

Image Grammatology and Gender Representation in Digital Illustrations on Honor Killing

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Article History: Received: 10 Apr 2019 Accepted: 03 Oct 2019	ABSTRACT The qualitative semiotic study investigates if and how digital illustrations published in Pakistani blogs on honor killing construct identities of the victims and perpetrators of honor killing in Pakistan. Besides analyzing the patterns of the portrayal and representation of Pakistani men and women, it examines if and how this discourse allows only particular kind of seeing for those outside the cultural domain. The framework of image grammatology suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) has been applied to study the visual grammar of ten digital illustrations selected from 8 different blogs published on the websites of 4 Pakistani newspapers including The Dawn, The Express Tribune, The Sindh Times and The Baluchistan Voices. The results show that women have been represented as victims, while men as perpetrators. Lack of research in this area, multimodal approach and implications of results for blogs, identity construction of Pakistani men and women, visual literacy and institutional education to address the issue make the study a useful contribution to the existing research on multimodality, gender and honor killing. Key Words: Digital Illustrations, Gender identity, Representation, Blogs, Image Grammatology, Honor Killing
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1. Introduction

Honor killing, a premeditated murder of a man or woman is especially associated with killing of women, because in traditional patriarchal societies, honor is vested in female body and sexuality and if she transgresses, the perpetrators deem murdering her essential to restore individual and collective honor (Pahor et al., 2016; Dyer, 2015; Ilic, 2016; Dhiman & Singh, 2017). In Pakistan, a predominantly patriarchal society (Amir-ud-Din et al., 2018), Lari (2011) claims that honor killing “is one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women” (p. 18).

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Though much of the data goes unreported, yet “1096” (1,096 Women Killed, 2016) and “737” (Ali, 2019) women were killed in 2015 and 2017-2018, respectively, while approximately 1000 women are killed for honor in Pakistan every year (Rahim, 2017, p. 260; Gauhar, 2014, p. 10). According to the statistics of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, “a whopping 620 women have been killed in the name of honor from the time” a bill against honor killing was passed in October 2016 till date (Qadeer, 2018). Considering the seriousness of the issue and its cultural implications, it is important to evaluate gender representation and dynamics to suggest solutions.

The study, therefore, investigates if and how gender roles have been depicted and if and how men and women have been represented as passive or aggressive, oppressive or oppressed, victims or perpetrators, flexible or rigid, or significant or insignificant through visual choices, signs, symbols, patterns and processes. Following is the research question and its sub questions for the present study:

- How have men and women been visually represented in the digital illustrations displayed in the news blogs written by Pakistani bloggers on honor killing in Pakistan?
- What are the signs and symbols related to gender in the digital illustrations employed in the blogs on honor killing in Pakistan?
- What are the implications of the visual grammar of honor killing with reference to Pakistani culture?

Understanding authenticity of gender representation in the context of honor killing in digital illustrations is an important aspect to study due to the typical representations of gender roles in Pakistan (Yasmin, et al., 2015; Amjad & Rasul, 2017; Beenish & Jamil, 2015), the false or incomplete representation of gender dynamics on national and international fronts and the misjudgments and misconceptions related to honor killing as a gender-oriented phenomenon among the audiences outside the cultural spheres. Therefore, the present study not only helps understand gender dynamics in the context of

honor killing, enables diverse audiences to “see the pain of ‘Others’ and be implicated in their alien experiences” (Pellicer-Ortin, 2017, p. 51), develops on the grammar of images and social semiotic framework in Pakistani context and explores the cultural notions as well as authentic realities of the representation, but also prompts the viewers, as well as, illustrators and bloggers to evaluate the representations cautiously.

2. Literature Review

So far as studies on honor killing, gender representation and social semiotic analyses are concerned, Pahor et al. (2016) and Bangash & Sami Ullah (2017) studied gender inequality causing honor killing in Pakistan and religious points of view on honor killing, respectively. Ullah et al. (2016), Islam and Asadullah (2018), Amjad and Rasul (2017) and Agha, et al., (2018) examined representation of gender in Pakistani newspapers, gender-based stereotypes in the textbooks in Pakistan, Malaysia and Afghanistan., ideological representation of Pakistani working women in news blogs and gender representation in Sindhi textbooks, respectively.

