Women at Work:

A Study of Pakistani Domestic Workers and Prostitutes in the UAE, 1971-2009

by
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Abstract

This thesis examines Pakistani female migrant domestic workers and prostitutes in the United Arab Emirates. Pakistani women are not legally allowed to work as domestic workers in the UAE. This pushes their work into the invisible economy and subjects them to the same vulnerabilities as prostitutes. An exploration of the wider context and the relationship between Pakistan and the UAE helps to understand why and how abuse occurs. Because the UAE is developing at such a rapid pace, it is useful to interpret it as a "heterotopia," or a site where order is subverted. This interpretation helps explain why Pakistanis work there and gives context to the experiences of female domestic workers and prostitutes.

Résumé

Ce mémoire a pour objectif d'examiner les employées de maison et prostituées pakistanaises aux Emirats Arabes Unis. La loi interdit aux femmes pakistanaises de travailler comme employées de maison aux EAU. Cela les oblige à travailler illégalement dans une économie « invisible », et leur fait subir les mêmes abus que les prostituées. Une étude de la relation entre le Pakistan et les EAU nous aide à comprendre comment et pourquoi ces abus se produisent. Puisque les EAU se développent rapidement, il est utile de les considérer une « hétérotopie », soit un endroit où l'ordre est renversé. Cette interprétation nous permet de comprendre pourquoi les Pakistanaises travaillent aux EAU et nous fournit un contexte pour les expériences des employées de maison et les prostituées.

Acknowledgments

There are many people who have substantially contributed to this thesis. I must first thank my mentor and adviser, Professor Malek Abisaab, for taking on and believing in a project that many considered too risky. Very little is written on women and work in the Middle East and I am very grateful to have an adviser who introduced me to the field, shared his interest and knowledge, and helped me develop the academic tools to explore my research interests. I would also like to thank Professor Setrag Manoukian and Professor Sajida Alvi for giving me feedback on various chapters and reminding me to keep my work grounded.

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Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the conditions and experiences of Pakistani female labour in the United Arab Emirates from 1971 to the present day. I will specifically discuss two forms of work - prostitution and domestic labour - and explore how women operate within the confines of their professions and in society at large. Since the 1980s Pakistani women have been banned from working as domestic workers in foreign countries. Their work in the UAE, like that of prostitutes, is technically illegal, though tolerated. Consequently, these women are vulnerable to abuse and lack any legal help or protection to counter it.

Though prostitution and domestic work are inherently distinct, I contend that they share a number of similarities for the purpose of this study. Not only are the women involved in both professions liable to violence and abuse owing to the existence of a power relationship between themselves and their clients, but there is also an ongoing academic debate which questions whether participants in these professions ought to be classified as workers or slaves.[1] Furthermore, in the UAE, both these groups of female Pakistani workers operate in a legal "grey zone" which exposes them to similar perils, as they are stripped of any legal protection because of the "illegal" nature of their work. In the context of Pakistani

[1] This debate is further discussed in chapter two.

society, any woman leaving her home and going to work abroad alone is breaking established social norms and pushing herself to the margins of the society. While this is still not the marginal space occupied by the prostitutes, it is certainly contrary to the norms of society. Why, then, do women choose to migrate?

Globalization has led to increased opportunities for labour migration, and migration is becoming "feminized." What is the impact of this migration? Some argue that the introduction of women into the workforce has led to the decay of the traditional family unit. Migration exacerbates this problem as female migrant labourers are usually separated from their children. Others note that employment and higher wages afford women bargaining power within their families and society.[2] Female migrant labourers generally earn higher wages than they would in their home towns or countries. I choose to view migrant work as a positive opportunity for women because I believe that we must not look at these workers either as victims or as the destroyers of tradition. Women choose to migrate for a number of reasons which I will explore in chapters 1, 2 and 3. The money, experience and opportunities that migration offers often seem to outweigh the threat of abuse or exploitation. In the course of this thesis I hope to show that despite the vulnerabilities and violence

[2] For a succinct analysis of this debate see Helma Lutz, "At Your Service Madam! The Globalization of Domestic Service" *Feminist Review*, no. 70, Globalization (2002): 89-104.

inherent in the positions of Pakistani female migrant workers in the UAE, the overall effects of migrant work can be positive. For this reason we must seek not to ban women from working as domestic workers or prostitutes, but to ensure that they can work safely.

"Women in Islam" has been a hot topic in the press and in academia for the last ten years. Since the invasion of Afghanistan the question of veiling has been thrown into the limelight. In 1992 Leila Ahmed wrote a seminal academic book about the issue of veiling in the Muslim world, but the debate has since spiraled out of control.[3] Some view veiling as a right, others as a human rights violation. For some the veil denotes freedom, for others oppression. It is not the purpose of this thesis to examine the veil, but this particular debate has changed the nature of the study of women and Islam. With all the attention on "popular" subjects such as veiling and honour killings, little attention is paid to the day-to-day lives of Muslim women. In this thesis I seek to explore the issues facing Pakistani female migrant workers in the UAE because it has not received the attention that it deserves. Although there are as yet no academic studies on this topic, the issue is beginning to be noticed by some journalists.[4]

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[3] See Laila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992).

[4] This issue is discussed in further detail in chapter three.

Pakistani female migrant domestic workers and prostitutes in the UAE are part of an "informal economy;" they practise their professions on the margins of society and are, therefore, little documented and out of the public eye. Consequently, given the lack of any research on this topic, I believe that these two groups need to be investigated, and that further research is needed in order to highlight their conditions, understand their concerns, and possibly improve their situation.

Organization of the Study

This study will be divided into three chapters. In the first chapter I provide a brief history of Pakistan and the UAE and their interaction based on labour export from the former to the latter, thereby situating and socially contextualizing the study. I then establish a theoretical framework which is broad-based and which allows us to conduct our inquiry across the traditional disciplinary boundaries. This theoretical framework is based on the theories of "liminal space" and "heterotopia" as expounded by Bhaba, Foucault and Heatherington. I suggest that the UAE represents such a heterotopia, or a physical manifestation of liminal spaces, for Pakistani migrant workers.

In the second chapter I situate the profession of prostitution in Pakistan in the broader context of Pakistani society and history by looking at its evolution (and what some may call decline) through Mughal, British Colonial and Postcolonial times. I also discuss the important current

academic debate about whether prostitution is "violence" or work, as each classification has its own implications and connotations. Furthermore, I examine the impact of the trafficking of Bangladeshi and Afghani women into Pakistan, and show that an influx of these women has driven down the price for the services of prostitutes in the country. This, in turn, has led Pakistani prostitutes to look for more lucrative markets like the heterotopic UAE. Lastly, I explore the "pull" factors that draw Pakistani prostitutes to the UAE and their experiences there.

The last chapter focuses on Pakistani domestic workers in the UAE. I discuss three main factors that put Pakistani domestic workers at risk of abuse in this heterotopic space: the inherent danger of working in the "private" or domestic sphere, the perceived "expatriate threat" by the Emaratis, and the lack of adequate legislation to protect domestic workers in the UAE, compounded by the illegality of female Pakistanis working abroad as domestic help. Because newspapers are such an important source of information on this topic, I find it necessary to examine the media's role in the UAE, specifically in regards to domestic workers.

A Survey of the Sources

The connection between prostitution and domestic work has only recently come under academic scrutiny. In *Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy,* Barbara Herenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild develop a framework that links forms of women's work to

globalization and a "gender revolution."[5] They contend that as women in the West enter the workforce their roles within the house are relegated to women who have immigrated from the East: maids clean the house, nannies raise the children, and prostitutes satisfy the husbands.[6] Their work falls short in comparing prostitution and domestic work however, as most of the articles in the book discuss one or the other. I choose to embrace the elements of this framework that link prostitution and domestic work because comparative analysis can be useful in highlighting trends, helping us identify and understand problems and, in the long run, finding solutions.

There are two invaluable sources on prostitution in Pakistan: *The Dancing Girls of Lahore: Selling Love and Saving Dreams in Pakistan's Pleasure District* by Louise Brown, and *Taboo!* by Fauzia Saeed.[7] Brown's ethnography gives insight on the inner workings of the prostitution district *Heera Mandi* - the Diamond Market - in Lahore. By following the life of one particular woman, Maha, and her family, Brown shows the complex social networks and power dynamics at play in the area. She is also able to discover the dreams, hopes and desires of women who work

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[5] Barbara Herenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 3.
[6] Ibid.
[7] See Louise Brown, *The Dancing Girls of Lahore: Selling Love and Saving Dreams in Pakistan's Ancient Pleasure District* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2005).
See also Fouzia Saeed, *Taboo!: The Hidden Culture of a Red-Light Area* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

as prostitutes, and shed light on some of the dangers and violence inherent to the profession. Saeed traces the history of prostitution in Pakistan to show the cultural and social aspects of the profession. Far from being just "sex work," prostitution in Pakistan has a rich heritage of dance and artistry. While Saeed also conducted interviews with prostitutes in Lahore, I choose to rely heavily on Brown's ethnography for contemporary information because her work relates more to migration to the UAE.

Domestic work in both Pakistan and the UAE is understudied. For an academic understanding of migrant domestic work I look to Bridget Anderson. Anderson's study, *Doing the Dirty Work: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour*, examines migrant domestic workers in six European countries. Anderson shows that while immigration laws worldwide are becoming strict, this does not prevent women from migrating and taking jobs as domestic workers illegally. Illegal or "alien" status makes these women vulnerable to abuse. She also discusses the racialization of domestic work, the impact of the "feminization" of the economy, and the differences between "live-in" and "live-out" domestic workers, the first group being more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.[8] While Anderson helps me frame my understanding of domestic work, the work of Rima Sabban and Wanda Krause help me situate it in the UAE.

[8] See Bridget Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour* (London: Zed Books, 2000).

Rima Sabban is an academic and activist who resides in the UAE. Her research on female migrant domestic workers in the UAE is the only study of its kind and is thus the basis for most NGO reports on the subject.[9] I discuss Sabban's work in detail in the third chapter, where I rely on her work extensively, partially because it is the only academic field-work available. Wanda Krause's *Women in Civil Society: The State, Islamism, and Networks in the UAE* is another groundbreaking study. While Krause touches upon domestic work only briefly, her discussion on changing Emarati social structures and the entrance of women into civil society helps to contextualize my work.

As I have mentioned, most of the sources for my third chapter on Pakistani domestic work in the UAE are newspaper articles. I deal with the issues of media bias and create a theoretical ground for the use of these articles in chapter three. Two articles have recently offered a scathing critique of the migrant labour system in Dubai or the UAE as a whole.[10] Residents of the UAE are finally starting to ask questions about the people that do their "dirty work," and the press has recently taken an interest in reporting stories on domestic workers.

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[9] See Rima Sabban, "Women Migrant Domestic Workers in the United Arab Emirates" in *Gender and Migration in Arab States: The Case of Domestic Workers,* eds. Simel Esim and Monica Smith (Beirut: ILO, 2004), 93.

[10] See Johanne Hari, "The Dark Side of Dubai," *The Independent*, April 7, 2009. Also see: Carole Cadwalladr, "'We've made a pact with the devil to be here. But if you're a silly girl who gets into trouble, forget it," *The Guardian*, Oct. 5, 2008.

Limitations of the Study

The scope of my research is limited due to the dearth of information on Pakistani female migrant domestic workers and prostitutes in the UAE. No primary research was conducted for this project, and as such we must rely on the available secondary sources. I believe, however, that there is sufficient material to begin to build a picture of the issues at hand. The question of Pakistani female migrant workers in the UAE is an important topic that needs to be addressed, and I hope that this study will open the door to further research on the topic.

A Note on Subjectivity

When I was growing up I had a nanny. Her name was Chand Bibi and she had bright red *mehndi* (henna) dyed hair and startling light blue eyes. Chand Bibi worked in my extended family for years, and when my parents decided to move to Abu Dhabi, UAE, Chand Bibi went along to take care of my two brothers. Three years later she was taking care of me as well. Chand Bibi fed us, clothed us, kissed us and chastized us; she was, in short, a second mother. When I was nine years old Chand Bibi, or Amma as I call her, decided to move back to Pakistan to be with her family. I did not understand - weren't we her family? It wasn't until I saw tears silently snaking down my brother's face that I realized Chand Bibi wasn't coming back. As it turns out, I see Amma almost every time I visit

Pakistan. She hugs me enthusiastically and calls me her "soni batcha," (sweet child) her "beti" (daughter).

While Chand Bibi was working in Abu Dhabi she sent all of her income back to her children in her village. As she fed and clothed us, her income was feeding and clothing her biological family. Unfortunately, when Chand Bibi returned to her home she found that she was not entirely welcome. Though she was elderly, certain members of her family questioned why she had stopped working. They missed the money coming from abroad. They did not like having to take care of her, though she had cared for them for so long. Her daughter had married and moved away, and her daughters-in-law were not accustomed to having another woman in the house. It was not long before Chand Bibi left her family again. She moved to Karachi and began caring for my grandmother who was elderly and needed assistance. Amma's story saddens me. Part of me feels guilty that she had to leave her family to take care of mine. Another part of me feels angry that her family mistreated her after her years of dedication.

