic right to pray in the Mūṣallah without being Separated by a barrier, including in the front and mixed gender Congregational lines.⁵²

So her assumptions are cleared in various Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ As reported in one of the Hadith of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the.

53. ((لا تمنعوا نساءكم المساجدَ وبيوتَهُنَّ خيرَ لهنَّ))"

“Do not prevent the female servants from Masjids, even though their houses are better for them”.

As the people keep diamond in safe lockers, similarly woman is also more than precious than a diamond in Islamic society. men consider the home as a safe place for women, because he does not trust their fellow man.

Another Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ backlash the claim which is reported by Ḥaẓrat ‘Abdullah Bin Mas‘ood (RA), "praying (of female) at room is better than praying in cortile and praying in a special place inside the room is better than the room⁵⁴.

In Islamic culture, the major decisions and strategies are executed by women in the family, so for that Allah (SWT), ordered them to remain inside the homes for better focus⁵⁵.

One of the aims of the Pakistani ‘Aurat March is to bring out women from their respective places (Homes), which is contradictory to the aforementioned verses of the Holy Qur’ān. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ also forbidden women to not come out of homes “except for legal purpose”. As reported by Ḥaẓrat Abdullah (RA), "women are safe in homes when they came out, the satin continuously trying to delude her⁵⁶. In the light of the aforesaid arguments, the Pakistani *Aurat March* tore out all the barriers of Islamic Sharī‘ah.

5.5. Islamic Narrative on Family System

Some placards were the clear indication, obviously demand of the march about the family planning. They were written as, “‘Aurat bacha paīdā karny kī machine nahīh hai (women is not the machine of children), No Bachdānī, no pain”

There are opinions in Islam, specifically and Pakistani, in general, considers women as for the promotion of their generation. In the opinion of Mawlānā Maudūdī that, “They usually say that children are a hurdle in their jobs and development. By various slogans, they express the view of family planning⁵⁷.

Nature has put two basic duties on human beings, i.e. endurance of life and survival of generation for the endurance of life, food, shelter, and defense is the duty of men

while for the survival of generation, careful education of the child is the duty of women⁵⁸. For the peaceful co-existence of society, both genders must work in harmony.

There is no room for family planning in Islam. Islam gave special awards to the women who give birth to the children. Prophet ﷺ says, “Are you do not agree on the reward when you got pregnant with your husband, and the reward is equal to the fasting in the daytime and prayer at all night. And the reward which she will receive during the birth of a child is only known to Allah. On each sip of milk which she gives to her child, she will receive a special award, and if she got up at nighttime for her child, she would receive the reward equal to, in status that she gave freedom to 70 slaves⁵⁹.”

Another Ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ reported in Sunan Abū Dā’ūd.

((الشَّهَادَةُ سَبْعٌ سِوَى الْقَتْلِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الْمُطْعُونُ شَهِيدٌ وَالْعَرِقُ شَهِيدٌ وَصَاحِبُ ذَاتِ الْجَنْبِ شَهِيدٌ وَالْمُبْتَطُونُ شَهِيدٌ وَصَاحِبُ الْحَرِيقِ شَهِيدٌ وَالَّذِي يَمُوتُ تَحْتَ الْهَيْدَمِ شَهِيدٌ وَالْمَرْأَةُ تَمُوتُ بِجُمُعٍ شَهِيدَةٌ))⁶⁰
“There are seven types of martyrdom in addition to being killed in Allah's cause: one who dies of plague is a martyr; and a woman who dies while pregnant is a martyr”.

As for as nurture the children, Syed Jalāl Uddīn states, “Muslim women do not foster their children as they are their flesh and blood, but as the fidelity of Allah and they have to give leaders to their nation who will lead the nation to prosperity and faith”⁶¹.

The present ‘Awrat March is a rebirth of radical feminism in third world countries like Pakistan. These kinds of steps extremely affect the Islamic values of Pakistani society. The most notorious impact of this radical feminism under the cover is the so-called slogans that are destroying moral and ethical values. The interest in spiritual and moral activities is decreasing day by day in women due to their so-called club activities and lack of interest in religion as modern Western thoughts have no concern with revealed ethics. So, their concept of ethics is entirely different from that of Muslims. Their teachers are western-based secular scholars and they believe that morality is not a unifying issue, and it differs from society to society and culture to culture. The theory of Materialism has been replaced by the theory of Neo-Materialism or Unitarianism. In simple words, the result of all human efforts is to get utility and benefits. The pros and cons of every issue are related to the rewards.

Keeping this scenario in mind, the Western civilization is based upon the materialistic merits and demerits instead of morality and spirituality, so it cannot survive for a long time. A renowned Muslim scholar ‘Abdul Reḥmān Kawākbī writes.

A Western man has a total materialistic approach and is very hard in dealings. His conduct is full of selfishness, malevolence, and revenge. So, it seems that he has nothing in moral principles and kind passions. He has rude and brutish behavior. Any weak person has no right to live in his sense. Only power and wealth are the basis of every honor.⁶²

Although, the public response to such marches in the reserved society like Pakistan has been attracted a lees attention at large in the society still the fact is irrefutable that it is affecting the new generation's attitude, approach, and mindset inadvertently. For example, "Divorced and happy" or happiness without marriage is just a slogan of an 'Awrat March in Pakistan that has no existence in real life. Sooner or later, it will drastically change our traditions as once in Europe, divorce was not as simple and easy as it is today. As well as the ratio of unmarried couples will be increased over time. It is leading them to the worst of cultural and moral values as well as and the destruction of the family system.

