



Legal and Islamic Approach Towards Prisoners' Conjugal Rights in Pakistan

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Abstract

The aim of the research is to examine the Islamic and legal approach towards prisoners' conjugal rights in the Pakistani Jails. Though imprisoned individuals are deprived of their liberty but remain entitled to well-defined human rights recognized internationally, regionally and within national legal statutes. The study also explores the basic principles of Shari'ah law, as well as constitutional, statutory, and judicial perspectives on prisoners' conjugal rights and attempts to answer that either Islam recognized the conjugal rights or not? The objective of the research is achieved through qualitative means of research by analysing constitutional provisions, jail rules, international standards, various articles and human right reports etc. Study draws the conclusion that acknowledging conjugal rights of prisoners is essential not only to protect of their basic human rights and the enhancement of rehabilitation efforts but conjugal visits within prisons helps preserve family ties, reduce homosexuality, and protect prisoners from sexually transmitted diseases.

Keywords

Conjugal Rights, Islamic Jurisprudence, Jail Reforms, Prison Laws, Jail Regulations

Introduction

The freedom or liberty of an individual is among the most essential rights of every human being. In certain situations, judicial authorities may decide that it is necessary to restrict this right for some individuals temporarily due to their actions or behaviours for which they have been convicted. During this time, individuals are managed and placed under the supervision of prison authorities (Coyle, 2002).

Detention is one of the familiar forms of sentence imposed by the courts to deal with the convicts. Jails or Prisons are the places where the offenders are kept in confinement with a view to limit their liberty. After being imprisoned, an inmate does not terminate to be a human being. They are being forfeiting of certain liberties under the law and still have some fundamental human inviolable rights, i.e. the right to life with a least average prevailing of living, right to humane cure, safety against distress, protection against unfairness on grounds of race or caste, right to education, reformation, and speedy trial and legal aid, protection of motherhood and childhood, right to culture and information are the fundamental minimum rights that a prisoner is supposed not to be decline even when in confinement (National Human Rights Commission on Humans Rights in Prisons, 2006).

Likewise the conjugal rights are also fundamental human rights of all incarcerated human beings. The term "Conjugal" refers to the acknowledgment of the inherent rights of heterosexual couples, including the privilege to live together or engage in intimate relationships, while also sharing various other rights and forming an extended family. A conjugal visit for a prisoner is a designated period during which an inmate can spend a certain number of hours or days with their partner in a private setting. During this time, the couple may engage in sexual activities. These rights granted to

prisoners are intended to result in positive effects both during their imprisonment and after their release, such as a reduction in instances of sexual and nonsexual violence among inmates (Kajawo, 2001).

The main object of this right is to reservation of family ties and marital stability. The debate on prisoner's rights to conjugal visit started from 1904 in Parchman Penitentiary (Kuroski, 2016).

Various historical viewpoints concerning conjugal visits for inmates have been documented throughout history. Most people are familiar with the term conjugal visits, which refer to prisoners being permitted to engage in sexual relations with their spouses. A conjugal visit involves a private meeting between an inmate and their partner in a designated room, allowing the inmate to exercise their sexual rights while incarcerated. (Bajpai, et al, 2022). The earliest prison to allow conjugal visits for inmates was Parchman Farm. Parchman Farm started as a labour camp for African American prisoners in Mississippi, serving as a clear effort to perpetuate slavery even after the conclusion of the Civil War 50 years earlier. (Hopper, 1962).

In 1904, the Parchman Penitentiary had been transformed into a farm reminiscent of the nineteenth century where black inmates toiled in the prison's cotton fields akin to slave labour. Marital interactions were a makeshift and patriarchal system of compensation. If black prisoners performed arduous work, they had to be coerced into sexual relations on Sundays. Established around 1904, the guards at Parchman devised a scheme and arranged for prostitutes to engage in sexual activities with inmates. Although such arrangements were not part of official prison policy, the administration supported these practices for many years. The rationale behind this was the belief among prison officials that permitting sexual intercourse for black inmates would increase their productivity (Plaisted,2021). Following 1955, the prison system officially approved the program for conjugal visits. To facilitate this, the prison administration constructed cabins where inmates could meet their wives and children, while visits from sex workers to Parchman were ultimately discontinued. Inmates began returning home as paternalistic rewards during vacations, which became recognized as an official furlough for prisoners. As a partial answer to the issue of sexual change in jail, the right to a conjugal visit at Parchman was implemented specifically in U.S. states with penal systems. Commensal rights were initially thought to be unlikely in American prison culture and to have little rehabilitative effect, but they ended up being more effective than a solution for sex anxieties in prison (Goldstein, 2015). The idea of inmates' conjugal rights is still a delicate and little-studied area of prison reform in Pakistan. Even while international human rights standards support maintaining family ties while incarcerated, cultural, legal and infrastructure barriers frequently prevent Pakistan from implementing these rights.