I believe that it is important for the author to situate him- or herself in any endeavour. This study is of particular importance to me, not just because I am interested, but because I feel that I have very much been a part of the system I am dissecting. I am a Pakistani woman, born and raised in Abu Dhabi. In Pakistan I am not Pakistani, and in the UAE I am

not Emarati; yet I feel a connection with both countries. I feel at home in both countries and yet neither is my home. I spent thirteen of my eighteen years in Abu Dhabi studying at the American Community School. My friends and acquaintances were almost all expatriates, and the majority of them were North American. While I was part of the expatriate community for eighteen years, I cannot accurately say that I was a part of Emarati society as such (if such a thing can be defined). My childhood gives me a curious perspective then. I must be careful, as I write, that I am not colouring my research too much. However I cannot escape my personal experiences, and they do influence my work.

Chand Bibi was the reason I became interested in studying domestic workers. In my family Chand Bibi was and is loved. But stories in the *Gulf News* and the *Khaleej Times* suggest that more and more nannies and domestic workers are being subjected to abuse within the home. I am not, nor have I ever been, opposed to hiring nannies or other domestic workers. I do, however, firmly believe that laws must be put in place to provide rights and security to domestic workers. In order to do this we must first understand why this abuse occurs, and what sort of system accommodates or perpetrates it.

Chapter One:

The Development and Implications of a Heterotopic Lens

This chapter seeks to set out a theoretical framework based on the ideas of "heterotopia" and "liminal space," through which lens we shall examine the avowed subject of this study: the world of immigrant labourers, especially as it pertains to Pakistani female domestic workers and prostitutes in the UAE.

The theoretical framework through which I seek to establish UAE as a "heterotopia," a physical manifestation of a liminal space – the "in-between space" where cultural change may occur - is essential to our enterprise, as it allows us to have a broad-based ideological framework which is comprehensive and flexible, yet transcendent of the traditional approaches within which studies of this nature are conducted. This framework allows us to complicate and add dimensions to traditional discussions of women and migrant labour in the country. Studies on women's labour often fall into distinct categories: women's rights, human rights, private or public matters, or indications of economic and social development. The subject is rarely studied for what it is – an issue that falls into all of these categories and more. By looking at prostitution and domestic work as it plays out in a heterotopic environment, we can embrace all of these categories and fully recognize the complexity of the issues at hand. In order to understand the issues surrounding the

exploitation of women and violence against them, we need to understand the complex power dynamics and the social factors within which this violence and exploitation are situated. By understanding the unique relationships between Emaratis and Pakistanis, employers and workers, men and women, we can see beyond the category of "victim" when we discuss Pakistani prostitutes and domestic workers in the UAE. This study seeks to shed light on why these women may choose to migrate to the UAE and where the demand for their services comes from. This recognition, of course, must not lead us to accept incidences of violence and abuse, but can help us better understand a complicated, multifarious situation, an understanding which is essential for any improvement in government and international policies on labour as well as social attitudes towards labourers.

To this end I will first provide a brief history of the United Arab Emirates, of Pakistan and their unique relationship since the 1970's that is based on the demand for Pakistani workers and labourers in the UAE. I will then define "heteroptopia" and "liminal space," and show how the UAE can be seen as such. It is important to recognize the effects of heterotopia at a macro and micro level; I find that Eisenstein's use of the "body as a locator" for "polyversality" can be helpful in such an

endeavour.[11] Lastly, I will discuss the importance of this heterotopic framework for my project as a whole and for establishing meaningful scholarship in the fields of women and work, trafficking of women, and violence against women in the UAE.

A Brief History of the UAE

On December 2, 1971 six emirates – Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, Ajman and Umm al-Quwain – came together to form the United Arab Emirates. Ras al-Khaimah joined the federation in early 1972. Prior to this, the coastal lands east of Saudi Arabia and north of Oman were known to the West as the Trucial States. The land was governed by several individual sheikhs, and its inhabitants were largely nomadic.

"The Trucial States" were called thus on account of a truce treaty the British Government had conducted with these sheikhdoms to curb piracy and raiding from Ras al-Khaimah which was preying on Indian ships in the area. The initial British campaign was launched in 1818, and by 1835 the Trucial States had agreed to end hostilities at sea; in 1853 the Trucial Sheikhdoms signed a "perpetual maritime peace treaty" with Britain. Britain monitored this treaty and arbitrated disputes between the sheikhdoms.[12] In 1892 another treaty was signed in which Britain

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[11] Zillah Eisenstein, *Against Empire: Feminisms, Racism and the West* (London: Zed Books, 2004), 6.
[12] Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 217. Also see "A walk through time," UAE Interact http://www.uaeinteract.com/history (accessed on July 15, 2009).

promised to protect the Trucial States and in return the Sheikhdoms promised not to enter into foreign alliances without Britain's consent. This newfound friendship was put to test in 1955 when the UK sided with Abu Dhabi in its dispute with Saudi Arabia over the Buraimi oasis and other lands.[13] By 1966, however, Britain, under its postwar policy of decolonization, declared that it was ready to end the 1892 treaty and withdraw from the area. Thus, on the 1st of December 1977, the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms formally came into being.

Any history of the UAE is incomplete without a biography of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi and the first president of the UAE. Sheikh Zayed was integral in strengthening the federation and ensuring its survival. He was the youngest son of Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who ruled Abu Dhabi from 1922 to 1926. On August 6, 1966, Sheikh Zayed became the Emir of Abu Dhabi after a bloodless coup, deposing his elder brother Sheikh Shakhbout. In 1971 Sheikh Zayed was elected the first president of the federation by the rulers

[13] In 1952 King Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia sent forces to occupy the Buraimi Oasis. Six of the nine villages in the oasis were considered to be under the rule of Abu Dhabi, and the other three under Oman. Abu Dhabi and Oman called for British aid. The British first advocated negotiation, but then sent the Trucial Oman Levies, a British officered force in the Trucial areas, to reoccupy the oasis in January 1953. Saudi Arabia called for international arbitration but was then caught bribing two of the five arbitrators and negotiations were put on hold. In October 1953 all Saudis were expelled from Buraimi. British support in this matter strengthened the Trucial States' faith in their ally and paved the way for future trade relations. British relations with Saudi Arabia, however, suffered. See Frank Brenchley, *Britain and the Middle East* (London: Lester Crook Academic Publishing, 1989), 77-82.

of each Emirate and enjoyed this political privilege until his death in November 2003.

The economy of the Trucial States had rested primarily on fishing and pearl diving; the desert environment allowed little in the way of agriculture. In 1950 the first oil well was dug in Ras Sadr in Abu Dhabi. Several others followed and in 1958 the first commercial oil field was developed in Bab.[14] In 1962 Abu Dhabi exported its first barrels of petroleum, and when the price of oil skyrocketed after the first oil shock in 1973, the UAE began to develop at a rapid pace. Sheikh Zayed pumped money into building infrastructure, hospitals, schools and roads. Under his initiative, the very geography of Abu Dhabi was changed from desert to garden.

The United Arab Emirates is a fascinating case study for economic and social development. At the end of 2008 the population stood at 4.765 million; this figure is expected to surpass 5 million by the end of 2009. Local Emaratis comprise only 15-20% of the population and are vastly outnumbered by immigrant workers.[15] The UAE has been built on the backs of these workers; there is not a sector of the economy or society in which expatriates do not play a role. They work as teachers, doctors, pharmacists, engineers, construction workers, shopkeepers, beauticians,

[14] "A walk through time," UAE Interact.
[15] "UAE population likely to cross 5m," UAE Interact, August 19, 2009. By the end of 2008 there were 892,000 Emirates and 3.87 million expatriates in the UAE.

bankers, taxi drivers, domestic workers and prostitutes. For a young country this influx of labour was a necessity. Today the UAE is going through a process of "Emaratization", whereby its citizens are educated and placed into positions of power. While the managers and directors of Emarati companies like the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) used to be foreigners, more and more "locals" are being hired to replace them. Administrative and banking positions are also popular choices for recent Emarati graduates. Emaratization is a movement to reduce the dependency on foreign labour, but not all positions are being targeted. You still do not see Emaratis driving taxis or working construction, and there are certainly no Emarati domestic workers.[16]

The UAE is often considered the most "liberal" of the Gulf States. Private newspapers such as *The Gulf News* and *The Khaleej Times* have existed since 1978, and *The National*, founded in 2008, is quickly becoming internationally recognized. There is limited freedom of press; the one restriction, which is self-monitored, is that the news is not supposed to criticize the ruling family. Media City, a tax-free international free-press zone, has recently opened in Dubai. Media City was conceived as a regional hub for news, advertising, and publishing industries. While there

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[16] See Meena Janardhan, "Foreigners Going for Low Paid Jobs: UAE's 'Emaratization' Drive," *DAWN: The Internet Edition,* August 27, 2003. Also see "Employment and Social Security," Ministry of Finance and Industry, UAE http://www.uae.gov.ae/government/employment.htm (accessed July 20, 2009) AND Sunita Menon, "Secretaries Cannot Bypass Emaratisation Rule," *Gulf News*, July 15, 2006.

were expectations of relative "freedom," many companies are considering relocating due to censorship. In 2007, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf asked two Pakistani TV stations operating within Media City, GEO and ARY, to shut down. Media City allowed them to remain open but they were not permitted to air news or political analysis. While this ban has since been lifted, a marked change has been noticed in the news reporting of these channels.[17] In 2008, one of the two national telecommunications agencies in the UAE, named du, announced that all information going through its servers would be rerouted through the government censorship proxy. This proxy removes any information deemed "inappropriate."[18]

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[17] "Pakistani TV stations forced to shut down," *Gulf News*.

[18] Derek Baldwin, "Dubai's du to block offensive websites," *XPRESS*, April 13, 2008.
Nevertheless, the UAE is a considerably more "open" society than, for example, Saudi Arabia. Expatriate women are seen wearing short skirts and tank-tops, or bikinis on the beaches. Alcohol can be purchased from specific shops by anyone who has a liquor license (available to all non-Muslim expatriates). Since 2007 bars and clubs serving alcohol have remained open even during the month of Ramadan. It may seem that this "liberalization" is only extended to expatriates and tourists, but changes can be seen among the local populations as well. It is not uncommon to see young Emarati couples out to dinner or coffee – a practice that would have been frowned upon until recently. It is likely that this liberalization is deemed necessary for economic purposes; it is, in a sense, a "commercial liberalism." The Emirate of Dubai has considerably less oil money than Abu Dhabi and has heavily invested in tourism. Home to the "seven-star" hotel the Burj al-Arab, an indoor ski slope, the Desert Palms, (the islands shaped like the world) and the famous Dubai Shopping Festival, Dubai attracted 6,996,449 tourists from across the world in 2008. Hotels reported revenue of 15.25 billion AED (approximately 4.15 billion USD) for the 2008 year.
The "seven" stars are self-proclaimed. Officially the Burj al-Arab has 5 stars. See: http://www.jumeirah.com, (accessed June 10, 2009).

The Relationship between Pakistan and the UAE

Like the UAE, Pakistan is a relatively young state. The India Independence Bill was signed by British Parliament on 1 July 1947, and six weeks later, on 14 August, Pakistan gained independence after a violent partition. Pakistan was in many ways ill-prepared to become a new nation-state. After partition the new and hastily formed government had not a paper to write on.[19] The celebrated founder of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, passed away a few months after his dream was realized. Jinnah had wanted a state where Muslims would be free to practise Islam.[20] After his passing, Pakistanis began the difficult search for an identity that could tie together the different ethnicities and provinces. The colonial authority had designated five provinces that would make up Pakistan: Sindh, half of the Punjab, the North West Frontier Province, Balouchistan and East Bengal. The latter was physically separated from the rest of Pakistan by 1,000 miles of India.[21] Finding a united purpose and identity was no easy task and indeed there were soon calls from the Eastern wing to separate. In 1971 civil war broke out between East and West Pakistan,[22] leading to the independence of the Eastern wing as the new state of Bangladesh.

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[19] Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan: At the Crosscurrent of History* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), 46.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 45.
[22] For a history of the civil war see Ziring, *Pakistan*. 123-130, 164-167.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power in 1971 in the wake of the civil war. His goal was to build a strong nation and prove that Pakistan was still a force to be reckoned with despite having lost the war. He focused extensively on foreign policy and development. According to Lawrence Ziring, Bhutto saw himself as a future leader of the Islamic World.[23] To this end he initiated the high-profile Islamic Summit Conference which took place in 1974 in Lahore. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Anwar Sadat of Egypt, Hafiz al-Assad of Syria, Muammar Qaddafi of Libya and Sheikh Zayed of the UAE all attended the conference. Bhutto also strongly supported the Palestinian movement and spoke out against Israel in an effort to befriend the Arab Middle East.[24] During this time migration to the Middle East, especially the Gulf States, was becoming increasingly popular.