It's assumed after analyses of the slogans and strength of this march, the situation is not out of control but in the future, we feel pressure over society and state in terms of media, social media, secular lobby, and western funded NGOs and personalities to these marches. Thus, the state and society should listen to their actual voices and try to resolve the actual issues of women and discourage the unethical slogans and manifestos of these marches. Islam respects women in the shape of mother, daughter, wife, and sister. Islam does not differentiate in terms of virtues and wellbeing of men women in this world and in the world hereafter. Many verses of the Qur'an and Aḥādīth of the kind Prophet (ﷺ) emphasize the importance of women in Islam. Therefore, the Noble Qur'an recommends their duties and rewards likewise:

﴿وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَّمْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَمٌ دَرَجَةً وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾⁶³

“And women shall have rights like the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them. And Allah is exalted in Power, Wise”.

According to this verse of the Qur'an, God grants equal rights and dignity to both males and females, but sometimes grants sovereignty and authority to males over females. Here comes a misconception regarding this verse which Islamic scholars try to eliminate. A renowned Islamic Scholar Muḥammad al-Ṣābūnī states,

“Almighty Allah grants male and female equal rights and respect and if there is any authority is granted male over female then it is due to physical power and to manage the household issues and problem which female cannot do rightly”.⁶⁴

Therefore, we should standardize and fulfill their actual and fair demands in the light of religious teachings, moral values, and as well social and legal norms. If they

come under these norms, we must give them their rights and liberties accordingly. But we cannot support them if they create riots against Islamic, moral, social, and legal values and norms.

5.6. The positive impact of the Aurat March

Indeed, the vulgar nature of slogans damaged the very core of women's rights movements and boundaries Islam has set for both genders. The manifesto of the Aurat March 2020 and all its few demands especially women related, for collective action and consciousness building for a socially just and equitable society are appreciated.

The Aurat March fills the gap between contemporary Pakistani women issues and Islamic ruling concerning women's rights. These marches have also drawn the attention of religious scholars of the country towards emerging current social issues to build a viable and dynamic Muslim society based on Islamic teachings, social justice, and constitutional rights. Islamic law emphasizes the contractual nature of marriage, requiring that a dowry be paid to the woman rather than to her family, and guaranteeing women's rights of inheritance and to own and manage the property. Women were also granted the right to live in the matrimonial home and receive financial maintenance during marriage and a waiting period following death and divorce.

Men and women in Islam, regardless of their age, class, and education are equal as citizens and individuals but not identical in their rights and responsibilities. At the early age of Islam, women were given equal rights and high responsibilities in terms of education, leadership, and independent decision-making. Islam has given phenomenal rights to women and changed the socioeconomics of the power dynamics.

In Islam, Gender equality is part of its jurisprudence and fundamental teachings. Numerous Verses of the Qur'an and Prophetic Traditions command gender equality which proves that gender inequality is not faith-based.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا.﴾⁶⁵
"O, people! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single soul and made its mate from within it, and from that pair spread many men and women and fear Allah in Whose name you ask for (your rights) and pay attention to the ties of relationship. Undoubtedly. Allah is watching you all time."

This Verse clearly illustrates that men or women are created from a single entity and are equal genders. As a gender, one is not superior to the other.

This Verse signifies those rights appreciated by men are the duties of the women and the duties of men are the rights of women. This suggests an equivalence between both genders. There is no right conferred on the man that a woman may be deprived of because she is a woman. Here we examine Islam has already given proper rights to women and give them higher status.

These marches have also generated a more structured revivalist Islamic feminism in Pakistani society which revolves around rights and duties rendered by Islam, hence creating more awareness about women's rights in Islam.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Aurat March for the rights of women is a scam, led by elite class women. Among the leaders of the march, no one can name a leader which is from the lower class. They do not discuss the actual issues and rights, from which they are being deprived. If they discuss the social problems, like issues concerned with health facilities, proper education, eradication of the Jahez System, rooting out the evil of brutal Rewaje, which made fornication accessible and easy but made the Marriage difficult.

If the Aurat March is for the demands and the rights of women, then they should divert the eyes of the world to the actual problems and issues of women. They should raise their issue in the circle, drawn by the Islamic Shar'iah and defined by the Pakistani culture. With lucid language on placards, they can echo the main theme and demands in the ears of the high-ups.

It's observed that somehow the women all over the world are hunting for discrimination and injustice. Thus, they can raise their voice to achieve their rights and liberties. They can struggle in the domain of social, legal, and moral circles. They can demand education, implementation, safety, right of inheritance, and equality in most places. But sorry to say the new movement or wave of feminism it's more radical feminism, which is extremely disturbing the family system and structure of Islam and promoting western and secular norms and western culture.

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- ⁶⁵ Al-Qur'ān 4:1.