



## **Portrayal of Women in Balochi Dramas and Promotion of Patriarchal Culture: A Study of Balochi Dramas of PTV Bolan and PTV Home**

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### **Abstract**

*Media content has been an important subject in academic research. The messages were proved to be effective on children during the summit of visual medium Television (TV). In Pakistan TV dramas became subject to academic research with the start of Pakistan Television (PTV) as the dramas aired by the state-owned channel were believed to be reinforcing patriarchal culture and the medium was profoundly used during the promulgation of Islamization during 1980s. This study is a contribution to the disciplinary academic research conducted to evaluate the influence of Balochi drams of PTV Bolan and PTV Home. The study aims to evaluate the promotion of patriarchal culture through Balochi dramas aired by sister channel of PTV, PTV Bolan and PTV Home. The study is based on a qualitative content analysis method taking 'dialogues' as unit of analysis to evaluate the nature of Balochi drama content in terms of promotion of patriarchal culture and stereotypical image of women being attached with myths. I use random purposive sampling method to select drama serials aired during 2010 to 2011 and 2018. I select 5 drama serials out of which 3 are taken from PTV Bolan and 2 from PTV Home. The research proves that, like PTV drama serials, Balochi drams telecast through PTV Bolan and Home reinforce patriarchal attitudes and ideology in society along with projecting a passive, submissive and conventional image of women stereotypically.*

**Key words:** *portrayal of women, patriarchal culture, Balochi dramas,*

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## **Introduction**

Baloch had been nomadic throughout the course of history or so they are still portrayed as being brave, culturally adherent, and modest along with being firm in their stance. With the depiction of the male being brave, modest, adherent to tribal and cultural values and retaining higher strata in Baloch society, the male has become a 'cultural standard'. (Pillalamarri, 2016). The lingual attributes attached to the Baloch women, on the other hand, delimit women into more specified demarcations of beauty, carefulness, complying with social, tribal and cultural values, being more submissive and uncompromising towards tribal, cultural and familial values and codes. ("Why Balochistan needs women's day," 2021) With this 'diminutive' attribution, women go through making a life governed and dictated on the 'patriarchal' lines. (Drury & BBC Urdu, 2020)

The Baloch society has often been studied on available anecdotes, poetry and folklore being less empirical in nature. (Nation. (2017). The available historical accounts of Baloch Society are a reflection of folklores. However, the transitional period of societal and cultural transformation has never been focused to connect the traditional and transformed societal norms and culture. (Berseej, 2001) The patriarchal dominance and representation of male as cultural standards are embedded and promoted through Balochi drama serials consecutively. The issue of the portrayal of women in Balochi dramas has never been subject to academic study. Balochi drams have been aired since 2005 with start of PTV Bolan. PTV Bolan and PTV Home have aired Balochi dramas respectively. Holz, S. (2020) The drama serials of the PTV channel have become an import discussion in terms of promoting stereotypical images of good and bad women as well as strengthening patriarchal attitudes in Pakistani society. Abass (2018) states that the patriarchal mentality was the by-product of Zia's (1977-88) policies. There has been a similar approach in Balochi dramas to promote what Abass (2018) terms the 'patriarchal mentality.



PTV dramas have been portraying a contested image of women. The dramas have stereotypically portrayed women. During the 'Islamization' period of Zia, the conservative image of women fell fit to the propaganda disseminated through state-owned television PTV. The women were shown as more religious and conservative which, in return, reinforced and acknowledged women as being submissive and 'perfect' in society. The stereotypical image of women as conservative, caring about family and children, and confining herself within Chadar and Chardiwari (veil and within the walls of home) best suited the Islamization during the 1980s.