Bhutto's effort at forming a closer relationship with the Muslim countries of the Middle East also coincided with a sudden inflow of oil wealth in the Gulf States. Massive infrastructure programs necessitated a huge need for foreign professional –doctors, engineers, etc – as well as skilled and semi-skilled labour. This proved to be a boon to the Pakistani economy as a very large number of workers moved to the Gulf States and

[23] Ziring, *Pakistan*, 135.
[24] Ibid., 139.

their remittances became an important source of foreign exchange for the country.[25]

In 1977 General Zia-ul Haqq overthrew the democratically elected government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and proceeded to implement a program of "Islamization." "Zakat"[26] became a mandatory tax and, most importantly, in 1988, Zia promulgated the Enforcement of Shari'ah (Islamic Law) Ordinance which stated that shari'ah would be the supreme source of all law in Pakistan.[27] Qasim Zaman suggests that these otherwise radical reforms did not automatically translate into practice. The High Court, for example, always had the final word on all cases and could overrule the shari'ah courts. Nonetheless, religion was becoming more prominent in both government and day-to-day life in Pakistan. One specific lasting effect of Zia's Islamization is the Hudood Ordinance of 1979, which I will discuss further in chapter 2.

Migration of Pakistani Workers to the Gulf

Unfortunately there is only limited research available on labour migration from Pakistan to the Gulf States, with the exception of the seminal study by Jonathan S. Addleton, *Undermining the Centre: The Gulf Migration and Pakistan,* which was published in 1992 and addressed the history of migration from 1971 to 1988. From an economic-development

[25] Husain, Ishrat, Pakistan: *The Economy of an Elitist State* (Karachi, Oxford UP, 1999), 38.
[26] Zaman, *Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 89. Zakat, or alms-giving, is one of the five pillars of Islam. Jurists differ on how Zakat should be calculated and distributed.
[27] Ibid.

perspective, Addleton sets out to prove four assertions: large scale migration to the Gulf was the most important economic event in Pakistan in the 1970s and 1980s; economics were not the only reason that Pakistan became a leading supplier of labour to the Middle East; migration fundamentally changed Pakistan at all levels; and these changes were defined by the decentralized nature of migration. Addleton contends that the large waves of migration in the 70s and 80s "did not simply happen."[28] Pakistan had a certain propensity to supply labour to the Gulf States because migration was an important part of Pakistan's history. He claims that this migration "goes back to the beginnings of recorded history," but focuses on the migration caused by the 1947 Partition.[29] Since Pakistanis were already so accustomed to migrating, he contends, the small trip across the Gulf of Arabia did not seem overwhelming.[30] Addleton further claims that this migration was "natural" because Pakistan and the Gulf had historical trading ties and because Pakistanis already regularly went to the Gulf for the Haj pilgrimage. British presence in the Gulf in the twentieth century strengthened this relationship. The British communicated with the Gulf through the Government of British India. The legal tender in the area was the Indian rupee well into the 1950s, and the pearl trade (the primary commodity of the region before the discovery

[28] Jonathan S. Addleton, *Undermining the Centre*, 27.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 27-39

of oil) was handled through Bombay. There were Pakistani shopkeepers and artisans in the Gulf in the 1950s.[31] Large-scale migration began in the 1970s, with the discovery of oil in the Gulf which resulted in a sharp increase in the demand for both construction workers and service providers; Pakistani labourers and professionals were brought in to cater to this need.

The paradigm developed by Addleton in his assertions are relevant to the purpose and methods of this study and are discussed in further detail in chapters two and three.

Addleton is quick to refute the notion that migrant workers in the Gulf were exploited during this period. He notes that wages in the Gulf states were significantly higher than in Pakistan.[32] In 1983 Pakistan earned nearly $2.5 billion in remittances, a figure which surpasses revenue from exports or foreign aid.[33] Pakistanis chose to move to the Gulf for economic reasons, social mobility and to be a part of a new expatriate community. Migration gained popularity through word of mouth. Returning or visiting migrants would spread word about life in the Gulf and how much money there was to be earned.[34]

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[31] Ibid., 40-42.
[32] Ibid., 52. Also see Husain, *The Economy of an Elitist State*, 182. Husain asserts that migration to the Middle East was a "safety valve for Pakistan." Without this migration unemployment and poverty rates in Pakistan would have been significantly higher.
[33] Addleton, *Undermining the Centre*, 3.
[34] Ibid, 52.

Meanwhile, political relations between Pakistan and the Gulf States strengthened in the 1970s and 80s. Pakistan was the leading recipient of Arab development assistance and it received over $500 million in bilateral aid from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Libya between 1972 and 1977.[35] Arabic language centres were established in Pakistani cities and Arab religious notables visited Pakistan often. Saudi Arabia is well known for funding *madrasas* (schools) in Pakistan. The UAE has also been funding madrasas in Pakistan since 1966.[36]

Remittances from non-resident Pakistanis are a very significant part of the Pakistani economy. Economists Rizwana Siddiqui and A.R. Kemal go so far as to suggest that the reduction of remittances in the 1990s was a major contributor to the increase in poverty and that this reduction was able to offset the expected positive results of trade liberalization carried out in the same period.[37] The UAE and Pakistan are economically dependent on each other. The UAE needs labour from Pakistan, and Pakistan needs remittances. The relationship, however, is not an equal one. The UAE imports inexpensive labour from several other countries as well, including India, Bangladesh and other Arab states. Pakistan is heavily reliant on the remittances that it receives from workers in the UAE. One of the most important reasons that Pakistan chooses to foster a

[35] Ibid, 47.
[36] Ziring, *Pakistan*, 175.
[37] See Siddiqui and Kemal, "Remittances, Trade Liberalization, and Poverty in Pakistan," 383-415.

close political relationship with the UAE is the need to preserve this economic relationship.[38]

I believe that this relationship, which is largely dependent on the supply and demand of labour, has profound impacts on society as well the economy and politics of both countries. In many ways we can see that relationships between Pakistani workers and Emarati employers, specifically domestic workers and their employers, mimic this aspect of the relationship between the two countries. Like Pakistan as a whole, Pakistani workers have the most to lose from broken contracts and lost opportunities. If Pakistan loses the UAE as a "demand" country, it will suffer economically. There are few other nations in the world that need to import large quantities of labour just to keep up with their own development. If a Pakistani maid loses her job in the UAE she too will likely suffer undesirable economic consequences. In other words, migrant Pakistani workers in general and female workers in particular, like Pakistan itself, have less bargaining power than their Emarati employers.

The relationship between the UAE and Pakistan, then, suggests a certain level of dependency. There are other factors, however, to consider. A migrant worker does not only receive money, but also experience and eventually, perhaps, a shift in her/his socio-economic class back home.

[38] This economic relationship is not just based on labour. Pakistan and the UAE are also trading partners, and Pakistan relies on FDI from the Gulf States as well. See Husain, *The Economy of an Elitist State*, 130.

Some Pakistani female domestic workers and prostitutes come to the UAE for more than just money. Stories of a different, perhaps more "liberal," way of life are tantalizing "pull factors" as well. Push factors such as poverty and lack of opportunity are also related. Motivations need to be addressed in the context of supply and demand dynamics of the labour market, but we should not be constrained by pure economic analysis. In order to have a clearer picture of how and why Pakistanis migrate to the UAE, we must look at other cultural variables involved in this environment; to this end, I find it useful to view the UAE as a heterotopic space.

Heterotopia

Foucault defines heterotopia as "something like countersites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and invented."[39] In *The Badlands of Modernity* Kevin Hetherington expands this definition of heterotopia to include all places of "Otherness" that express an alternative ordering of society. He illustrates the idea of heterotopia using the *Palais Royal*, which he describes as a place that "combined old aristocracy and new bourgeoisie both enmeshed in hedonism and consumption."[40] Hetherington claims we must speak of

[39] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16(Spring, 1986): 22-7.
[40] Kevin Heatherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997), 6.

"ordering" instead of "order" – the process rather than the end result - if we want to recognize the complex process of negotiating, ordering and reordering in society. Heterotopia exists between eu-topia (good place) and ou-topia (no-place) – heterotopia therefore only exist in between spaces, that is to say, in the relationship between spaces. Heterotopia are not, says Hetherington, transition spaces because "the chasm they represent can never be closed up – but they are spaces of deferral, spaces where ideas and practices that represent the good life can come into being, from nowhere, even if they never actually achieve what they set out to achieve – social order, or control and freedom."[41]

I suggest that the UAE represents a heterotopic space, especially for the expatriate workers who constitute the majority of the population. It is a country in which the process of ordering occurs rapidly, and is just as rapidly disrupted, negotiated and renegotiated. It is perhaps easier to see the UAE as a liminal space for Pakistani female workers, or an in-between space where cultural change may occur. This concept was first adopted by Postcolonial Studies in reference to the space between colonial discourse and the assumption of a new "non-colonial" identity. But can this space be physical? Homi Bhahba suggests that it can. He uses a stairway to illustrate liminal space both physically and metaphorically. Physically, it prevents identities from polarizing between upper and lower. He claims

[41] Ibid., ix.

that, metaphorically, this space opens possibilities of cultural hybridity.[42] For Pakistanis, the UAE is in many ways the stairway between the ordered reality of their existence and a perceived utopia of their imagination where they can not only attain financial prosperity but also escape the social determination of their economic class in their own country. Furthermore, the UAE for many Pakistanis is also the liminal space between the "West" whose prosperity it shares, and an "Islamic East" by virtue of its Arab-Islamic culture. It is a place that seeks to combine the best of both worlds for Pakistani expatriates. For example, in the UAE Pakistani parents can send their children to Western-styled universities and academic institutions while living in a "Muslim" environment.[43] With the upcoming opening of Saddiyat Island, which houses the new international Louvre and Guggenheim museums, even the best of authentic Western art and culture will be available in the UAE.[44] In the UAE Pakistanis can experience Western consumerism on a scale unavailable to them in Pakistan. If they choose so they are free to wear bikinis on the beach and go to nightclubs, activities that are frowned upon in Pakistan. But they are also free to practice Islam. This freedom is not

[42] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 4.
[43] There are several American curriculum universities and colleges in the UAE such as the American University of Dubai and the American University of Sharjah. Other schools, such as NYU, Boston University and Harvard, have or are planning to open international campuses in the UAE.
[44] See: www.saadiyat.ae for more information (accessed June 22, 2009).

simply political, but social as well. During the month of Ramadan, for example, operating hours for businesses and schools in UAE change to accommodate the fast schedule, thereby creating a social space that encourages the Islamic practices. Secular and religious educations are both available. Through the UAE, a selected form of Westernization, one that can be seen as compatible with Islam, is brought closer to Pakistan.

The heterotopic experience of a Pakistani worker in the UAE is not limited to cultural or consumerist exploration. Class, age and ethnic boundaries are also subverted and renegotiated and through this process unique relationships are formed both during and after the heterotopic experience. A farmer from the Punjab and a factory worker from Karachi, in Sind, may have had very little reason to relate to each other in Pakistan. If they have both lived in the UAE, however, they have something in common upon their return. As Zaman notes, these relationships are often very important when workers return to Pakistan and relocate to urban areas as they provide a tool for upward social mobility within Pakistani society. Exposure to different ideas with regards to religion, politics, rights, education and culture all play a role in how returning labourers function within Pakistan. Therefore, UAE is not merely a liminal space between their reality in their country and their utopic vision of the West, but also a place that would endow them with tools for social mobility upon their return to their own country.

While Heatherington attempts to establish a difference between liminal space and heterotopia, I believe that they are linked, and that the UAE can be seen as both. Liminal spaces exist in the space between many and various opposites. “Similitude” becomes apparent when liminal spaces overlap or cross. I would suggest that heterotopia consists of these liminal spaces.

Heatherington himself seems to say this when he discusses similitude, one of the two modes of ordering discussed by Foucault. Heatherington finds "similitude is about an ordering that takes place through a juxtaposition of signs that culturally are seen as not going together, either because their relationship is new or because it is unexpected."[45] By its very definition, to juxtapose signs is to compare and contrast them - to create a binary, however temporary. As suggested above, the UAE is full of binaries and therefore full of liminal spaces: malls versus souks (traditional markets); sheesha bars versus nightclubs; Arab dress versus Western-style suits, secularism versus religion, local versus expatriate, unskilled labours versus oil-rich executives, domestic workers versus their employers. To some extent, binaries of this nature can be found everywhere in the world. What makes the UAE unique is the breakneck speed of development and growth that requires an almost constant, and tangible, reordering of society. The physical space changes

[45] Heatherington, *Badlands of Modernity*, 9.

by the second, laws adapt by the week. It is through examining these multiple binaries and how they are renegotiated through time, then, that we see the ordering of society. It is also this very flexibility that gives us hope that positive changes with regards to the status of migrant workers can be quickly adopted and accepted.