Rehman (2016) did a multimodal study of gender, religion and culture in Pakistani films, while Ahour and Zafrani (2016) studied gender representation in six images from textbooks. Chambers et al. (2018) examined the depiction of Muslim sexuality in famous magazines. Sherry et al. (2016) reviewed visual representation of female athletes on media and Jäntti, et al., (2018), studied Finland based homing blogs as spheres to display female agency. Similarly, Loverock and Hart (2018) studied gender representation in the photographs in two top scientific journals. Zollo and Loos (2017) did social semiotic analysis of cyberhate in blogs.

However, no multimodal or social semiotic study has been carried out on honor killing with reference to gender, blogs or Pakistani context. The present study, therefore, fills the gap in academic literature.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Data Collection

Data in the form of digital illustrations given in the blogs written by Pakistani bloggers on the websites of 4 Pakistani newspapers have been collected. The following number of Pakistani blogs was selected:

- The Express Tribune Blogs: 5 blogs (5 illustrations)
- The Dawn Blogs: 1 blog (3 illustrations)
- The Sindh Times Blogs: 1 blog (1 illustration)
- The Baluchistan Voices Blogs: 1 blog (1 illustration)

In total, 10 illustrations have been purposively selected from 8 blogs. The variables of selection include blogs published by Pakistani male and female bloggers, blogs published by Pakistani newspapers, digital illustrations employed by the bloggers or the publishers of newspapers or blogs, prose, the year of publication (2011-2018) and the issue of honor killing in Pakistan.

The Dawn had three illustrations in the same blog while there was no other blog available in The Dawn; however, news and articles on honor killing in the Herald, which is a magazine of the Dawn, were plenty. Considering “The Dawn” as one of the widely read English newspapers in Pakistan, three illustrations given in the same blog have been considered, while the fourth which was more like a collage has been excluded. The blogs selected from The Sindh Times and The Baluchistan Voices were the only blogs available in those newspapers. Most of the blogs on honor killing were written in the Express Tribune; however, 6 have been selected due to their relevance to the topic and data type.

3.2 Data Analysis

Illustrations have been analyzed on the basis of the framework of image grammatology suggested by Kress and Leeuwen (2006). The framework is based on the

application of ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions on visual design. According to Kress and Leeuwen (2006), ideational metafunction deals with ‘what is’ in an image, and is realized through the setting, background, foreground, processes, relations between interactive participants in the image and symbolic value of various lines, shapes, curves with reference to a particular culture or issue which the image represents, because “visual language is culture-specific” (p. 4).

“Interpersonal metafunction”, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), is about the social relations between interactive and represented participants, which are explored through studying angle, frame, shot, focus, direction, size, posture, gaze, text, salience and modality (p. 42). Kress and Leeuwen (2006) postulate, “modality” is the “truth value” or “credibility” of the “statements about the world” (p. 155) and it is realized through treatment of colors in the images. Textual metafunction deals with the compositional arrangement or layout. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), textual metafunction is realized through placement of interactive participants at the “center”, “margins”, “top”, “bottom”, left or right side of the frame, through which “Given”, “New”, “Ideal”, “Real” and “key information” are determined (pp. 177-196). In the present study, representational meanings of gender in the metafunctionally organized illustrations used in the blogs on honor killing, as multimodal texts, have been analyzed on the basis of all three metafunctions mentioned above. Multimodality, here, involves employment of multiple discourse types including text, images, videos and sounds etc. to construct meanings (Mehmet & Clarke, 2015, p. 94; Mateo, 2015, p. 231).