He [Zia] propagated the slogans of Islam and used them for the longevity of his military reign. Pakistan Television (PTV) was the only channel in the country until 1992. As state-owned TV channel, PTV served as a major tool of state propaganda. So we can observe the rhetoric of Islamization in TV dramas, too. (Abass, 2018, p. 22)

Patriarchy ensures a culture that places men at a privileged place in terms of traditional gender-based roles (Hidayati and Itafarida, n.d.). Dramas play a significant role in shaping cognitive consolidation. Women live in a patriarchal culture in Pakistan whereas women in Balochistan are more affected by the patriarchal culture. The status of women is influenced by many factors including patriarchy and media's biased role in portraying stereotypical image of women in society. The consumption of messages brings about change in attitude and behaviour of society (Ashfaq and Shafiq, 2018).

The tribal setup of Baloch society binds women in its traditional ways of austerity constraining the access of women to resources. The Balochi dramas revolve around love and strengthening tribal roots which enshrine

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different codes of conduct for women as they do for male members of society. The dramas and their stories lag far behind in highlighting the issues related to women in Balochistan. However, female writers started this trend in PTV drams during the 1980s. As Qaiser and Jabeen (2008) note:

Fatima Suraiya in the 1980s wrote plays like 'Afshan', 'Ana' and 'Zeenat' while Haseena Moeen presented blockbusters like 'Dhund', 'Ajnabi', 'An Kahi', 'Chaoon', 'Dhoop Kinaray' and 'Tanhaiyaan'. All these plays dealt with the feminist issues and lives of women belonging to the middle strata of our society. (Abass and Jabeen, 2008, p. 211)

Nowadays, Ptv Bolan is on airing three drama (Tinae, Nazuk and Mazahib) on the same issue as I mentioned, but the question emerge is that why Ptv Bolan is showing women as an object and shallowness In 2021 dramas, whereas in the 20th-century era we have lots of social issues to make drama on this.

Balochi dramas seem devoid of any female play write. The domestication of women remains a dominant factor that portrays women engaged in domestic and household works and promotes patriarchal culture. The triumphant use of patriarchal culture has resulted in justifying inequities such as denying women access to leadership and politics Tyson (as cited in Hidayati and Itafarida, n.d.).

The gender-based biases also contribute to promoting patriarchal culture. Like dramas aired by PTV before or after launching PTV Bolan, the Balochi dramas have a strong bias towards the male. The dramas show males in roles that are authoritative whereas female roles, even if a character is an educated woman, are confined to the subordination of males. Roles assigned to women as caring mothers, obedient housewives, smooth in the utterance of words, religious, innocent and caring sisters who remain ready to push back their wishes and whims for the sake of family are



common in dramas Abass (2018). Females, mostly, are shown in submissive and passive roles which promote the element of patriarchy Hussain (as cited in Abass, 2018).

Similarly, Ashfaq and Shafiq (2018) state that Pakistan has a patriarchal culture where males dominate women despite having an equal proportion in terms population. Most of the drama serials shown in PTV Bolan are male dominated pushing women to underrepresentation which makes male a 'cultural standard'. According to Ashfaq and Shafiq (2018) patriarchal ideology and its strengthening has been at the centre of Pakistani dramas. Women confined to home and non-working female enjoy the appellation of being a 'good woman'. This in return consolidates the domestication of women making her life interwoven with patriarchy. It is not biological but the culturally inferior status which is produced and continues worldwide to date. Resultantly, male's authoritative 'standard' makes women suffer oppression and discrimination.

The reinforcement of patriarchal attitudes in society also justifies male-justification-based values and norms which, with constant dissemination through dramas, are adopted as part of women's life thus making it obligatory upon women to bear gender-based violence. Women only appear on TV as victims where they go through violence, slaps, insults and many kinds of abuses (Uks, (n.d.)).

The Balochi Dramas of PTV Bolan and PTV Home are not free from the chain of showing women in a stereotypical and submissive way pushing them under subordination. Although the gender-based issues and portrayal of women in PTV drama serials have dragged the attention of many research scholars and the issue had been subjected to academic study, yet the portrayal of women in Balochi dramas has never been under scholarly discussion.