According to Heatherington, similitude is associated with heterotopia because the latter is "constituted by an unexpected bricolage effect" that can challenge convention.[46] This “bricolage” is created when numerous liminal spaces intersect or interact. It may be easier to view heterotopia as a specific space, a closed four-walled room, for example, where numerous strings are stretched from each wall to its opposite. The strings overlap and intersect. Each string represents a liminal space, and the ends of each string represent things that are set up or perceived as opposites: Self versus Other, worker versus employer etc. There can be millions of strings in the room, all representing different liminal spaces. The room itself, however, is heterotopia. When one string is pulled or shifted, it affects other strings and thus the space is reordered. While similitude may be an ordering of society it can also transgress or resist social norms, leading to reordering. This is how I define heterotopia for the purposes of this study.

[46] Ibid.

Implications of Heterotopia

The UAE, as a heterotopia, is a space of juxtaposition, of exploration, change, development, utopia and the subversion of utopia. It is a space where all societal metaphorical strings are constantly being tugged, yanked and renegotiated over very short periods of time. Each of these strings, each of these variables, must be examined and analyzed one at a time, with a clear recognition and understanding of how they affect each other. When this study began, I intended to focus solely on female domestic workers, but I found that the issue of prostitution was too closely related to ignore – the strings are almost intertwined at this point.

It is not a new discovery that different issues interrelate. When one studies the history of a place one has to examine the politics and the economics, etc. There is always some point, however, at which a line has to be drawn. Historians are limited by the availability of sources; more often than not their subjects have long since departed. This particular topic, prostitution and female domestic work in the UAE, however, is contemporary, and the problems with sources are of a different nature - access. The theoretical framework I am suggesting is mammoth, and would take years of research and collaboration to hone and properly apply; we need to simultaneously study all of the strings in the sphere. This means that we have to have as holistic a view of the UAE society as we possibly can. For example, we need to know how passing a law about

the rights of female domestic workers will affect not just them, but the families for whom they work, social habits or customs, attitudes, other labour laws, wages and even international politics. This is, of course, a very idealistic endeavour and also one that would be worthwhile for any contemporary study. I think it is particularly important to apply it to a study about the UAE, however, because it provides a unique example of a heterotopia, due to the country's rapid development and extremely high numbers of migrant workers. Viewing the UAE as a heterotopia will remind us that it is necessary to look at multiple factors at the same time.

While this concept of being aware of implications beyond one's own project seems obvious, it is also seems strangely absent from most contemporary research projects. Research is too often conducted in a vacuum or with the thought that further studies can be conducted after the fact. It can be damaging to look at things from one perspective. Examining heterotopia to the fullest allows us to interweave disciplines and fields of study and to get a holistic understanding of a given situation. It is only once we have this understanding that we can hope to effect substantial positive change.

This challenge is in some ways already being answered by different Postcolonial scholars. For example, by giving voice to the traditionally

silenced, the Subaltern Studies Group[47] seeks to fill a void in the historical narrative of South Asian history. Furthermore, Zillah Eisenstein attempts to historicize and "complexify" contemporary power structures and give voice to feminisms that have been silenced.[48] She calls for an understanding of "polyversal humanity," seeking out and embracing the differences that make us human and complicating our notions of self and other.[49] "Polyversal humanity" can only be understood by displacing the Self, a process that Eisenstein undertakes first by using the term "elsewhere/s" to expand her perspectives by multiplying the locations from which she views "other-than-Western democracies."[50]

Through examining "elsewhere/s" we see that the commonly used and perceived dichotomy of East/West is artificial. There are multiple voices in both the "East" and "West." The idea of the "West" as a definitive whole is fictional then, as well as exclusionary. Eisenstein draws on Edward Said here; the Orientalism of the West simplified the East. By exposing this, Said re-complicated the East. The West, however, somehow remained (and perhaps continues to remain) a universal and simple whole. Eisenstein maintains that by giving up the simple classification of

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[47] The Subaltern Studies Group is a collective of South Asian scholars who focus primarily on postcolonial South Asia. The title Subaltern Studies is now also attached to other scholars who share similar views.
[48] Zillah Eisenstein, *Against Empire: Feminisms, Racism and the West* (London: Zed Books, 2004), 6.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 1.

"East," "West" also necessarily becomes complicated.[51] This process of "complicating" is necessary when trying to examine and reorder a heterotopia.

Eisenstein finds it necessary to find a common ground for humanity. She uses the human body as a site from which to think about democracy. Our bodies, according to Eistenstein, connect us by providing common experiences - desire, sex, labour, and reproduction to name a few.[52] Understanding the body as a common site allows us to situate ourselves "elsewhere" and view or experience "polyversality." The body transcends any limited time and space, and is therefore a useful tool when doing a comparative study.

Eisenstein sees experiencing "polyversality" as a necessity to complicate notions of self and other. This binary between self and other underlies the liminality of the UAE and is central to the understanding of prostitution and female domestic work in the country. By examining "elsewheres" we can attempt to understand why Pakistani women choose to immigrate to the UAE and where the demand for their labour comes from.

[51] Ibid., 34.
[52] Ibid., 32.

Applying the Heterotopic Lens to Prostitution and Domestic Work in the UAE

For the purposes of studying Pakistani prostitutes and female domestic workers in the UAE, using heterotopia as a lens is an effective approach because it situates the topic in a much wider theoretical framework. To properly examine these two forms of labour we must discuss law, religion, violence, culture, notions of honour, economics, politics, health, middle-men, push factors, pull factors, the history of slavery, national and international development, Western influences, education, and more. To study all these factors and their relation to female labour and prostitution is beyond the scope of this project. I am aware that in my study of the history of prostitution in Pakistan I have to consider many variables and factors. However, I am only able to study a few variables and their interactions with other variables at this time.

My choice of which variables to examine is largely influenced by the availability of sources. While trafficking and violence against women are increasingly covered by the media in the UAE, little scholarly and empirical research has been done on these issues. We do not know how many women enter the UAE annually for the purposes of prostitution. We do not know all of the channels that lead them to negotiate their way to the UAE, to get better work opportunities and ultimately to return home safely. We do not know how many women, or men, are forced into

prostitution once they arrive in the country and how many have actively chosen to come to the UAE in order to prostitute themselves. To answer these questions we need primary research, and more specifically, we need firsthand accounts from women who work as prostitutes in the UAE. Unfortunately this research is beyond the scope of this study. While the UAE is becoming increasingly open to criticism from media, academia and human right organizations, certain subjects remain sensitive and taboo to serious investigations, or are only discussed in a cursory manner. Prostitution, violence against women and female domestic work fall under this category.

In this chapter we have looked at the history of interactions between UAE and Pakistan and have sought to explain the complex relationship that binds the two countries together in a power dynamic. We then looked at the concepts of heteropia and liminal space and demonstrated how UAE in many and myriad ways represents a heteropia, particularly for the expatriate population. Not only has a very rapid economic expansion over the recent decades led to a constant reordering of society, but also to the very large expatriate population and its constantly changing interaction with the sources of power in that country. For Pakistani workers the UAE is a liminal space in another way as well: between their present socio-economic situation in their country and the socio-economic status they hope to have upon their return.

Chapter 2: Problematizing Prostitution in Pakistan: A Historical Examination of the Kanjars in Lahore's Heera Mandi from Colonial to Contemporary, 1857-2009

The issues surrounding prostitution and female domestic help, as argued in the previous chapter, are complex and multifaceted, and need to be situated in their socio-economic complexity if they are to be studied successfully. Having established the concept of heterotopia and shown how the UAE represents such a physical manifestation of liminal space for Pakistani workers, this chapter seeks to look at the social history of the profession of prostitution in Pakistan in order to better illustrate the attraction of the UAE for these prostitutes, in the context of moving to a heterotopia, not only to experience new realities but also to improve their socio-economic standing in Pakistan upon their return. This is done by studying *Kanjars*, a loosely defined social group that has traditionally been associated with the practice of prostitution in Pakistan. In the process, the traditional prostitution districts present in major cities in Pakistan are socially contextualized and the profession of prostitution and how it is viewed by the larger Pakistani society is discussed, as are the dynamic religious, cultural and social norms that affect it. The chapter then sheds light on the motives and attraction that going to the UAE has for these prostitutes and how they get there and their experiences in that country, in order to situate the subjects of my study in a wider context.

The major obstacle in this project is the lack of empirical figures that can allow me to fully substantiate my findings. In other words, we do not have enough data on the Pakistani/Kanjari prostitutes who work or have worked in the UAE – the data simply does not exist. By studying the history of the Kanjars, however, we can avoid falling into the trap of assuming that all prostitutes are victims of trafficking or at the mercy of circumstance. I show here that prostitution can be a conscious choice and that migrating to the UAE to pursue this form of work can also be a choice. There are times, of course, when this choice is taken away and women have to suffer great abuse. This abuse should not be written off as dangers of the trade, however; it is only by studying the history of prostitution in Pakistan that we can begin to understand the history and conditions of Pakistani prostitutes working in the UAE.

Maha, a woman in her mid-thirties, has worked as a prostitute for over fifteen years. When she was twelve years old she was allegedly "married" to Sheikh Zayed, the ruler of the United Arab Emirates.[53] When their brief marriage came to an end, she joined the business of her mother and grandmother before her - prostitution. As a young girl Maha was

[53] The case study on Maha and her family has been drawn from Louise Brown, *The Dancing Girls of Lahore: Selling Love and Saving Dreams in Pakistan's Ancient Pleasure District* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2005), 17. The details on Maha's alleged marriage to Sheikh Zayed are unclear. Brown reports that Maha claims Sheikh Zayed paid her the equivalent of $3,372 for her virginity. Maha apparently spent only an hour with the Sheikh before she was taken to another, younger Sheikh. The legality of the "marriage" or if there was ever a divorce, is unclear. Nonetheless, when Maha speaks of Sheikh Zayed she always speaks of marriage.

renowned for her dancing skills, but the income that sustained her family came from her sex work, for which she earned over 5,000 rupees (approximately $270) a night.[54] Eventually Maha remarried, divorced and then married yet again when her second husband left her. Both of her later husbands allowed her to continue her work as a prostitute - the first even acted as her pimp occasionally.

Maha has five children living with her - four daughters and one son - with a thirteen-year age difference between the eldest child and the youngest. All but one of the children are considered "legitimate" because they were born within the bounds of matrimony. Her daughters all joined her in "the business" when they reached what Maha considered appropriate ages, 12, 13 and 14 respectively. When business is good Maha and her family live in comfortable housing with air-conditioning, but when there are no clients life is less pleasant.[55]

Maha and her family are Kanjars and they live in *Heera Mandi* or the Diamond Market, in the old city of Lahore. Prostitution has been popular in Lahore for centuries and has thrived despite religious and legal opposition. From before the time of the Mughals (1526-1857), through the

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[54] Pakistani Ruppee to US Dollar currency conversions in this chapter are based on the specified years or time periods. In this case we do not know exactly what year Maha "married" Sheikh Zayed. Based on the fact that she is was in her mid-thirties in 2000 and she had been a prostitute for 15 years, I used the exchange rate for 1985. All exchange rate information has been taken from Werner Antweiler, "Pacific Exchange Rate Service: Foreign Currency Units per 1 U.S. Dollar, 1948-2007," http://fx.saunder.ubc.ca (accessed February 5, 2010).

[55] Brown, *Dancing Girls*, 15, 120.

colonial period (1857-1947), independence and even during Zia ul-Haq's Islamic reforms (1977-88) prostitution has shaped the lives of Kanjari women, within the family, society and the informal economy. There have, however, been changes in both the work and family structure of the Kanjars. This study seeks to explore those changes that occurred between the colonial and postcolonial periods. Over time the price for the services of prostitutes has decreased, driving women to travel to the Gulf States for more lucrative work.

In the last two hundred years, the nature of prostitution in Pakistan has changed dramatically. Whereas during the Mughal era prostitutes were considered primarily dancers, musicians and entertainers who also provided sexual services to members of the court, during the colonial and postcolonial periods Kanjars were increasingly associated primarily with sex work. This change has been attributed to an increased demand for sexual services and a decreasing lack of appreciation for classical dance and associated art forms.[56] Changes in regulation of prostitution have also had a significant effect on the profession. Any form of legal regulation by the government suggests an acceptance of the profession, and lessens the stigma associated with prostitution. Reduced stigma, in turn, can lead to an increase in demand for services. Today prostitution is illegal in Pakistan; it cannot be subject to regulation because it is not supposed to

[56] Ibid., 36.

exist. The stigma associated with illicit activities both curbs demand and pushes those involved with prostitution into an "invisible" informal economy. This informal economy can be a dangerous place. Out of sight and mind, prostitutes can be subject to violence and abuse and have no legal recourse to deal with these issues.[57]

Since the criminalization of prostitution there has been an increase in the number of women reportedly forced into prostitution, or trafficked into Heera Mandi.[58] This has changed the economics of the prostitution industry - with an increase of supply, the price for the services of prostitutes has dropped drastically.[59] The drop in price means that prostitutes must take on more business and cannot afford to be picky about their clientele any longer. These women are thus at a greater risk of contracting disease and being subject to violence.