The potential to address important legal, social and policy issues makes researching inmates' conjugal rights in Pakistan significant. it aims to legally define conjugal rights as a fundamental human right that is consistent with both international norms and constitutional protections. In terms of society, the study emphasizes how crucial these rights are to preserving familial ties, promoting the mental and emotional health of inmates and their families, and lowering the risk of recidivism. It offers practical advice for changing prison administration systems at the policy level in order to strike a balance between the requirement for security and the humane treatment of inmates. This study advances the rights of prisoners in Pakistan and provides a useful basis for more extensive criminal justice reforms by fusing comparative studies of global norms with Pakistan's sociocultural setting.

Concept of Conjugal Rights

Conjugal rights, or the right of either spouse to be with their spouse, are, in general, rights established by marriage. However, in the context of prisons, conjugal visits refer to the idea of letting a prisoner spend some private time with his spouse inside the prison's grounds. It is frequently asserted that conjugal visits can help inmates' psychological well-being, maintain marital bonds, and lower rates of sexual aggressiveness and homosexuality in correctional facilities. In addition to the aforementioned, it is maintained that the spouses of prisoners have a fundamental right to visit their spouses. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and other international agreements all recognize the rights of prisoners. Inmates' intrinsic dignity and right to life are protected by such tools. These treaties provide the right to preserve family relationships, including visits between spouses. The majority of jail laws and regulations nationwide acknowledge the need of preserving social and familial ties (Bajpai, 2022). The idea of inmate conjugal rights refers to the

inmate's right to continue having close contact with their spouse through conjugal visits. These visits respect inmates' basic human rights and the value of maintaining family relationships by granting them privacy and physical intimacy. The acknowledgment of conjugal rights, which is based on the ideas of dignity, rehabilitation, and reintegration, attempts to lessen the psychological and emotional toll that incarceration takes while also promoting stability within the family. The discussion of conjugal rights frequently centres on striking a balance between the rights of inmates and security considerations as well as social standards, even though the practice varies widely throughout the world, with some nations completely accepting it and others enforcing severe restrictions. These rights are also increasingly being considered from the perspective of gender equality and the larger prison reform discussion (Goyal, 2018). In the context of human rights and prison system reform, the subject of inmates' conjugal rights is gradually gaining attention. This matter is undoubtedly understudied in Pakistan, where society and the law appear to conflict, yet it is crucial. The rights of prisoners to marry are not well-regulated in Pakistan.

The Prisons Act of 1894, which governs jail operations, makes no mention of marital rights. However, in some cases, the dignity of prisoners—possibly including the right to marriage—has been interpreted as part of the right to life and liberty protected by Article 9 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. (Gul, 2018). Internationally, the recognition of conjugal rights is associated with broader human rights principles, such as the right to family life guaranteed by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and analogous provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). As a signatory to the ICCPR, Pakistan is required to align its actions with international norms (Qamar et al, 2019).

Pakistani society's perception of conjugal rights is influenced by cultural and religious norms. Islam places a strong importance on marriage's sanctity and spouses' rights, which might be interpreted as promoting conjugal visits (Burhanuddin et. al, 2023).

However, traditional cultural attitudes and progressive interpretations sometimes clash, leading to resistance to the realization of these rights.

Research conducted in various countries yields valuable insights. For instance, judges in India have occasionally acknowledged the conjugal rights of prisoners, using the justification that these rights encourage rehabilitation and reduce recidivism (Kaushik, 2021). In a similar vein, many US jurisdictions have authorized conjugal visits as part of jail reforms aimed at maintaining family relationships. These examples highlight the potential benefits and feasibility of granting conjugal rights, which could serve as a reference for Pakistani policymakers (Vladu et al, 2021).