### **Theoretical framework**

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Feminist theory is an extension of feminism in the field of theory or philosophy. It includes work in a variety of disciplines including anthropology, sociology, economics, women's studies, literary criticism, art history, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. Feminist theory seeks to understand gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. In criticizing these social and political attitudes, many feminist theories focus on advancing the rights and interests of women. Issues addressed in feminist theory include discrimination, stereotypes, objectification (especially sexual), oppression, and patriarchy. (Radtke, 2017)

### **Methodology**

To examine the promotion of patriarchal culture and stereotypical image of women in Balochi dramas, I chose the qualitative content analysis method to analyze 16 episodes of 5 Balochi dramas. The sampling is purposive random selection. Out 5 drama serials 2 drama serials, DhoDhar (separation) and Durdana which was telecast in 2011 are taken from PTV Home whereas 3 drama serials, MahZaib (2010), Hosham (Thrust) (2018) and Sutkagne Zird (2018) (The Burnt Heart), from PTV Bolan.

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

Do Balochi dramas, in PTV Bolan and PTV Home, portray women being submissive to male i.e. husband, brother, father and other male members of the family?

Are educated women portrayed as authoritative in decision-making?

What roles are attached to women?

Are independent women portrayed as villains?

Are dramas promoting patriarchal culture?



### **The working definition of categories**

**Submissive:** women complying with orders and instructions given by a male member of the family i.e. husband, brother, father or another male member of the family, and pushing their interest back in respect of husband, father, brother or any male member of the family; whereas not uttering in front of male members.

**Educated woman:** any women going office, school or any workplace and uttered as educated in dialogues.

**Independent women:** educated women not much involved in household work and dressed in western/moderate or not usual dress, worn by Baloch women culturally, is not considered suitable for marriage.

**A perfect woman:** any woman involved in household work frequently, remains confined to the home and engaged in caring for children and family.

**Roles:** any role mother, sister, wife, teacher, professor, and office worker assigned to any woman.

**Villains:** educated and less careful about familial values.

**Patriarchy:** the society where males are in control of the decision-making process and even males remain in control of access to resources.

### **Analysis**

#### *Brief profiles of selected dramas*

#### ***MahZaib (Beautiful like Moon)***

Drama serial MahZaib was written and produced by Attah Ullah Baloch and telecast by PTV Bolan in 2010.



The plot of the drama is about a village girl, Mahzaib. The story of the drama is based on the life of a nomadic Baloch living in a mountainous area. It is a love story of MahZaib and Kohyar, a young man from the same village—who is a passionate hunter. MahZaib likes Kohyar but her cousin Dostain wants to marry MahZaib. The Baloch society in drama serial is depicted with much exaggeration. For instance, none of the male or female characters are shown as educated. Further, the other female character, Droshom, has been assigned the role of a ‘dumb’ woman who throughout the drama serial never receives a single marriage proposal.

### **The stereotypical and mythical image of women**

MahZaib, the leading female character, is young and beautiful whose embroidery is praised across the village. The scenes where MahZaib is spotted: home; spotted while baking loaves and washing clothes; rearing cattle. MahZaib’s beautiful embroidery attracts Kohyar’s mother to ask her hand in marriage for her son. Such a stereotypical image of women consolidates the outdated norms practiced in traditional Baloch society. Further, MahZaib’s cousin, Droshom, who is dumb, never receives a marriage proposal and she is often treated with pity. The stereotypical image of Droshom reinforces a false picture in society about physically challenged women being unsuitable in the society like fellow women who are beautiful.

Similarly, most of the mother characters seem worried about the marriage of their daughters. This reinforces the ideology of early marriages. None of the mothers seem concerned about the education of their daughters.

### **Objectification and promotion of patriarchal culture**

The female and male dialogues of the drama prove that the drama is much more inclined towards promoting patriarchal culture. Objectification in terms of women's portrayal is mostly related to sexual objectification; however, the term here applies to the portrayal of women as an asset. For



example, when Dostain's father Abdullah asks MahZaib's father for her marriage, he refers to MahZaib as 'luggage'. Following are the dialogues that transpired between Gohram and MahZaib's father, Meeran:

*"Dostain tahi dasta rusta. Aga logh e 'madi' logha boro...?"* ["Dostain has grown in your care." says Gorham, "the 'luggage' of home remains in home?"]