Besides this framework for the analysis of illustrations, “politics of representation” (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 33; Burgin, 1986, p. 55; Hall, 1997, p. 19) has been employed as a point of contention to analyze whether gender roles have been misrepresented, hyper-represented or authentically represented. The study, therefore, takes in view the ideological concerns behind gender representation from cultural point of view; because according to Hall (1997), “representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture” (p. 15) as well

as people outside the cultural realm; and according to Hutcheon (1989), “ideology is a production of representations” while “our common-sense presuppositions about the ‘real’ depend upon how that ‘real’ is described, how it is put into discourse and interpreted” (p. 33).

4. Analysis and Discussion

Figure 1:



Semiotic Configuration of Figure 1:

The “locative circumstance” in Figure 1 as a “dynamic”, “dramatic” and “personal” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 46-72) illustration consists of a red dupatta, which represents women, a stone, which connotes men and society, and a thread which signifies patriarchal norms of honor. Women are deprived of freedom to enjoy their lives fully; because patriarchal norms of honor hold them back (Hadi, 2017; Dogan, 2018; Gill, 2017). Brown color of the rock as well as the piece of land, representing security, in this painting, paradoxically connotes insecurity and instability, which men offer to women due to exercising power instead of protecting them. Hadi (2017) also supports, “men restrict

women's freedom of living" and control them, in order to "guard their virginity and chastity" (p. 299) and protect their own honor. Rahim (2017) suggests that "honor killers have more sense of ownership... and try to be dominant and control other people" (p. 260).

In Kress & Leeuwen's (2006) terms, the processes involved are "transactional" and "symbolic attributive" and the "curved form" of the rock suggests that male dominance is considered as a natural right of men; while "straight" thread suggests that social norms are considered as rule of "law" (pp. 46-105).

The stone is an "actor", while the woman is a recipient; and the "vector" formed by the thread targeted at the woman connotes that "goal" of the actor is to control the woman (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 46-64). The "possessive attributes" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 90) of red dupatta all its curves and creases signify flexibility, love or murder; while those of the stone signify rigidity, stability and strength. Stone and red color also refer to the tradition of stoning to death in the context of honor killing. Keeping the size of the stone and dupatta in view, it is clear that no matter what the professional position, capability or social stature of the woman, she can be overpowered, controlled and exploited by her male guardian, because social norms give him authority over her (Amjad & Rasul, 2017; Hadi, 2017). Badar (2011), the blogger, asserts that the socially celebrated image of a man as a "glorious muscular superhero", who can save a woman from burning fire, should be changed to a man who can "save her from himself" (p. 1). Red color also represents strength, which means that women, by utilizing their strength, have chances of seeking freedom.

In Figure 1, a "perspectival", "offer" image, angle is "high", in case of the stone, while "low", "frontal", "horizontal" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 119-145) in case of dupatta, thus highlighting the plight of women and giving them power over the interactive participants. For dupatta, "shot" is "medium long" and "distance" is "close social" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 124-125); however, in case of stone, shot is long, and distance is far social. Therefore, on the one hand, confinement of the woman has been highlighted, while on the other hand, it has been suggested that the interactive participants and society

deal with the issue on an impersonal level. Besides men are also shackled by honor norms to such an extent that they snatch women's right to live freely. The illustrator, thus, offers the interactive participants an opportunity to contemplate and set men and women free from patriarchal burden. Modality of brown and red color, texture, color contrast, brightness and representation are high.

Dupatta has been made what Kress and Leeuwen (2006) call "salient" (p. 177) by its large size and placement on the top; and freedom has been depicted as an "Ideal" i.e., new, idealized and contested information, while the key information is subjugation of women due to toxic masculinity and honor norms, which have been depicted as the "Real" i.e., existing information (p. 186). The illustrator aspires the freedom of women, which is why, dupatta is "New", while the stone is "Given" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 181).