Government policy and socio-economic reality dictate the way that the prostitution industry functions. I will examine the policies of the British Raj (1857-1947) the Hindu Nationalist Movement, which arose

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[57] Brown, *Dancing Girls*, 51-2, 94, 97,183, 196, 244. Brown's ethnography is littered with examples of violence against women in Heera Mandi. Some of this violence is domestic: when Maha was five months pregnant her husband kicked her in the stomach repeatedly until she miscarried. Ariba, one of Maha's daughters, is raped on the street before she reaches puberty. A nameless girl is gang-raped. Also see: Leslie Ann Jeffrey and Gayle MacDonald, *Sex Workers in the Maritimes Talk Back* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 79-92. For more on women working in the invisible economy see Richard A. Lobban, Jr. Ed., *Middle Eastern Women and the Invisible Economy* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1998).
[58] Ibid. and Fouzia Saeed, *Taboo!: The Hidden Culture of a Red-Light Area* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).
[59] Brown notes that Maha used to earn at least 5,000 rupees a night, but her daughter Ariba only earns 1,500 rupees. See Brown, *Dancing Girls*, 161, 175, 255.

during the 19th century in Colonial India, and the post-independence Pakistani government's attitude toward prostitution in order to trace their effects on the family and work lives of Kanjars. This, in turn, will allow us to gain a better understanding of the social reality of the role and place of prostitutes in Pakistani society.

Violence or Work?

Thus far I have referred to prostitution as a profession, a form of work. Western feminist scholars have long debated whether prostitution is a form of violence or work. Today, these feminists are divided into pro-choice and anti-slavery campaigns against prostitution.[60] In the introduction of the book *International Approaches to Prostitution: Law and Policy in Europe and Asia*, editors Gangoli and Westmarland admit that they come from opposite sides of the divide. Gangoli views prostitution as a legitimate form of work because she considers it a choice, and does not view the choices that are made based on economic necessity to be abusive in and of themselves.[61] Westmarlard belongs to the "prostitution is abuse" school, and believes that prostitution should be classified as a form of violence against women.[62] Her belief stems from her focus on the harmful effects of prostitution, rather than the choices that lead up to it.[63] Fouzia

[60] Sophie Day, *On the Game: Women and Sex Work* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 9.
[61] Geetanjali Gangoli and Nicole Westmarland, eds., *International Approaches to Prostitution: Law and Policy in Europe and Asia* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2006), 3.
[62] Ibid., 2.
[63] Ibid., 5.

Saeed agrees with Westmarland in her anthropological book, *Taboo!*, that prostitution is viewed as a form of violence against women (or men). The United Nations Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and various similar documents also label forced prostitution as a form of violence against women.[64]

It is important to make a distinction between voluntary prostitution and forced prostitution along the trafficking of women, which I believe are forms of violence against women. The reasons why a woman may engage in prostitution are numerous and range from poverty to social practices and to violence. Some may consider poverty to be a form of violence. If a woman is starving and uneducated she may choose to enter "the business" and this may be a form of covert gender-based violence (GBV).[65] This same starvation and lack of education, however, may make a woman choose to take a job as a domestic worker, or to involuntarily marry a specific person. These decisions, too, would then have to be classified as forms of violence. Furthermore, by labelling prostitution as a form of violence we automatically label prostitutes as victims and strip them of agency. For many Kanjars, "the business" has often been part of the family

[64] "Article Six" In the United Nations *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* http://www.un.org/womanwatch/daw/cedaw/text (accessed March 17, 2009).

[65] Theory behind GBV suggests that women will experience higher rates of poverty than men due to their gender roles. For example, a woman may opt to feed her family first and eat only what, if anything, is left. This is a form of widespread social violence that targets women predominantly.

tradition for generations, and becoming a prostitute is seen as carrying on a rich tradition.[66] The income that Kanjar women earn from dancing and providing sexual services allows them to support themselves, their children and often their husbands.

Maha's story shows that among the Kanjar, women earn the income and run the families. Though she is married, Maha, rather than her husband, provides the bulk of the money for rent, food and clothing. Her wealthy but absent husband can only be relied on for occasional monetary gifts. Maha is responsible for raising their children and making all decisions regarding them. When, for example, Maha and her family are desperate for money, she chooses to send her daughter, Nena, to Dubai in order to sell her virginity.[67] Her husband is furious when he finds out about it. Though Nena is not his real daughter, he is appalled because he has known her since she was eight years old. While Maha's husband is initially shocked and upset, there is nothing he can do, because ultimately Maha runs her own family.[68] Prostitutes, then, can command a financial independence which translates into power within the family. As such, while I recognize that there are many complex factors involved in a woman joining the prostitution business, I choose to view prostitution as a

[66] Brown, *Dancing Girls*, 43. This is also evidenced by Maha's daughter Nena's enthusiasm to learn how to dance and travel to the Gulf States to begin her life as a prostitute, 214.
[67] Ibid., 195.
[68] Ibid., 233.

form of work, except in cases where women are forced to work as prostitutes against their will.

It is important to note, however, that there is a substantial "grey area" in the definition of prostitution. Marriages or long term relationships can be seen as a form of prostitution if only one of the two partners is working or earning an income. The other (traditionally the woman) relies on her spouse to provide housing, food etc, in return for free sexual access. Different definitions of prostitution lead to diverging policy options. If prostitution is violence then it makes sense that it be outlawed. If it is a form of work then, like marriage, it should be legal. Most theorists and policymakers who believe that prostitution should be legalized argue that sex workers are indeed at risk of violence and disease; if prostitution is legalized then the government can attempt to prevent this but if it is illegal it becomes taboo, and there is no protection for sex workers.[69]

Prostitution in Pakistan

It is important to situate the illustration of Maha's apparent power and independence in a brief examination of the general situation of women in Pakistan. Pakistan consists of four provinces with diverse cultural and traditional practices. Nonetheless, some commonalities can be drawn out to allow us to create a useful generalization about ideologies of

[69] See Gangoli and Westmarland, *International Approaches to Prostitution*.

gender relations in Pakistan. In *The Haven Becomes Hell: A Study of Domestic Violence in Pakistan*, Yasmeen Hassan claims that Islamic thought is the backbone of the ideology that defines the role of a Pakistani woman. She does not claim that Islam is responsible for the subjugation of women in Pakistan, but suggests that tribal patriarchs used Islam to cement certain cultural traditions such as *karo-kari* murders,[70] which are not actually sanctioned by Islam.[71] Hassan claims that the idea of women as property and honour are reinforced and justified by the Islamic ideology of veiling.[72]

Hassan claims that in Pakistan women and men are theoretically considered "equal but different" and are therefore relegated to different social spheres. This concept was expounded upon by a popular Pakistani Islamic theologian, Abul A'la Maududi, in his work *Purdah and The Status of Women in Islam*.[73] Maududi claims that all women are inherently and primarily sexual and must therefore be kept in seclusion for their own well being and for the well-being of society. Furthermore, they cannot

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[70] Karo-Kari killings are honour killings. A woman participating in "immoral activity" (sexual) is labeled a *kari*, and the man a *karo* (literally meaning 'black'). Both the man and woman must be killed to avenge the honour of the woman's family. Yasmeen Hassan, *The Haven Becomes Hell: A Study of Domestic Violence in Pakistan* (Lahore: Shirkat Gah, 1995), 14.
[71] Ibid.
[72] There is a large and tumultuous discourse surround veiling in the present day. Hassan does not explain how or why veiling reinforces the idea of woman as property. Linking veiling in the region to Islam also requires some explanation. See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992) for background on the debate of the veil.
[73] See Abul A'la Maududi, *Purdah and the Status of Woman in Islam* (Lahore: Islamic Publications Lt., 1972).

possibly compete with men in the public sphere because this goes against their "natural tendencies." Women must thus be relegated to the private sphere, *chardevari* -- literally four walls --, and wear the veil, or *chadar*. Together, *the chardevari* and the *chadar* are *purdah*, or seclusion. Maududi is, of course, only one scholar but his ideas are very influential in Pakistan.[74] It is interesting to note that while Maududi does have a discussion on prostitution in his book *Purdah and the Status of Women*, he does not discuss prostitution in the Pakistani context – indeed he does not even acknowledge its existence.[75]

Maududi discusses prostitution in the context of the downfall of great empires. He presents sources from Greek and Roman history that suggest that prostitution and other "immoral" behaviour became common practices at the peak of these empires' power and contributed to the destruction of the two empires. In a section entitled "Capitalist Selfishness" Maududi says that the prostitution is only a money-making endeavour. The sole purpose of prostitution – and dancing and acting

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[74] Hassan, *The Haven Becomes Hell*, 14. In 1941 Maududi founded his own political party – the Jaamat'i-Islami. The Jaamat'i-Islami was founded to support Maududi's stance against the creation of Pakistan. Maududi believed that the western educated leadership of the Muslim League was unfit to create and run an Islamic state. The Muslim League was a political party founded in 1906 during the British Raj. Jinnah joined the Muslim League in 1913 and became its president in 1916. Nonetheless Maududi and many of the members of his party did move to Pakistan after independence. Today Jaamat'i-Islami is the foremost religious party in Pakistan. The result is that supporters of Jaamati'i-Islami believe that women are not meant to work outside the home, and should defer to their fathers, husbands and brothers within the home. See Ziring, *Pakistan*, 42 and Qasim Zaman, *Ulama in Contemporary Islam* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002), 102.
[75] See Maududi, *Purdah.*

which he associates with prostitution – is to make innocent people lose money. He points his finger at capitalism and the Western world which encourages capitalist behaviour, saying, "Obviously, the ideal murderer is the one who can coax the one to be murdered to come forward cheerfully and lay down his head willingly."[76] The "murderer" here is the capitalist system. Perhaps Maududi would say that prostitution in Pakistan is evidence that Pakistan is following too closely in the footsteps of the West and will be subject to the same pitfalls.

Women in Pakistan are active in the public sphere, though - they work as doctors, nurses, teachers, domestic workers and service providers, and, as evidenced by Fatimah Jinnah[77] and Benazir Bhutto,[78] they can even hold the most important positions in the political arena.[79] Although UN statistics suggest that only 15.5% of Pakistani women participate in the labour market,[80] these statistics do not take into account the informal sector or women's participation in the agricultural sector.

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[76] Maududi, *Purdah, 41.*

[77] Fatima Jinnah was the sister of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. She played an active role in the founding of Pakistan, and in 1965 she ran for President as the Combined Opposition Party's candidate. She lost to Ayub Khan. See Ziring, *Pakistan*, 98-102.

[78] Benazir Bhutto was Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1988-1990 and 1993-1996. She was a leading opposition candidate for the 2008 General Election, but she was assassinated on December 27, 2007.

[79] There are those who would say that Fatimah Jinnah and Benazir Bhutto were only able to attain powerful positions because of they came from famous political families. I believe that this is likely true. Benazir Bhutto certainly used the legacy of her father, former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, to legitimize her rule

[80]United Nations Population Fund, Statistics on Pakistan http://www.unfpa.org/profile/Pakistan (accessed on March 17, 2009).

Studies on violence against women in the home suggest that women are still prevalently considered as property, and play subservient roles within the home.[81] Hassan claims that because men feel like they are the "owners" of their wives, they feel that "it is necessary to show them who is boss."[82] She further states that "both religious practice and cultural/social practices accept a certain level of wife abuse as being inherent in the relationship between the spouses and as necessary to preserve the harmony of the home."[83] This view cuts across ethnic and class lines. The Kanjars, however, are different. Many Kanjar women rule their households and can make their own choices. Some women choose, for example, not to enter into prostitution, the profession designated to them at birth.[84] How, why, and to what extent are the Kanjar women unique in this regard?

Saeed suggests that being removed from traditional social structures that arbitrate women's roles in the wider Pakistani society has allowed prostitution districts to develop their own distinct social mores and practices.[85] She claims that it is common within wider Pakistani society to view women as occupying four roles: wife, mother, daughter and prostitute. Prostitutes are seen as being wholly disconnected from

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[81] See Hassan, *The Haven Becomes Hell*, 39.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., 40.
[84] I.A. Rehman, "Foreword" to Fouzia Saeed, *Taboo!,* xiv. Also, Saeed, *Taboo!*, 5.
[85] Saeed, *Taboo!*, 5.

Pakistani society - they are all perceived as "bad" women.[86] This enforced distance between recognized Pakistani society and that of Heera Mandi and other prostitute districts is both partially responsible for and due to the difference in gender relations. Difference keeps the "good" and "bad" Pakistanis apart.

Yet another "difference" keeping the Kanjars apart is that they are predominantly Shia, while the majority of Pakistanis are Sunni Muslims. The Shia traditions and beliefs of the Kanjar serve to further separate them from other Lahoris.[87] As Brown's ethnography shows, Maha and her family strictly observe Muharram and mourn on the anniversary of Ali's

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[86] Saeed, "Good Women, Bad Women," 156, 159.