MahZaib's polite language and complying attitude remains a reflection of patriarchal culture and proves male dominance in the decision-making process. The dialogues between Kohyar's mother and the mother of MahZaib are a reflection of reinforcing patriarchal culture.

While replying to Kohyar's mother, when she comes to MahZaib's mother to ask her hand in marriage, MahZaib's mother says that in their society decisions about daughters' marriage lie in the hands of male members.

*"Mai raaj e taha mai harchiye faisla'e bi mai 'mard' zag kanante,"*

[Here, all decisions are taken by a male]

Women are excluded from the decision-making process and male members are responsible for their care. Drama serial shows women in more submissive attitude towards their male counterparts which promotes patriarchal culture.

### **Hosham (Extreme Thrust)**

Hosham is a Balochi word that means 'extreme thrust'. The drama serial is written by A. D. Baloch and produced and directed by Mohammad Nawaz Magsi.

The schema of the drama focuses on Metro (the leading female character) who belongs to a village whereas Javid, the leading male character, belongs to the same village where Mehro lives. Although, the drama is based on



the issue of marriages, yet it is not free from clutches stereotyping of women. Mehro's marriage is decided without her consent. Javid loves Mehro, yet Mehro gets married according to the consent of her family. Mehro's husband Fakeero, Mehro's paternal cousin, is a drug addict and compels his wife, Mehro, bag. Mehro and Fakeero have a son, Anwar. Mehro after bagging hides some money for her son; however, her drug addict husband, Fakeero, takes the entire bagged amount for his drugs. Mehro lives an oppressed life.

Javid, the boy who loves Mehro, now has completed his education and lives happily along with his wife [educated by appearance because she is once spotted reading a book] and two school-going daughters. But the life of Javid takes turn when he spots Mehro bagging in the city. Javid starts struggle to save Mehro from the hell she is burning in.

### **The stereotypical and mythical portrayal of women**

The stereotypical portrayal of women is part of the drama's schema. For instance, the Mehro's marriage made her life miserable had she married Javid she would have spent a happy life. Mehro is seen more careful about her son. On the other hand, the role of Fakeero frames males into a stereotypical way. The role of a drug addict is exaggerated which is contrary to societal realities. Javid is seen as an educated and savior male character since his marriage with another woman made Mehro's life miserable, on the other hand, Javid after spotting Mehro bagging starts the role of being a savior for her.

### **Promotion of patriarchal culture**

Though Javid is an educated person, yet his wife depends on his free schedule to take children for a picnic. Similarly, Mehro, despite living a degraded life, has no right to part her ways with her husband Fakeero. Reliance on males reinforces patriarchal attitudes. Mehro, despite living a



life of many hardships, utters the following sentences when her husband Fakeero prays that he should die as he has made Mehro's life hell.

“Na, Anwar phith (Fakeero) chon magosh Allah thara hich makant. Tahi sayag mai wasta bhazint.”

[No, don't say like this Anwar's father (Fakeero) may Allah save you from any harm. Your shelter on our heads is enough]

The drama serial, however, is a step to highlight the issues of forced [forced in sense where female resistance is not open but accepting the marriage for the sake family's honour] marriages, it still projects a false image of women being submissive and devoted to a family apart from facing abuses and insults in the hands of her husband. Mehro prefers death over his comfortable life when Javid comes to help her.

### **Drama serial Durdana**

Durdana is the name of female character (leading). The drama is directed and produced by Gul Shah Bukhari and written by Riaz Sagar. Drama was telecast in November 2011 on PTV Home.