The implementation of conjugal rights in Pakistan is hampered by a number of factors, such as jail congestion, poor infrastructure, and social opposition. Critics argue that prioritizing marital rights may divert attention from more pressing issues, such as inmate safety and health (HRCP, 2018). Others contend that in the absence of sufficient safeguards, such programs might be abused, severely taxing the criminal justice system, which is already precarious.

Why do Protect Conjugal Rights of Prisoners

Human dignity, rehabilitation, and the maintenance of familial ties serve as the foundation for the protection of inmate conjugal rights (Van Kempen, 2008). Marital visits support the essential human rights that convicts maintain despite their confinement, such as the right to privacy and family life (Allen, 2024). By reducing the stress and loneliness associated with incarceration, these visits are essential for promoting emotional and psychological well-being. By preserving close family ties, which are essential for reintegration into society and lowering recidivism, they also aid in recovery (Folk,et al,2017). Furthermore, defending conjugal rights promotes family stability, guarantees that obligations and relationships are not broken because of incarceration, and tackles gender equality issues by acknowledging the rights of both male and female inmates (Vianney,2024). These rights, which represent a humane and restorative approach to justice, are also viewed in many jurisdictions as a component of larger legal and human rights obligations (Acorn, 2024).

Islamic Approaches toward Conjugal Rights for Prisoners

The foundation for comprehending inmates' conjugal rights is Islamic jurisprudence, which places a strong emphasis on protecting human dignity, marital rights and family life. Islam views marriage as a holy contract with reciprocal duties, including the right to sexual intimacy, which is recognized as a legitimate right of both partners. Islamic beliefs emphasize that unless specifically restricted for the sake of justice or public safety, jail does not deprive people of their fundamental rights. The

significance of upholding familial relationships and carrying out marriage responsibilities is emphasized throughout the Quran and Hadith. For example, "*O people! be careful of (your duty towards) your Lord who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same kind and spread from these too many men and women*" (The Holy Quran, 04:01).

"*And of everything We have created pairs that you may be mindful,*" says Surrat-Al-Zariat (The Holy Quran, 51:49). "*O you people, We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honourable among you is the one among you that is most careful (of his duties); surely Allah is knowing and aware,*" Allah then states in Surrat-Al-Hujurat. (The Holy Quran, 49:13).

According to Surah Al-Nisa, men are responsible for maintaining and protecting women. This job has been purposefully allocated, even if actual equality exists. A husband cannot disregard his obligations to his wife and kids in such circumstances. In a same vein, the wife has duties to her family and husband. As a result, both spouses are entitled to continue communicating with each other. One spouse's inherent right is unaffected by the possibility of their incarceration. As a result, temporary parole can be added to the Shari'ah-approved parole system, enabling prisoners to carry out their obligations to their families.

Islamic teachings are compassionate toward prisoners, offering more leniency and opportunities for those who confess their crimes. The Sunnah states that no one should be separated from their family (spouse or child) for more than six months. This principle also applies to married prisoners, as it is documented that a woman once complained to Imam Ali about her husband's refusal to provide for her. The laws established by Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) set universal and humane standards for the treatment of prisoners. The husband was imprisoned by Imam Ali, but his plea was accepted when he asked his wife to accompany him. "The inmate's family may visit him at any time," Imam Ali said. The prisoner's spouse is permitted to visit and remain with him as well. It has been verified that Imam Ali let the detainee's family to reside with him while he was incarcerated. (Muhammad Aslam Khaki and others V. The State and Others, 2010).

Legal Approach towards Prisoners Conjugal Rights

As an "Islamic Republic State," Pakistan is obligated by the constitution to respect the Islamic values of equality, tolerance, liberty and social justice. The establishment of particular safeguards for the protection of women and children is the main objective of Article 25(3) of (1973) constitution of Pakistan. Article 35 guarantees the State's protection of matrimonial, the family and the rights of mothers and children. This indicates that because marriage matters are intensely emotional and involve delicate human relationships, constitutional authority over them is only used in certain situations. When addressing such human concerns, courts should take into account the larger social context and the general fabric of society rather than judging these matters only on the basis of the law.