Figure 2:



Semiotic Configuration of Figure 2:

Figure 2 is a portrait of a social media star, Ms. Qandeel Baloch, who had been smothered to death by her brother in 2016. Though they had issues over money, yet he later

said that he had killed her in the name of honor. The relations and processes involved are “instrumental”, “analytical”, “transactional reactional” and “symbolic attributive”, as suggested by Kress and Leeuwen (2006, pp. 46-105). The man, all black, carrying a gun is the actor, while the woman is a “reactor”, “recipient” and “carrier” (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 50-90) simultaneously due to her possessive attributes and vectors formed by her eyes. Goal of the actor, due to vectors formed by his arm and pistol, is to kill the woman, while the vectors formed by the piercing, stunned, disillusioned and aggressive gaze conveys helplessness, anger, shock and disillusionment, simultaneously. Her possessive attributes such as well-kempt high ponytail, pointed nose, deep neck, lipstick and jewelry items, and vectors formed by her eyebrows, eye-liner and nose, represent her as a strong woman. In fact, posting bold videos in revealing dresses, displaying bold and provocative body language, crossing what Nawab and Chaudhry (2017) consider “some class and power boundaries” (p. 1) and challenging “middle-class morality” (Qandeel, 2017, *The Guardian*) are what made her a social media sensation.

It is not that Pakistani women have never asserted their freedom or individuality, because millions are studying and have studied at colleges and universities, millions are doing or have done valuable jobs in media, judiciary, politics, medicine, teaching, sports, armed forces and the structure is evolving; however, in case of Qandeel Baloch, the assertion of individuality was of a different kind - one that is socially looked down upon due to perceptions of sensuousness and provocation involved. Idriss (2017) notes, Arabic words, “Aurat, Awrah, or Awrat” meaning women, are translated into “nakedness” and that female body and modesty “require covering or protection”; therefore, “honor is perceived as residing within the bodies of women” (p. 322). Social perceptions of female body combined with media blamed for sensationalizing the details of Qandeel Baloch’s personal life, thus according to Chughtai (2016) “increasing the "shame" factor upon her family” (p. 1) instigated her brother to take this heinous step. The black color of the man, targeting her in the illustration represents reality and crime.

Not wearing dupatta connotes loss of honor, though in her case it stands for choosing modern life style. Though not all the women wear dupatta or hijab in Pakistan; yet wearing Dupatta, hijab or abaya or observing parda, are considered dignified choices, especially among those sections of middle class and contexts where honor norms are intact. According to Almila (2018), in the history of various cultures, veil was linked to “urbanization”, “social status and social standing, and was a privilege”; and it was historically practiced by “honorable, elite women” in “urban environments” (p. 4); however, during colonial times, it emerged as a “powerfully political symbol” and “visible marker of oppression” (pp. 4-5), due to what Kassam and Mustafa (2018) term “Orientalist logic of ‘saving or rescue’ of the Muslim female from the oppressive patriarchal values” (p. 75). However, not wearing dupatta in the context of honor killing suggests helplessness and lack of protection; because honor and protection are conditioned with modesty.

In Figure 2, a perspectival demand image, angle is low, frontal and horizontal in case of the woman, while high and oblique in case of the man, thus giving the woman power over the interactive participants and highlighting honor killing as femicide.

Woman and man, represented as Given and New, respectively, draw attention to the oppressive role of men in determining female freedom and choices. Keeping her placement and makeover in mind, it can be said that modernity and freedom have been presented as Ideal, while honor killing, and male dominance have been presented as the Real and key information or core issue.

Figure 3:



Semiotic Configuration of Figure 3:

The setting of Figure 3 depicts gun, representing men, as an actor, while woman as a recipient and reactor, whose reaction is nothing but silence. Sun also (2017) notes that women are “depicted as hyperfeminine, submissive, dependent, and sexually available to men, whereas men are frequently assigned a dominant role in gender relations and are associated with hypermasculine characteristics” (p. 2627).