The schematic plot of the drama revolves around Durdana, whose love story again like other plots of dramas, is the central theme. Durdana is blamed by Jirgah to have marked the name of society with sahme. Durdana, however, escapes the tyrant jirgah but falls into the protection of Mir Alam whose marriage proposal had already been rejected by Durdana. Durdana is found with Sharjeel, an educated male and editor of a newspaper and Mir Alam's college friend, wondering in garden whereupon Sharjeel is killed by the people sent by Mir Alam, who is misled by some people about his friend Sharjeel being in love with Durdana.

### **The stereotypical and mythical portrayal of women**



Schema of drama draws a picture of women being a morbid entity. Durdana, for instance, is projected as middle (8<sup>th</sup>) pass educated women. The mythical representation of Durdana being an educated woman is reinforced that for women middle education is enough to be called educated. Dialogues during a conversation between Durdana and Mir Alam result in the stereotyping of educated women. When Mir Alam proposes her for marriage, Durdana replies:

“Mir Alam, man kamzor e janik neon, man yak wanindae janikon samjitay toh”

[Mir Alam, don't consider me a weak girl, I am an educated girl. Mind it.]

This reinforces the myth that studying few classes for a woman is enough to know good or bad, right or wrong.

### **Promoting patriarchal culture**

Durdana escapes jirgah and comes into the protection Mir Alam whose proposal she rejects while she is an educated woman not a weak woman. Durdana now finds Alam as a protector and serves him day and night as her wife. Stereotypical schema of the story reinforces patriarchal attitudes showing Durdana as submissive to his protector. The jirgah calls Durdana 'shoom' (ill-fated) girl who has humiliated them (male) in society. On the other hand, Alam defies the jirgah saying that now Durdana is in his custody and shall have the right to remain safe. This reinforces the ideology that male remain the savour and destroyer of women relegating the status of women in the society.

### **Drama serial Dho Dhar (separation)**

Dho Dhar (separation) is directed by Attah Ullah Baloch and Javed Shah. Date of drams serials telecast is unknown as it is published on the web.



The schema of drama is based on revenge which the leading character Ejaz wants to take from Farooq, father of female leading character Maheen. Ejaz's father has been imprisoned for being indicted in corruption case. Farooq, who is offered bribe by Ejaz's father, is boss of Ejaz's father. Without knowing the guilt of his father, Ejaz vows to take revenge from Farooq for which his 'soft' target is Maheen through which he reaches Farooq to take his revenge.

### **The stereotypical and mythical portrayal of women**

Maheen falls in love with Ejaz at first sight and proposes Ejaz herself. Ejaz marries Maheen to take revenge of his father's languishing. This creates stereotypes about women in two ways: first, it implies that females are the soft targets for getting revenge and easily exploited without any danger. Second, it intensifies the myth that women, for the sake of family, shall bear any abuse hurled to them. The following dialogues intensify the myth and stereotypical portrayal of women. While replying to Maheen on her question why did Ejaz marry her. Ejaz replies:

“Agar man hasil makortanay toh man wati badla choon gitag. [If I did not marry you, how could I take my revenge? Tahi qasoor hameshen k tou Farooq k janik e. Tahi qasoor hameshen k tahi khuwahishaan ni wasta tahi pita mani pitar phansent. [It is your mistake that you are daughter of Farooq the person who, for fulfilling your whims and wishes, trapped father]”

### **Reinforcement and promotion of patriarchal culture**

Maheen, after being excessively oppressed by Ejaz, still bags from Ejaz not to harm his family. Despite being despotic towards Maheen, Ejaz still retains his status as a 'good husband' as what he did it was not his fault. Ejaz oppresses and marries Maheen because he wants to give his father a surprise on his bail from jail.



“Baba, hama Farooq e janikin hamaya k tahi sara ilzam bastag o tarha jail booth. Ano man ishiyaach tahi, wati o wati maat badlaha giragon. Baba! Thara choon lagit mani ‘surprise’? [She is the daughter of the very Farooq who got you jailed in a fabricated case. Now, I would take your, mine and my mother’s revenge from her. Baba! How is my ‘surprise’?”