[87] Sectarian differences are complex in Pakistan, as they are everywhere, and they are often marked by violence. Sectarian violence in Pakistan came to a boil in the 1980s. There were two main catalysts for bringing about such strong sectarian differences: the Ahmedi question and Zia's *zakat* policy. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine sectarian identity in Pakistan. Shia and Sunni activist groups were created, however, and both actively proselytized in rural areas. The BBC reports that from the early 1980s – 2004 at least 4,000 people had died during incidents of sectarian violence. See "Pakistan's Sunni-Shia Divide," *BBC Online*, June 1, 2004 (accessed March 27, 2009).Sectarian violence still occurs in Pakistan. On March 27, 2009 a bomb exploded at a Shia mosque in the town of Jamrud in NWFP, killing approximately 70 people. See "Deadly bomb hits Pakistan mosque," *BBC Online*, March 27 2009 (accessed March 27, 2009).
The Ahmedis are the followers of Ghulam Ahmad, who in the nineteenth century claimed to have a revelation. Ahmedis therefore do not believe that Muhammad was the last of the prophets; many Muslims believe that this is blasphemous. Resentment towards the Ahmedis grew because they had embraced the education and opportunities offered by the British Raj and were rewarded with high positions in the military and bureaucracy. In the 1980s Zia declared that Ahmedis were not Muslims. To this day in order to receive a Pakistani passport all citizens must sign a declaration stating that Ahmedis are not Muslims. During his Islamization process, Zia pushed for the implementation of *zakat*. *Zakat* is one of the pillars of Islam whereby Muslims are required to share their wealth with the poor. Some Shia communities opposed Zia's institutionalization of *zakat*, so Zia exempted them from paying the tax. This move was strongly opposed by certain Sunni movements and led to sectarian violence in Karachi. See Ziring, *Pakistan*, 185.

death.[88] These are very visible signs of faith that set the Kanjar apart from the Sunni majority of Pakistan. The Shia beliefs of the Kanjar have yet another implication. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into Islamic philosophy, certain Shia interpretations of Sharia law allow for temporary marriages. These temporary marriages, *sigh'a* or *Mut'a* can be contracted for a specified period of time, ranging from a few moments to decades. They are normally undertaken after a fee has been paid to the woman.[89] While the Pakistani government does not recognize *Mut'a* marriages, among the Kanjar they are widely considered a social and religious justification for prostitution.

Maha, for example, first claimed to have been married to Sheikh Zayed, and then to two other men. The cloak of marriage, even temporary marriage, provides security and the appearance of respectability. It also defines family relations. Maha's eldest sons, for example, were taken by their father once their marriage was over. These boys were legitimate and therefore able to leave Heera Mandi. Maha's three eldest daughters, Nena, Nisha and Ariba, occupy different places within their own family. The first two daughters are from a marriage and are therefore treated with

[88] Muharram is a Shia festival commemorating the martyrdom of Hussain ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, at the Battle of Karbala.
[89] For a more detailed examination of the radicalization of sectarian identities and the rise in violence see Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*. See also Nayereh Tohidi, "Gender and Islamic Fundamentalism: Feminist Politics in Iran" in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991), 253-4. Tohidi discusses *mut'a* marriages in Iran.

respect. Ariba's father, however, was unknown to Maha and she is therefore comparatively ill-treated. Ariba is always yelled at, is the last to eat and is rarely bought new clothing. Maha does not even train her to dance. Brown attributes Maha's attitude towards Ariba to the fact that Ariba's father never assisted the family in anyway. Furthermore, Maha saw Ariba as *gandi*, or dirty, because she was born outside of wedlock.[90]

Prostitution under the British Colonial Authority

The* Tawaif *System

Prostitution in South Asia predated the rise of the Mughal Empire. The "Great Mughal Emperors," and perhaps, Akbar the Great and his son, Jahangir, in particular, were known for their patronage of the arts.[91] This era of "high culture" (1556-1707) spawned the courtesan system of prostitution.[92] Girls were trained at a young age to sing and dance in order to entertain the court or aristocracy. While the primary function of these courtesans was entertainment, they also provided sexual services. Indeed, it was considered a sign of wealth to "keep" one or a number of courtesans. A "kept" courtesan or *tawaif* would be housed, fed and clothed at the expense of her wealthy male client, and may or may not be required

[90] Brown, *Dancing Girls,* 23-24.
[91] The Mughal Empire took control of much of the Indian subcontinent in 1526. The "classical period" of the Empire began with the rule of Emperor Akbar, or Akbar the Great, in 1556 and ended with the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707. The Mughals technically remained in power until the 1857 Rebellion against the British, at which point the British Raj took over. See Marshall Hodgson, The *Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1974), vol. 3, *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, 63-98.
[92] Saeed, "Good Women, Bad Women," 141,42.

to limit her services to him. Heera Mandi and other areas where courtesans trained were considered cultured neighbourhoods. Young aristocratic girls were sent there for dance lessons, and young boys were sent as a coming of age ceremony.[93] Society saw "common" prostitutes as a purifying force; they could keep men's desires in check and were a necessity. They were accepted in all towns and took part in local culture and festivals.[94]

The *tawaif* or courtesan was still popular at the beginning of the British Raj in the middle of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the most illuminating source on the life of a courtesan is the novel *Umrao Jaan Ada* by Mirza Muhammad Ruswa. Ruswa was a Lucknow-born poet and writer, and *Umrao Jaan Ada* is widely considered the first Urdu novel. Written as if it is being recounted to the author by the protagonist, the novel tells the story of Ameeran, a young girl who is kidnapped and sold into a brothel. Ameeran's name is changed to Umrao Jaan and she is taught to sing, dance, and even to write poetry. When her training is complete she begins her life as a courtesan. The novel highlights the excellent treatment and education that Umrao Jaan receives growing up in the brothel. Umrao Jaan's education is overseen by a scholar who teaches

[93] Ibid.
[94] Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 109.

her Persian and Arabic grammar.[95] *Tawaifs* were said to be better educated than the average middle- or upper class-woman in Lucknow and their education was said to be part of their allure to men.[96] The novel also describes the lavish surroundings, clothing and jewellery; the brothel is no place for the poor. The learned, however, are always welcome. Umrao Jaan tells one story about a highly respected scholar of Arabic who falls in love with a *tawaif* named Bismillah. A former pupil sees the scholar at the brothel and runs away. The scholar himself is not ashamed of being seen with a courtesan, but the pupil is embarrassed to intrude. Respected men, then, were found in brothels.

That said, there is still a sense of shame associated with the act of prostitution. Umrao Jaan says: "I know why I took the vagrant path / Why like one possessed my days spent / Wandering in the wilderness, / But can I explain to my philosopher friend?"[97] She is quick to say that she was kidnapped; she was not born a prostitute, nor did she choose to become one. When Umrao Jaan has established herself as a poet and entertainer she is asked to perform for both women and men, suggesting

[95] Mirza Mohammad Hadi Ruswa, *Umrao Jan Ata*, trans. David Matthews (Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1996), 142.
[96] Brown, *Dancing Girls*, 31. Brown compares the *Tawaif* system to that of the *Geisha* in Japan. While I find the comparison illuminating I do not think it serves our purposes to elaborate on it at this point.
[97] Ruswa, *Umrao Jan*, 23.

that at least for some, artistry outweighed the fact that she was a prostitute.[98]

Colonial Policy

Historian Philippa Levine suggests that a new kind of brothel or "red-light" district was developed as a result of the British colonial policy in India. The position of the prostitute underwent significant change after the commencement of British rule in 1857.[99] Under the colonial system, prostitution was first seen as a necessity to keep soldiers satisfied and then both as a necessary evil and a threat to the health of soldiers. The British kept tight regulations on prostitutes; they were expected to register themselves and then undergo routine venereal disease checks. If found positive for these diseases, they had to undergo supervised treatment. Furthermore, prostitutes were classified for specific clientele; some prostitutes were reserved solely for the entertainment of British soldiers and others for Indian men. If a woman refused treatment for a disease, she was, by the Cantonment Regulations, ousted from the military settlements in order to maintain the sexual health of British soldiers. The women, however, settled just outside the cantonment area and thus continued to be detrimental to the health of the soldiers.[100] The Colonial government then decided to decree that prostitutes that refused to be tested or tested

[98] Ibid., 151.
[99] Philippa, Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 56.
[100] Ibid., 110.

positive for disease would have to maintain a distance of ten kilometres from Cantonment boundaries. This, however, was ineffective in urban areas where municipal authorities were upset by military intervention.[101]

The British colonial regulations had profound impacts on the family structure of Kanjars. Whereas during the Mughal era Kanjar women who participated in sex work lived with their families, demand now required them to travel and live in or beside military settlements. While these women lived within the family structure they were considered "good women," because they still played the roles of mother, daughter, sister and wife. As migrant workers however, they were identified only through sex work. The emphasis on health regulations also further disassociated prostitution from art and culture; the magic of the *tawaif* was lost to injections and physical examinations.

It is interesting to see how migration affects the perception of prostitutes. Perhaps contemporary prostitutes in the UAE are seen as "bad women" because of their dislocation from their families. This would suggest that women are only accepted as workers when they are sheltered by their families, which means that female migrant workers of any profession can come under scrutiny for living apart from their families. This idea will be discussed further in the next chapter as it also has implications on females moving abroad to work as domestic workers.

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[101] Ibid., 111.

The Policies of the Hindu Nationalist Movement

In *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*, Charu Gupta shows that in the 1920s and 1930s the Hindu nationalist movement which grew out of a rising middle class was decidedly opposed to sex work. They considered the Kanjars and other sex workers and even entertainers who were not prostitutes "bad women." Gupta attributes this to a need to assert a moral "rightness" during the anti-colonial struggle. The rising middle class was seen as inadvertently taking on Victorian sensibilities even as they fought the colonizers.[102] The Hindu nationalist movements took a two-tiered approach in the fight against prostitution. First, they demonized prostitutes, claiming that they were the source of all evil. Secondly, prostitutes (and the entertainers who were associated with them) were forced to leave certain cities or regions within a city by municipal decree. The justification was that the number of prostitutes in a city defined its level of morality. In order for "respectable" middle-class women to live in certain neighbourhoods, the prostitutes had to be cleared out.[103] These policies affected Hindu and Muslim prostitutes alike.

The post-1857 colonial period, then, marks the beginning of a change in the traditional system of prostitution in India. Firstly, dancing and

[102] Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, 112.
[103] Ibid., 117.

music slowly became separated from sex work. With an increased demand for sex workers and the need for these workers to migrate to cantonment areas to fill this demand, came the disintegration of the family-run brothel system. This latter effect, however, was somewhat reversed when the colonial powers, with pressure from the Hindu nationalist movements, attempted to segregate prostitutes and entertainers from the rest of society. Since entire families were implicated in prostitution or entertainment they generally migrated together.

While Kanjar prostitutes worked within family-run brothels they retained respectability in the eyes of the middle classes. They could be seen as entertainers only. Once they migrated to military encampments, however, they became separated from the image of the family, and could only be identified as sex workers. This had implications for who they could socialize with; a "respectable" person would refuse to be seen in the company of a prostitute. It also seriously hindered decent marriage prospects for these women. According to Philippa Levine, the British Colonial Authority created somewhat of a census for prostitutes. Prostitutes were differentiated by whom they serviced (British or Indian men), their sexual health, and their religion. Brothels were divided into tiers; British soldiers frequented tier one brothels and Indian soldiers tier

two.[104] Conflicts over religion emerged when Muslim women provided sexual services to Hindu men, or Hindu women serviced Muslim men, although there is no evidence to suggest that there was conflict when British men slept with Muslim women.[105] The Kanjars, who are Shia, were in a special category because although they are Muslim, Sunni and Shia discourses on prostitution vary greatly, as we have briefly observed above.

Once the "bad woman," "bad profession" labels had been applied, the Hindu Nationalist Movement and the colonial powers strove to segregate prostitutes and entertainers from the rest of the population. They argued that while prostitutes themselves were "bad" they also housed other "bad people" such as drug dealers, and provided locations for illicit activity. Dancers and musicians too were categorized as "bad" because music and movement were inherently sexually suggestive. Thus Kanjars, Mirasis (an ethnicity associated with music) and other entertainers were segregated to keep the rest of the city "pure."[106]

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[104] Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics*, 254-5.
[105] See Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, 239-320.
[106] It is likely that this new notion of "purity" was adopted with other Victorian ideals. While the Hindu Nationalists were struggling against the colonizers, they had also largely been educated in British systems. It is not surprising, then, that they inadvertently adopted Victorian notions of morality and purity. In *The Eloquence of Silence* Marnia Lazreg showed how French perceptions of prostitution changed the social status of the Nailiyat. The Nailiyat were women from the Ouled Nail tribe in the south of Algeria. These women danced in public places and voluntarily invited men into their homes. They did not ask for money, but expected their clients to provide for them in some way. When the French colonized Algeria, Ouled Nail became a centre for sex tourism, and the Nailiyat were labelled prostitutes. Like the Kanjar, the Nailiyat began to lose their culture

Prostitution in Post-Independence Pakistan

The ideas of the Hindu Nationalist Movement also affected the society at large and were adopted by their Muslim counterparts as well. Saeed notes that while many people today accept the existence of Heera Mandi in Lahore, they still view the profession and people that participate in it as "bad." This, she claims, is also one of the foremost reasons that women's rights and activist groups have largely ignored the issues faced by Kanjari women including rape, abuse, substance abuse, exploitation, sexually-transmitted diseases and, increasingly, the threat of HIV/AIDS.[107]

After independence (14 August, 1947), Pakistan entered a turbulent political period. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan and the first governor-general, died in 1948, shortly after the creation of Pakistan. Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister, was assassinated in 1951, and Khawaja Nazimuddin, Muhammad Ali Bora, and Chaudry Muhammad Ali followed with brief reigns. In 1956 Pakistan was proclaimed an Islamic Republic, and Iskander Mirza became the first President.[108] Two short

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of dance and were associated predominantly with sex work. They lost status within their own community and society as a whole. See Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 29-33.