White dupatta signifies simplicity, chastity, loss and death. It’s common in Pakistani culture to wear white Chaadar/dupatta, especially while condoling with someone; however, in elite feminist discourses and western culture, women wearing dupatta are perceived as “oppressed, passive, and uneducated” (Nagra, 2018, p. 276). Red blotches connote killing of women for honor. The vectors formed by the placement of the gun, signify the all-pervasive and overarching nature of toxic male-dominance. Vectors formed by the woman’s eyes display her passivity and disillusionment. The black and brown colors of the gun signify both instability and crime or death. Brown, being the color of earth and trees, signifies shelter, resources, stability and support, but in this context, it represents instability, because men destabilize and kill women in the name of protection. Red color also signifies strength, which the woman, instead of passively suffering, must build as Murshid and Critelli (2017) also clarify that sticking to patriarchal norms, impeccably predicts women’s experiences of intimate partner violence.

The angle in this demand image is low, frontal and horizontal, shot is close and distance in case of the gun is close personal but for woman, it is close social which show that the interactive participants deal with men on a personal but women on an objective level. Men are socially accepted and closely associated in honor-based contexts; while, women are socially challenged and distanced. Arat and Hasan (2017) note that “aggressive and violent behavior is typically associated with manhood treated as a male trait both in popular cultures and gender studies” (p. 2); while MacDonald (2016) notes third world women “are portrayed as perpetually oppressed” (p. 1).

The large size of the gun and its placement on the top makes it salient, while woman, a human figure, is also salient. Margins are white and nothing is being idealized, however, the oppression and penury of women have been highlighted as the Real and key information.

Figure 4:



Semiotic Orientation of Figure 4:

The locative circumstance in Figure 4, a dramatic, personal and dynamic illustration represents the killing of women on a large scale by men. The processes involved are instrumental, analytical transactional and symbolic attributive because vectors are forming by the knife and hand of the man whose goal is to kill the woman. Red color represents murder and the woman with closed eyes, as a recipient, signifies death, resignation and helplessness. The blog is about the real story of sons killing their mother and step sisters and the blogger, Gulfaraz (2014), asserts that “we need to publicly shame those sons, ridicule them, embarrass them... so that the rest of the world knows that we will not accept this in our backyard” (p. 1).

In case of the female face, shot is extreme close, while in case of the woman, it is very long. Distance is close and far personal. Angle is low frontal horizontal which according to Kress and Leeuwen (2006) shows “what you see here is part of our world, something we are involved with” (p. 136). It’s a perspectival offer image which makes the interactive participants brood over the condition of women and stop men from killing them. Female face is the Given, while man carrying a knife is the New, thus male dominance is the key information.

Figure 5:



Semiotic Orientation of Figure 5:

The blogger narrates the story of an innocent girl who was killed by her uncle without confirming if she was actually guilty. The processes in Figure 5, a dynamic, personal and dramatic illustration, are locative, symbolic attributive and transactional. The upside-down crown placed against plain white background represents female victims, and blood represents honor killing. The straight lines formed by the six streaks of blood, show that honor killing is treated as rule of law. The orientation of the crown shows that honor

has been lost and woman who was supposed to be treated as a princess, is not being offered the rights to freedom, life, respect and personal choice.

In this subjective offer image, mood is indicative, angle is low, frontal and horizontal, shot is close, and distance is close personal. Therefore, the illustrator shows involvement and depicts the issue as condemnable actually relevant to the culture.

Female oppression, disrespect, violation of rights and killing in the name of honor are the Given, New, Real and key information in this illustration. Nothing has been idealized as such, however, keeping in view that red also stands for strength, the illustration, as the Ideal, may suggest that if women learn to be strong, they can, gain control over their situation.

Figure 6:



Semiotic Orientation of Figure 6:

The red handprint placed at the center and red spots on all four corners of the frame, in Figure 6, a conceptual illustration, portray killings as a crime. Though the hand appears to be that of a man; yet it cannot be clearly established if men are being killed or women. In this perspectival offer image, shot is extreme close, distance close personal and

angle is low, frontal and horizontal. It shows that honor killing is a serious social evil in Pakistan and the illustrator wants the interactive participants to think about eradicating this evil.