This reinforces the patriarchal attitude while representing female as an object which consolidates the stereotyped image of women. With Maheen’s soft, submissive and compromising attitude towards any oppression and abuse is justification of bearing violence as part of marital life respecting the concept of chadar and chardiwari (veil and within four walls).

### **Drama serial Sutkagen Zird (The Burnt Heart)**

Sutkagen Zird (The Burnt Heart) is produced and directed by Mauzullah Jamal dini and Ghulam Sarwar Yousufzai and written by Rashid Ali Baloch. The drama was telecast in 2018.

The story is based on marital life of Ali the, leading character, Ayesha (an educated woman and a school teacher) and Saima both wives of Ali. Ayesha lives in a rented house owned by Ali. Ali is married to Saima and has two children. Apart from his first marriage, Ali chooses to go for second marriage with Ayesha because Ali’s first wife, Saima, contracts a sudden and fatal disease. Ayesah accepts the marriage as compulsion as her father is unable to pay the rent. Ayesha, before marrying Ali, was fiancé of Jalal. Jalal turns to animosity to Ali as he believes that Ali snatched his fiancé. Ali is portrayed as an abortive man in managing marital affairs. However, the drama, in totality, reinforces and promotes patriarchal culture.

### **Stereotypical and mythical portrayal of women**

Both female characters are assigned roles of wives but they remain passive and submissive to their husband. Ali, despite being an infuriated man, who

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gets angry on tiny matters, is portrayed as the supportive pillar of the family responsible for looking after both wives. Such portrayal draws picture of a passive, compromising women ready to sacrifice her wishes for the sake husband and family.

### **Reinforcement and promotion of patriarchal culture**

The drama serial *Sutkagen Zird* exceeds in exaggeration of patriarchal culture as compared to other drama serials. For instance, the first wife of Ali never utters or is allowed to utter a single word in front of Ali when he (Ali) is speaking. Ayesha, despite being educated, remains dependent on Ali who often admonishes her to comply with his order as he (Ali) is her husband. Ayesha and Saima, on the other hand, remain passive, submissive, complying and compromising to family values and culture which embed patriarchal attitudes in society.

### **Discussion**

As noted by Ashfaq and Shafiq (2018) Pakistani dramas consolidate patriarchal mindset while depicting women as passive, obedient, complying, and engaged in doing household works as good women. The sister channels PTV Bolan and Home seem to follow the same path reinforcing patriarchal ideology through Balochi dramas. The study finds that the Balochi drama serials reinforce the already embedded ideology of patriarchy in Baloch society. Further, it is also observed that Balochi dramas mostly endorse the societal attitudes, created by a mythical and stereotypical depiction of women, towards women instead of breaking those myths and stereotypes. In this context, it was observed that instead of tackling child marriages the schema of the Balochi drama serials justifies women as being a burden on family reinforcing false images making early marriage inevitable. On urban and rural and on educated and uneducated grounds, the Balochi dramas confine the women to their dresses in a more stereotypical way. For instance, in *MahZaib*, all women were portrayed as



donned in a cultural Balochi dress since they belonged to a village and were uneducated. On the other hand, without much disclosing about a woman's education, the Balochi dramas portray educated women in a moderate shalwar kamiz. Moreover, the stereotypical portrayal is not only related to women only, in fact, male characters are also portrayed in a westernized dress if educated whether living in a rural area or an urbanized city. The study further finds that schema of Balochi dramas is written by male play write which makes it biased in terms of gender balancing issues. It is also observed that none of the male characters is spotted doing feminine works.

### **Conclusion**

The study finds that women in Balochi dramas are framed in a stereotypical world which not only reinforces the patriarchal and tribal culture; but also excludes women from the decision-making process. Almost all plot and schema of all Balochi drama serials revolve around marital issues faced by women in society; however, with a similar strength the, dramas are responsible for reinforcing widely held stereotypical beliefs which according to Bhargava (as cited in Ashfaq and Shafiq, 2018) are a psychological state where men and women are portrayed according to an organized set of beliefs.

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