[107] Saeed, "Good Women, Bad Women" 150-52.

[108] Though Mirza's Presidency coincided with the renaming of Pakistan as an Islamic Republic, he was a staunch believer in the separation of religion and state. He is quoted as saying "We can't run wild on Islam; it is Pakistan first and last." Mirza had a military background: he was trained at the Imperial Military Academy at Sandhurst, but he then chose to enter the civil service. When Pakistan was founded he was appointed the Defence Secretary. Mirza was said to have little patience for politicians. See Ziring,

years later, however, martial law was proclaimed, and General Ayub Khan declared himself President. In 1962 martial law was suspended and Ayub Khan was elected President. His term lasted until his resignation in 1969.

It is under Ayub Khan that we first see legal changes with regards to prostitution. The government decided to dismantle red-light areas and push the residents out in an effort to eradicate prostitution.[109] This was similar to the actions undertaken by the Hindu nationalist movement as discussed above; only the end goals differed. The Hindu nationalists strove to relocate the "bad woman" but prostitution was still seen as a necessary evil. These measures, on the other hand, strove to eradicate prostitution altogether. Saeed criticizes these policies, claiming that the government labelled prostitutes a "problem" but never scrutinized the clients.[110] As red-light communities in Pakistan were broken apart prostitutes moved into other parts of the city. Residents of these other neighbourhoods, however, objected to brothels opening next to their homes, forcing the government to change its policy again. The red-light districts were reopened, and the Kanjar community was able to negotiate

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Pakistan, 73-4.

[109] Ayub was apparently a staunch Muslim, but he, like Mirza, believed in secularism. He strongly opposed Islamist groups. Ayub is also well known for controversially promoting family planning and issuing the Muslim Family Law Ordinance which called for the registration of all marriages and divorces. Morality was a key concern of Ayub's; he is known to have bolstered the working classes and weeded out corrupt government officials. It is likely that his decision to eradicate prostitution stemmed from this emphasis on morality. See Ziring, *Pakistan*, 81-90.

[110] Saeed, "Good Women, Bad Women," 148.

a deal with the government whereby they classified their dancers as performance artists. The High Court issued a ruling that allowed them to perform from 10pm to 1am. Anyone who was not a dancer and only performed sexual services, however, was considered a criminal.[111]

In 1961 *The Punjab Suppression of Prostitution Ordinance* was created. This document details the punishments to be dealt to prostitutes, those who run brothels, and those who force women into prostitution. The punishment for soliciting was up to six months of imprisonment and/or a two-hundred rupee ($42) fine. The punishment for keeping a brothel was imprisonment for up to two years and a thousand-rupee ($210) fine. There were also punishments outlined for "living on earnings of prostitution," "procuration" and "causing, encouraging, or abetting prostitution of a girl under sixteen."[112] The latter earned the highest form of punishment given, which was "rigorous imprisonment" of up to three years, a fine of 1,000 rupees and, if the convicted person was a man, whipping.[113] These laws were never changed and are still part of the Pakistani criminal code.

Under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was Prime Minister from 1973-1977, the residents of the red-light districts received more protection.

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[111] Ibid. The Kanjars were likely able to negotiate this deal because it was understood that their livelihood depended on entertainment and because dancing was a part of their culture.

[112] "The Punjab Suppression of Prostitution Ordinance of 1961," Punjab Laws Online, *Provincial Assembly of the Punjab* http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/130.html (accessed from April 8-May 1, 2009).

[113] Ibid.

Bhutto justified his policies as support for the arts - for dancing and singing. Under his government, customers who wanted to hire a "dancer" to come to their homes had to first register with the police.[114] This protected girls from violence and abuse. While this law seems liberal and positive in nature, it is difficult to judge its effectiveness without empirical evidence. Perhaps potential clients were scared away by the thought of registering with police. Or perhaps most found a way around the rule. Many women probably did not want the police to monitor their actions. If the Suppression of Prostitution Ordinance was still technically in effect, what was to keep the police from charging the dancers for prostitution?

Under Zia ul-Haq's military regime, the Kanjars were once again targeted. Zia and his government attempted to "Islamize" the country and they considered even song and dance anti-Islamic.[115] As such, they restricted working hours for dancers further, to two hours a night. Red-light districts were strictly monitored by police, and women were not even allowed to rehearse their dancing out of working hours. Furthermore, checkpoints were set up around red-light districts and all clients had to register before entering.[116] This scared many clients away, and forced sex

[114] Saeed, "Good Women, Bad Women," 148, 49.
[115] According to Ziring, Zia believed that Pakistan was in mortal danger. Unlike Ayub, Zia believed that religion and state were one. He also believed that Islam was the one factor that could unite Pakistan, a country so recently wounded by civil war. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent influx of Afghani refugees further solidified Zia's belief that Pakistan was in danger. See Ziring, *Pakistan*, 163-202.
[116] Saeed, "Good Women, Bad Women," 149.

workers to arrange outside meetings with clients. Zia and his government also passed the *Offence of Zina*[117] *Ordinance* which has had a serious impact on the rights of all Pakistani women. According to section six of this ordinance anyone who participates in sexual intercourse outside of legal marriage has committed *zina* and may be punished by imprisonment and / or death by stoning.[118] Sexual intercourse is generally defined as penetration. The Zina Ordinance falls under the Hudood Ordinance. There is currently much debate over this law, which has led to the wrongful arrest of female rape victims who have been accused of adultery. The law is currently being debated within the Pakistani judiciary.[119]

On 1 December 2006, under President Pervez Musharraf, *The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act*, 2006 was passed. The Bill amends the Pakistan Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, the Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance, and the Offence of Qazf (Enforcement of Hadd) Ordinance. Several sections of this Bill pertain to this study. Two sections are inserted into the Penal Code: 365B. "Kidnapping, abducting or inducting women to compel for marriage etc," and 367A "Kidnapping or abducting in order to subject person to unnatural lust." Both of these

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[117] Zina is adultery or pre-marital sex.
[118] Ibid, 150.
[119] See Rahat Imran, "Legal Injustices: The Zina Hudood Ordinance of Pakistan and its Implication for Women," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 7, no. 2 (Nov. 2005): 78-97.

articles prescribe punishment of life imprisonment, fines and even death for the perpetrators. This law applies to trafficked women as well, because they are usually kidnapped and then married off or sold. Section 371A deals directly with selling people for the purposes of prostitution. It states that,

> Whoever sells, lets to hire, or otherwise disposes of any person with intent that such person shall at any time be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or for any unlawful and immoral purpose, or knowing it to be likely that such person shall at any time be employed or used for any such purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to twenty-five years, and shall also be liable to fine.[120]

Illicit intercourse is defined as sexual intercourse between people not united by marriage. This is followed by a law pertaining to the "buyers**,**"

> Whoever buys, hires or otherwise obtains possession of any person with intent that such person shall at any time be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or for any unlawful and immoral purpose, or knowing it to be likely that such person will at any time be employed or used for any such purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to twenty-five years, and shall also be liable to fine.[121]

This impacts not only clients but those who own and operate brothels.

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[120] Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006 http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/legislation/2006/wpb.html (accessed April 8-May 1, 2009).
[121] Ibid.

Only one section directly applies to the prostitutes themselves, and that is the inclusion of a definition of "fornication" in section 196B and the prescribed punishment of five years and / or a fine of up to ten thousand rupees. There is also still a punishment for a false accusation of fornication. These amendments are a great improvement to the legislation that existed previously. There are still, however, numerous problems. For one, fornication is defined as two people having "willful" sexual intercourse outside marriage.[122] How does one ascertain whether an act is committed "willfully"? In the case of prostitution it is difficult. It may be willful in the sense that the prostitute is willing in exchange for money. However, she may also have been forced into the position by the people who "own" her or run the brothel for which she works. If poverty was the "push" factor and starvation is the other option, then perhaps it is unfair to call prostitution "willful" intercourse. Lastly, a woman may enter into sexual relations "willfully" but then be abused or subjected to violence. Under this law she would be penalized even if she came forward to accuse the offender. These amendments, then, still do not protect prostitutes from violence. While the laws attempt to target those involved in trafficking - the buyers and the sellers – it does little for the women who are forced or choose to prostitute themselves for food, shelter or even medication.

[122] Ibid.

The Impact of Trafficking on Prostitution in Pakistan

Over the last few decades, women from Afghanistan and Bangladesh have been and continue to be smuggled into Lahore to work in the sex industry. The Coalition Against Trafficking of Women estimates that over 200,000 Bengali women have been trafficked into Pakistan for the purposes of prostitution and slave trade in the last ten years.[123] This has changed the fabric of society in Heera Mandi. Whereas before the Kanjars and other ethnic groups were born into prostitution, they were now also joined by women working as sex slaves. This increased competition for clients also further changed the nature of prostitution. Earlier brothels were primarily family-run operations, with the male members acting as pimps. An influx of Afghani and Bangladeshi sex workers resulted in a change in dynamics within and between brothels. Within brothels, pimps no longer felt the need to invest in the training or health of "their girls." If a girl became sick or too old she would simply be thrown out. Training was wasted, because the girls were not expected to feel loyalty to the people they worked for (or who owned them).[124] Maha, on the other hand, invested in dance lessons for her daughter Nena because she knew that Nena would one day support her in her old age -- her daughter is in some

[123] "Pakistan: Trafficking," The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women http://www.catwinternational.org/factbook/Pakistan.php (accessed March 29, 2009). The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women is a non-governmental organization founded in 1988 to combat the international trafficking of women and girls.
[124] Brown, *Dancing Girls*, 71.

ways her social security system. Between brothels there is an increase of competition and a decrease in respect. Kanjar women look down upon trafficked Afghani and Bengali women. There is little sympathy for their plight of the sex slave – she is simply the woman bringing down the price of prostitution and ruining the livelihoods of Kanjar women. There is also the sense that the influx of trafficked women has made prostitution "disrespectful" and "shameful." In the corner of the courtyard, across from Maha there live a Bangladeshi couple that allegedly pimp children, one of whom is their daughter.[125] There is a steady flow of girls through this house, and the neighbours suspect the couple of horrible practices. They are said to sell very young girls to groups of four or five men. The Kanjars don't like this couple – they find them vulgar.[126] Once again we see that working within a family can afford protection against both stigmatization and abuse. The trafficked women here operate under different terms. Their pimps do not care for their well-being; they only care that their products are lucrative.

After independence, we see the continuation of the decay of the traditional system of prostitution. Under the colonial system, this decay has been attributed to the lack of cultural appreciation felt for Indian classical dancing by British soldiers and the rising middle class. The decay

[125] Ibid., 183.
[126] Ibid.

after independence, however, can similarly be attributed to a change in sensibilities. Both Brown and Saaed claim that demand for classical dancing is now virtually non-existent in Heera Mandi.[127] Maha's daughter, Nena, was taught very basic classical techniques, but modified them with Bollywood dance moves. Brown note that with more and more Bollywood and Lollywood movies on television, demand for in-person dance shows has decreased. Demand for simple sexual services has increased at the same time.

Causality, however, is difficult to determine. There are several factors involved in the change of the work structure and environment of Kanjar prostitutes. While it is possible that consumers simply no longer demand classical dance, cost is also a factor. An increase in inexpensive sexual services due to the influx of trafficked women has created steep competition for Kanjar women. Furthermore, stigma associated with keeping a long-term mistress, the threat of venereal disease and legal repercussions have also affected demand. In the quest for customers the familial and social aspects of prostitution have changed. More and more women move from brothel to brothel, hoping to find an owner that will treat them well. Families, such as Maha's, are forced to introduce their daughters into the business untrained in order to earn fast cash.

An elderly woman of about eighty years tells Louisa Brown that,

[127] Ibid., 201. See also Saeed, "Good Women, Bad Women," 147.