The hand placed at the center is the key information. The illustration is horizontally aligned, therefore, the hand of the perpetrator of honor killing, placed at the center, and blood of the victims, placed on the margins, alternately become the Given and the New, thus highlighting the suffering caused to people in the name of honor. Nothing has been idealized, however, honor killings and victimization of people have been depicted as the Real.

Figure 7:



Semiotic Configuration of Figure 7:

The locative circumstance, in Figure 7, which is a dramatic, dynamic and personal image, illustrates heads or necks of ten women but one-eyed faces of six of them can be seen and seventh placed at the center is covered. A few are wearing chaadar, while a few others are bareheaded. Abid (2018) found “burqa can be seen as a dynamic, gendered marker of religious identity in modern Pakistan” (p. 228); and according to Hasan (2018), generally, in orientalist literature, it “is viewed as a symbol of female oppression, a mark

of backwardness and a shroud of invisibility”; but “it is a powerful statement of agency and liberty” of Muslim woman (Hasan, 2018, pp. 26-33). However, in figure 7 and visual discourse on honor killing in general, veil is represented as a superficial but strong oppressive tool to hide, protect and reflect male honor. In this regard, Bouvier (2017) posits, “clothing can regulate and control people in a much more overt way” (p. 191).

Twelve red circles signify that women are deliberately targeted for killing. The processes involved are transactional and symbolic attributive, therefore, the vectors formed by the eyes aim at questioning the social negligence, silence or insensitivity and possessive attributes of women, such as single eyes, unusual skin colors, covered heads and faces, circular or semicircular shapes of their dupattas, straight lines and vertical bars, connote limited freedom of expression, insignificance, marginalization, social control over their bodies, restraints, hurdles and social challenges.

The straight lines signify that such an oppressive treatment of the women is socially considered as a norm or rule. The blogger, Abro (2013), sarcastically views that we are taught that women are weaker, so we keep maltreating them as a right, while “we hide our honor under “topis, turbans and chadors” (p. 1). Men as actors have not been depicted but the red shooting targets or bullseyes represent men as snipers or killers.

In this demand image, shot is close, distance close social and angle is high frontal and horizontal, thus highlighting the represented participants as victims of social norms and honor killings and inspiring the interactive participants to take action against female suffering. Modality is medium to high because unusual colors have been used for their skin, however keeping in view the inhuman treatment of the women; the symbolic significance of the choice of colors is high.

Both women and shooting targets have been made salient by overlapping, however women, being human figures, are more salient. Overlapping of same patterns represents the magnitude of killings in the name of honor.

Figure 8:



Semiotic Orientation of Figure 8:

Fifteen moustaches, representing what Pascoe and Bridges (2016) call “hegemonic masculinities” (p. 212), while, five decapitated heads with blurred faces, representing female victims of honor killing, have been foregrounded against a pitch-black background. The straight grey line represents the divide between the male world and female world as a norm or rule of law, and draws attention to gender gaps, discrimination and injustice and imply that there is a “sex class system” (Akgul, 2017, p. 32) in the society.

A red Sindhi chaadar on the top represents men, especially waderas (tribal landlords), belonging to the province Sindh. In her ethnographic study on Sindh, Shah (2017) asserts, “in Pakistan, ghairat is firmly linked to honor violence...Ghairat is explained as an instinct in men”, “‘a reflex action’... a ‘moral justification for violence in honor” (pp. 50-57). According to Shah (2017), while Islamic discourse rejects honor killings, “terming it un-Islamic” but “in upper Sindh, not a single day passes without reports of killing of a woman or a man both under the ostensible karo-kari slogan (p. 15). Karo-literally means ‘black male’ and kari, ‘black female’. The slogan implies that the victims were sexual transgressors... roughly two-thirds of the deaths are those of women”

(Shah, 2017, p. 42). Processes involved are locative and symbolic attributive. Blurred faces represent loss of identity and life, oppression and death. Grey and black represent traditional values, death, gloom and chaos. In Figure 8 as an offer image, distance is close personal, shot is close, and angle is mainly low horizontal and frontal but slightly high in case of the women shows that women are treated as insignificant.