Legal clauses addressing these rights found in other legislation, like the Pakistan Prison Rules (Jail Manual). There hasn't been any explicit court recognition of the Constitution's guarantees of life, liberty and dignity (Article 9 and Article 14), which could be related to enable conjugal visits. The conjugal right is also mandated by internal standards. The significance of family life is emphasized by international obligations, such as Pakistan's adherence to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966), which may serve as the foundation for future reforms. The right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and start a family is recognized by Article 23 of the ICCPR (1966). It highlights that the family is the natural and essential unit of society and that it should be protected by both society and the state. The ICCPR's preamble and the non-discrimination principle, which is respected as both a separate human right and as a fundamental component of the right to marry, are essential factors to take into account when interpreting the right to marry, including whether it applies to same-sex couples. Article 16 of UDHR (1949), clearly expressed that with the free and full consent of both intending spouses, men and women of full age are entitled to marry and start a family without any limitations based on race, nationality, or religion. Equal rights are guaranteed during the marriage, during its duration, and after its dissolution. The family is known as the natural and essential component of society and is entitled to support and guard from the state as well as from society at large.

Critics point to issues including security threats and the dearth of facilities in overcrowded jails, while supporters contend that conjugal visits could strengthen family bonds, promote inmates' mental health, and aid in rehabilitation. Pakistan may witness comparable trends through legislative or

judicial intervention, showing rising awareness of inmates' human rights, as neighbouring nations like India have started to recognize limited conjugal rights for prisoners.

Legislative needs regarding of Prisoner's Conjugal Rights

The denial of marital rights to inmates and its repercussions, such as sexual exploitation, drug addiction and health hazards highlighted in Petition No. 21-I of 1995, raised awareness of the lack of marital sex regulations and tight prison discipline, which encouraged misbehaviour and public debate. The Federal Shariat Court's 2010 affirmation of the inmates' right to special marriage meetings under Rule 545-A of the Pakistan Prison Rules. These right tackles the societal problems brought on the extended separation of breadwinners from their families and is based on Islamic beliefs that emphasize family preservation. It emphasized the value of preserving family ties for societal stability and was first implemented at the federal level before being incorporated into provincial regulations. Prisoners have the right, under Pakistan Prison Rule 545-A, to have special meetings with family members.

Following the Federal Shariat Court's landmark ruling in *Dr. Muhammad Aslam Khaki and others vs. the State and others* (2010), on prisoners' conjugal rights, the Governor of Punjab, under Section 59 of the Prisons Act, 1894, approved an amendment to the Punjab Jail Rules, 1978, introducing Rule 545-A to allow conjugal visits in Punjab prisons.

Although this entitlement had previously been established under Rule 544 in 2005 and later under Rule 545-A in Punjab in 2007 as a result of changes to the provincial prison regulations of KPK, the FSC acknowledged it at the federal level. The FSC emphasized the protection and stability of family life in its ruling. Rule 545-A of the Punjab Jail Manual allows prisoners serving over five years to stay with their spouse and a child under six for three days, up to three times a year, in a designated jail area. Special conditions apply, including identity verification, multiple spouse allowances, and meal provisions. Prisoners convicted of terrorism or anti-state offenses require government approval, and jail authorities must maintain detailed records and submit monthly reports (Jails Manual, 1978).

The state of Pakistan acknowledges inmates' conjugal right as a kind of rehabilitation. Conjugal visitation must be ensured in all prisons across Pakistan that could help reduce issues like sexual abuse among inmates and drug addiction in married prisoners. To support family bonds, it was proposed either family gatherings within prison premises on special occasions or a parole facility for private family meetings lasting up to a week every four months (Business Recorder, 2009). It was enshrined in Rule 545-A of the Pakistan Prison Rules (PPR). Some provinces, like Punjab in 2007 (Rule 545-A) and KPK in 2005 (Rule 544), had already implemented comparable regulations, nevertheless. Individual provinces in Pakistan carried out conjugal visitation programs independently prior to the federal government's official recognition of them. This was made feasible by Section 59 of the Prisons Act of 1894, which gives provincial governments the authority to alter jail rules within their borders. Due to this legal autonomy, provinces such as Punjab and KPK were able to include provisions for conjugal visits in their prison regulations before the Federal Shariat Court recognized the right nationally in 2010 (Tariq, et al, 2022).