Figure 9:



Semiotic Orientation of Figure 9:

In Figure 9, the processes involved are analytical transactional, locative and symbolic attributive because two men, representing men belonging to Pathan clan due to their possessive attributes such as cap, turban and facial features, two hands representing killing of women and floral patterns representing women, have been illustrated. Besides, the vectors formed by the facial expressions of men and their intense and concentrated gazes show anger, vengeance and disturbance. It is important to understand that “individuals are not born violent”, but “so many males are attracted to violence or see violence as a legitimate way to deal with conflict” (Harland & McCready, 2015, p. 3) is because gender is socially constructed and performed through repetition (Butler, 1990, p. 25).

Angle is low, frontal, horizontal in case of men and hands which highlights male dominance; but for flowers, it is high frontal horizontal. Shot is close and distance is close personal in case of men and hands but far social in case of flowers. The texture of the illustration conveys mayhem, disturbance and confusion.

Men are the Real, hands are the key information and floral patterns not having a hand placed over them are the Ideal. The illustrator, while cherishing a sense of freedom for women, depicts their killings and oppression by men. As the painting is horizontally aligned, so the floral patterns and men alternately become the Given and the New, thus portraying men as perpetrators of honor killing and the need to emancipate women.

Figure 10:



Semiotic Orientation of Figure 10:

In Figure 10, instrumental, analytical, transactional and symbolic attributive processes are involved because the vectors formed by the fierce gazes of men and the rods they are carrying are targeted at the girl. Rodrigues (2016) asserts with regard to male gaze and power that, “the moment he stabs, through that look of fear, he, a socially and emotionally disempowered male, immediately gets empowered. He becomes a

necropolitical lord with the power over life and death. He chooses death...A socially powerless male is not a male. He partakes in the symbolic ‘lack’ (p. 126).

Men have been depicted as actors, while, woman is recipient and carrier. Her bare head shows helplessness, while her back towards the interactive participants shows trust, vulnerability and abandonment, because Kress and Leeuwen (2006) pinpoint, “to expose one’s back on someone is also to make oneself vulnerable, and this implies a measure of trust, despite the abandonment which the gesture also signifies” (p. 138).

The possessive attributes of men including beards, turbans and unbuttoned shirts, as well as, the sticks they are carrying and brushstrokes standing for crops and signifying divide between men and the woman, collectively indicate that they have rural background, and they are being othered in the illustration from the cultured society (Lancioni, 2018, p. 155). Beards and turban also signify honor and religious affiliation in this context. The blogger, Mastoi (2018), however, asserts that “there is no place for honor killing in Islam” (p. 1). In addition, “killing one innocent human being is akin to killing the entire human race” (Qur’an 5:32, 6:151, 17:33, cited in Gharaibeh, 2016, p. 123; Bangash & Sami Ullah, 2017). Modality brought by rough texture and use of black, brown and white colors is high from cultural point of view, due to “black and white traditionally indicating reality” (Ravelli & Leeuwen, 2018, p. 278); while the light brown depicting instability and insufficiency of protection that men are expected to offer in this context.

In Figure 10 as a perspectival offer image, shot is close, distance is close personal, and angle is low, frontal and horizontal. It shows the represented participants have power over the interactive participants and male dominance, female subjugation and gender-based violence are actually critical issues in Pakistan.

From the perspective of textual metafunction, the woman at the center is salient and her helplessness, fear and trauma have been depicted as the key information. The layout is horizontal, therefore, men on both the margins and the woman, in turns, become the Given and New, thus highlighting gender-based oppression and violence. Nothing has been

idealized but the celebrated male dominance and misuse of power in the honor-based contexts have been presented as social ideals and the misery of the woman has been presented as Real.

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

Analysis shows that women have been represented as oppressed, insignificant, helpless, and marginalized victims, while men have been depicted as aggressive and controlling murderers or oppressors. The existing studies such as those by Chambers et al. (2018), Ullah et al., (2016), Islam and Asadullah (2018), Amjad and Rasul (2017) also confirm varied representations of men and women due to association of hegemonic masculinity and aggression with the former and marginalization and exclusion with the later; however, Ahour and Zafrani (2016) found neutral representation of both men and women. Signs and symbols such as stone, black man pointing pistol, gun, man pointing knife, four red handprints, 12 bullseyes, moustaches, Sindhi chaadar, Pakhtune turban and cap, furious men carrying large sticks have been used to represent men; while red flowing dupatta, women not wearing dupatta, upside down crown, burqa-clad women, decapitated heads, blurred and distorted faces, one-eyed faces, floral patterns and faces with no eyes at all have been employed to represent women. Placement and salience of objects also shows that women are oppressed and killed by men.

Though representation is authentic from the perspective of women in terms of their traumatic experiences; certain “subtle ideological messages” regarding honor killing have been “framed” (Cvetkovic & Pantic, 2018, p. 321) in the illustrations. However, various dimensions of the representation have been neglected. For instance, women also perpetrate honor killing (Dogan, 2018) and men are also killed for honor. In 2015 alone, 88 men were killed for honor in Pakistan (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Report, 2015; cited in, 1,096 women killed, April 2, 2016; Hashmi, 2018). Shah (2017) also notes that men are killed for honor in Pakistan but two third victims are women.

Besides, suicides are also committed as a legitimate way of restoring honor (Roberts et al, 2018, p. 2), but their representation cannot be found. Patriarchal values and honor norms as well as fear of society are strong forces behind honor killings (Dogan, 2018; Pahor et al., 2016). However, except for thread in Figure 1 and black white or brown backgrounds, there is no significant depiction of social pressure, norms and expectations related to honor.

As we know reality through representations (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 33); and Scott et al., (2017) also assert that “we acquiesce in being made invisible, in our occupying no space...we participate in our own erasure” (p. 13); therefore, misrepresentations or under-representations of men, suicide cases, female perpetrators, male victims, male and female survivors, society and social norms as a perpetrator and men as rescuers will make them invisible, represent the reality differently and give an incomplete, if not inauthentic, picture of gender relations in Pakistani culture.

Killeen (2018) notes that visibility of victimhood can easily be manipulated; therefore, reiteration of incomplete representations generates what Gill (2017) terms as “harmful generalizations” (p. 149), which may cause cultural stigmatization and distortion of the “self-image” of women “and the image of the opposite gender group” (Islam & Asadullah, 2018, p. 2). Coll et al., (2018) also highlight that “wars have been waged based on ethnic cleansing, religious persecution and the role of women in society, among other cultural values” (p. 342). Therefore, as language can be used for “engineering opinion” and “manufacturing of consent” (Chomsky, 2004, p. 13-15) or creating propaganda; and “self is produced through repetitive representation” (Van es, 2017, p. 9), it is important to carefully construct realities in visual or textual discourse.

In addition, “sociologically, the concept of honor affects all societies, classes and religions” (Idriss, 2010, p. 4); and besides Muslim cultures, “honor killing is a common practice in Spain, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico” (Jafri, 2008, in Rahim, 2017, p. 255); but due to its practice coupled with incomplete representations and sometimes false

propaganda, the issue both harms and doubly stigmatizes. Therefore, discourses, through shifting the existing gender boundaries and emphasizing on honor killing as a shame-killing which brings dishonor to male dignity, should create awareness, as Van es, (2017) notes, “stereotypes can be internalized or appropriated by the people stereotyped, but also subverted” by “shifting symbolic boundaries and relocating identities” (p. 3). Comprehensive depictions of honor killing in more blogs and illustrations need to be made.

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Figure 2: A Qadeer. (2018, July 15). Two years and two bills, later Qandeel Baloach and honor continue to turn in their graves [The Express Tribune Blogs]. Retrieved from <https://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/69128/two-years-and-two-bills-later-qandeel-baloch-and-honor-continue-to-turn-in-their-graves/>

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