Conjugal visit may be principally effective in tumbling situations of offenders and in turn improving jail rule and re-offending. Conjugal visitation program may relieve stresses correlated with detention, particularly chronic feelings of isolation. Visitation will strengthen social bonds and encourage prisoners to maintain contact with family and community members. Prison visits would help inmates to be more enthusiastic about their future, which may in turn contribute to a lower probability of misconduct (Cochran, 2012). Not least, review can improve the view of jail system and staff by prisoners, which can also reduce the opportunity of violence and misbehaviour. Various studies regarding prisoner's conjugal visits have found that prisoners receiving visits are less likely to engage in violence than those who are not visited (Berghuis, 2024).

As part of the world human rights movements, more and more rights have been recognized. Once convicted of crime and denied of their freedom lawfully, inmates still hold a legacy of constitutional rights. The judiciary in all countries is well aware of inmates' rights. Legislative contributions are not extensive. The judiciary used a significance-oriented understanding of the provisions incorporated into the Pakistani constitution to make infrastructures regarding prisoner rights (Alam, 2022).

Despite numerous recommendations and directions from boards, councils, criminologists and court decisions, there is still a significant gap between theory and practice. Pakistani jails lack sufficient funding yet, with allocated resources not meeting their objectives. Because of this financial carelessness, jail reforms are ineffective and receive little attention from the media or the general public. Pakistan's jail system, like its broader criminal justice system, is confronted with increasing security risks, including criminal activity and violent extremism. Even while democratic developments have improved civil law enforcement, prisons and their growing populations are nevertheless typically ignored (Asia Report, 2011).

Currently, even after punishment, the judiciary actively monitors the behaviour of prisoners within the prison. A person's freedom of movement, freedom of association, and other essential rights are taken away while they are imprisoned. Inmates have the right to exercise their remaining fundamental rights even while incarcerated. Upholding and defending one's rights, such as the right to life and human dignity, is the fundamental and constitutional state's duty. Over the past three decades, the expansion of the penal system has led to a study aimed at investigating the implications of imprisonment and inmates' contacts and experiences that could alter these conditions. While part of this evolution, a rising workforce has focussed on investigating the benefits of social support for inmates, and especially, has considered visiting as an activity that may be essential due to its heterogeneity and helping prisoners to preserve family relationships while incarceration. Despite the potential advantages of visitation to strengthen the social order in prisons and the changes in society of inmates, earlier studies have not consistently examined the factors of conjugal visitation or aspects; that it could be increase or decrease the access of prisoners to conjugal visitation at the internal or community level (Khan, 2010).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Pakistan's legal and Islamic perspectives on the rights of convicts to marry reflect the intricate relationship between social standards, religious beliefs, and human rights. While Islam emphasizes the sanctity of marriage, family unity, and humane treatment, Pakistan's legal system does not specifically recognize inmates' conjugal rights. Current regulations, such as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prison Rules and Punjab's Rule 545-A, allow special family gatherings but do not cover conjugal visits. Articles 9 and 14 of the Constitution provide a foundation for these rights, but administrative challenges, cultural sensitivities, and infrastructure constraints hinder their implementation. Following the 18th Amendment, provinces have the authority to amend their laws, and the government should align prison regulations with international norms by explicitly recognizing conjugal rights. Legislative reforms should include revising Rule 545-A to permit these rights for inmates serving three years or more. Funds should be allocated for constructing dedicated conjugal facilities, and the Prison Department must ensure privacy and raise awareness. The application process should be accessible, allowing either partner to apply to the court, which, if satisfied, may direct the jail superintendent to arrange the visit. A parole scheme under the Probation and Parole Service Act could further facilitate conjugal rights, while existing conjugal buildings should be utilized immediately. Prisons should also be equipped with modern medical facilities, and inmates should receive training on preventing sexually transmitted diseases. Additionally, to sustain this initiative, the Sessions Judge or Jail Superintendent may set an affordable conjugal fee, allowing the prison department to generate revenue. Addressing these legal, administrative, and infrastructural challenges will help align Pakistan's prison policies with Islamic principles and international human rights standards while strengthening family bonds and preserving the dignity of inmates.

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