> In those days it was different. We had high status and were respected. We were trained as singers and dancers and we had to practice for hours every day. We began when we were about seven, and then we started performing when we were fourteen or fifteen. The classical singers had the highest status… only the lowest kind of entertainers went to bed with the men….. It was good in those days, but all that has changed. Nobody bothers with singing and dancing anymore. We were trained for years, but today nobody does that.[128]

Brown suggests that the old woman offered a romanticized version of prostitution under the colonial rule. While the decay may have started much earlier than this elderly woman remembers, the Kanjars still feel that the change was relatively sudden. They hold on to their traditions and the profession they were born into. As the older generation passes, however, and the system of family-run brothels fades away, it is likely that much of their rich history will be lost. It is also likely that this influx of trafficked women and Zia's Islamization process have pushed Kanjar prostitutes to find alternative lucrative places, like the UAE, for business.

Working in the UAE

The Gulf States are mentioned throughout Louise Brown's ethnography. Going on tour to Dubai is considered a career break; it is said that virginity fetches a much higher rate in the UAE than in Pakistan.[129] Brown recounts that there are dozens of promoters that recruit

[128] Ibid, 43.
[129] Brown, *Dancing Girls*, 33, 194.

women and girls from Heera Mandi for dance shows and then ensure that they are available for sexual services. The largest promoters send these women to the Gulf and to Europe. The length of contracts range from one night to three months.[130] Promoters provide the women fake passports and visas. Nena's documents said that she was 18 years old and married. If a woman chooses to back out of an engagement she is expected to pay for any expenses that the agency may have incurred on her behalf. This can amount to $1,300, an impossible amount for the women of Heera Mandi to pay back.[131] On the other hand, Nena, for example, was to receive $2,529 for her marriage to a wealthy Sheikh.[132]

Brown's discussion on trafficking to the UAE is brief and dispersed throughout her work. Her account, however, is probably the best source on this process. Brown first discusses two girls from Heera Mandi who travel to Dubai. The girls belong to a family that came from the villages and are therefore not well respected within Heera Mandi. When the girls travel to Dubai they are much envied.[133] They are able to send their family VCRs, a new refrigerator and a DVD player. The girls do very well and each takes several three month tours to Dubai. On one of her returns to Heera Mandi the eldest girl recounts the experience of swimming in a pool. She is excited about and shocked by the revealing nature of her

[130] Ibid, 198.
[131] Ibid, 194-5.
[132] Ibid, 226.
[133] Ibid, 33.

Western-style swimsuit.[134] The girls have only positive experiences to recount and their family gains both wealth and prominence.

After failing to get a high enough price for Nena's virginity in Pakistan, Maha decides to send her daughter to the Gulf. The two see a promoter who agrees to "marry" Nena to "Sheikh Khasib," a wealthy man who is apparently well-known for his preference for virgins.[135] The promoter puts together Nena's papers and then encourages her to buy sexy clothing for her wedding night. On the way to the airport she stops at a questionable clinic to ensure Nena's virginity. The doctor also injects Nena with a muscle relaxant and gives her some opium to make the experience easier. Nena is unaware of this of course; she is told she has "water-on-the-uterus," a disease the doctor claims arises from the Pakistani diet.[136]

The agent was allegedly raised in Dubai and still has family there. Her sister is to pick up Nena from the airport and house her before and after her wedding night.[137] All does not go as planned though. Nena is so nervous that she becomes violently sick every time she is taken to see the Sheikh. She is threatened and told that she will not be allowed to return home until she has "married" the Sheikh. When this seems unlikely her

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[134] Ibid., 74.
[135] Brown uses fake names in her ethnography to protect her subjects. It is unclear whether Sheikh Khasib is a real name. Early on in her ethnography she does use Sheikh Zayed's real name.
[136] Ibid., 234. The medical condition does not exist.
[137] Ibid., 228.

hosts neglect and abuse her. She is forced to dance in a club for six weeks in order to fund her own trip home. She arrives home thin and with a head full of lice.[138] Despite this initial negative experience, Nena and her sisters subsequently make many lucrative trips to the UAE.

Nena's story highlights the role of the agent or procurer. These middlemen or middlewomen have total control over the women they illegally bring into the UAE. Some promoters confiscate the women's passports once they are in the UAE and then force them to accommodate long lines of customers.[139] They then receive only a small fraction of the money that they have earned. Brown notes that people in Heera Mandi are aware that this happens but do not discuss it – nobody wants to admit what they have had to endure.[140] This, as I will discuss in the next chapter, is also a problem that domestic workers face.

While there is little actual information on prostitution in the UAE, there is a growing interest in the topic. In 2007 photojournalist Mimi Chakorova released a short documentary entitled: "Dubai: Night Secrets, the Oldest Profession in the Newest Playground."[141] Chakorova had been working on prostitution in Eastern Europe when she heard stories of

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[138] Ibid., 243-4.
[139] Ibid., 198.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Chakorova, Mimi, "Dubai: Night Secrets, the Oldest Profession in the Newest Playground," *Frontline: World, Roughcut*, September 13, 2007. http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2007/09/dubai_sex_for_x.html (accessed on July 20, 2009).

women working in the UAE. The majority of prostitutes working in the UAE are Eastern European. Many, she found, went on their own volition – they heard it was easy to make money in the UAE. Others were told they would find jobs as waitresses or nannies but found that they had been lied to. Even these women soon found that they would make lots of money at clubs – money that is difficult to resist. Chakorova says these women seem as if they have been hypnotized by Dubai. She defines Dubai as city of "Muslim traditions mixed with capitalism on steroids."[142] Indeed, one Emarati human rights activist whom she interviews claims that prostitution is an unavoidable consequence of globalization.[143] The activist claims that the UAE is developing so rapidly that the legal regulations are not catching up fast enough. He also notes that the government does not want to scare off businesses and investors by imposing harsh prostitution laws.

At the end of Chakorova's trip her hotel room was ransacked and all her research was taken. Her camerawoman was detained at the airport and all of their footage was confiscated. After the two created a scene some of the material was returned. Chakorova and her camerawoman had

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[142] Ibid.

[143] On the consequences of globalization in regard to prostitution see Elina Penttinen, *Globalization, Prostitution and Sex-Trafficking; Corporeal Politics*," (London: Routledge, 2008) AND *Kara Siddharth, Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery*, (New York: Columbia UP, 2009).

been followed throughout their stay in Dubai. Someone wanted to ensure that her project on prostitution would not be completed.[144]

Whether or not the documentary had anything to do with it, in November of 2007 the UAE signed an international agreement on human trafficking.[145] Following this the Dubai police began to crack down on prostitution and on 5 December 2007 it was reported that 170 prostitutes from East Asia, 12 pimps and 65 clients had been caught.[146] In July 2008 the UAE National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking announced that they were going to start a major nationwide media campaign against trafficking.[147] They also declared that they would create new laws to protect domestic workers, which I will address in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown where the supply of Pakistani prostitutes to the UAE comes from and how demand for their services is fulfilled. Prostitutes in the UAE do not always travel there unwillingly. They are drawn in by middlemen who promise them money and a luxurious lifestyle – essentially a heterotopic experience. Once in the UAE, however, the dream is stripped away and women are forced to work long hours and do not have the privilege of choosing their own partners.

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[144] Chakorova, Mimi, "Dubai: Night Secrets,"September 13, 2007.
[145] This will be further discussed in the next chapter.
[146] "Dubai police make biggest prostitution bust," *Reuters*, December 5, 2007.
[147] "UAE anti-trafficking plan in spotlight," Gulf News, July 7, 2008.

Many of the problems faced by prostitutes in the UAE are the same issues faced by domestic workers. The two issues are inextricably intertwined. Many prostitutes travel to the UAE under the pretense of being domestic workers just as many domestic workers are lured to the UAE by the promise of jobs and then forced into sex work. Prostitutes and domestic workers both have to deal with middlemen – agents or promoters – that can exercise complete control over them. Neither group is offered much protection by the law and, as a result, are subject to violence and abuse. This will all be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: The Heterotopic Experiences of Pakistani Female Domestic Workers in the UAE

So far I have developed a theoretical framework that describes the UAE as a heterotopic locale with multiple liminal spaces, especially as it pertains to the reality of Pakistani expatriate workers in that country and in the context of the history of an evolving socio-economic relationship between Pakistani and the UAE. In the second chapter I have looked at the history of prostitution in Pakistan, its power dynamics and its evolution from a relatively respected institution under royal patronage in Mughal times, with an emphasis on performing arts, to its transformation during the colonial and postcolonial times into a marginalized institution, with its main emphasize on provision of sexual gratification to large segments of society. We have also seen how many of these prostitutes have the same dreams about improving their lives by going to the UAE and entering a liminal space as do most of the other skilled and semi-skilled workers from Pakistan that migrate to that land.

In this chapter we will seek to tie-in the experience of Pakistani prostitutes in the liminal space of the UAE with that of female domestic workers. Both of these are contentious topics since they deal with marginalized groups of women who largely operate in the Emirates in the legal grey zones, as neither profession is strictly legal. While prostitution is legally forbidden to all, employment of Pakistani females as domestic

help in the UAE is also forbidden both by the Emarati and the Pakistani governments. However, just like the prostitutes, many Pakistani women do end up working as domestic help. This places them in a very vulnerable situation not unlike that of the sex workers, in that they are engaging in work that is technically illegal and thus have no recourse to legal help or protection in case of problems with their employers.

Another challenge facing this study, or any other study of this kind that seeks to look at people in these "grey zones" is the lack, or at best, the paucity of official data available about the subjects. While this study has found indirect evidence that suggests that at least some Pakistani women are employed as domestic help, no official statistics are available in this regard.[148] This is an acknowledged constraint on the scope of this thesis; however it is hoped that addressing this hitherto unstudied phenomenon will perhaps provide a stimulus to greater research on this topic. We shall therefore proceed with mostly secondary sources available to us.

This chapter will examine the three main factors that put these Pakistani female domestic workers at risk of abuse: the divide between the public and private spheres, the perceived "expatriate threat," and a lack of

[148] Having grown up in Abu Dhabi, I have personal knowledge of Pakistani domestic workers. There are also discussions on online forums and NGO reports that corroborate this. See "Emirates Arabes Unis: Domestic Workers Face Abusive Employers" *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis*, July 2, 2006. http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=27089 (accessed Jan. 23, 2009). Also see the chat room discussion at Expatwoman.com http://www.expatwoman.com/forum/messages.aspx?TopicID=43561 (accessed Jan 18, 2009).

adequate legislation. Since maids work within the private sphere, they are usually subject to the rules of this space.[149] In many cases this means that domestic workers are seen as an extension of the family, but it can also mean that their actions reflect on the family. Strict rules and regulations may thus be applied to ensure that the worker does not threaten the family's honour. If she does, she may be physically or emotionally punished.[150] The "expatriate threat," as it is perceived by Emaratis, relates to all foreign workers. Rima Sabban and Wanda Krause claim that because Emaratis are vastly outnumbered in their own nation, they are concerned about the preservation of their culture.[151] Female domestic workers may be considered the most threatening to culture because they operate within the private sphere and can influence children.[152] Lastly, a lack of adequate legislation puts domestic workers at risk of abuse. While the UAE government has made improvements to policies regarding domestic workers, many have argued that they may not be sufficient. Furthermore, as long as Pakistani women are working illegally, they cannot take advantage of any useful measures the UAE government puts in place for

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[149] For a discussion of public vs. private space as it pertains to Islamic societies see Asma Afsaruddin, "Introduction: the Hermeneutics of Gendered Space and Discourse" in *Hermeneutics and Honour: Negotiating Female "Public" Space in Islamicate Societies* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999), 1-28.
[150] See Rima Sabban, "Women Migrant Domestic Workers in the United Arab Emirates" in *Gender and Migration in Arab States: The Case of Domestic Workers*, eds. Simel Esim and Monica Smith (Beirut: ILO, 2004), 93.
[151] Sabban, "Women Migrant Domestic Workers," 91 And Wanda Krause, *Women in Civil Society: The State, Islamist, and Networks in the UAE* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 114.
[152] Ibid.

the protection of domestic workers.

We have already seen some of the factors that "pull" and "push" Pakistanis to migrate to the UAE, such as poverty, class mobility, and experience.[153] In this chapter I will address the demand for domestic workers in the UAE before discussing the three factors that may sometimes lead to their abuse. In order to contextualise this discussion, it is relevant to examine the available sources of information. Due to this dearth of documentation, this chapter is framed differently than the last. I will begin by examining the available sources of information on this issue, including newspaper articles, NGO reports and the works of activist Rima Sabban and academic Wanda Krause.

An Analysis of the Available Sources

The local press is a major source of information about the society in the UAE. The newspapers are central to disseminating government statements and statistics and also help us understand local perspectives. It is both useful and necessary, to examine the media discourse on domestic workers. I use information from two English-language[154] newspapers - the *Gulf News* and the *Khaleej Times* – and magazines such as *7 Days*.

Before looking at specific articles, it is important to consider the role

[153] Please refer to chapter 1.
[154] I recognize that looking at only English language newspapers will have an effect on my results. Both the *Gulf News* and the *Khaleej Times* have both English and Arabic editions. While the same stories generally appear in both editions they have different authors.

of the media in Emarati society. While *Gulf News* and *Khaleej Times* have been in circulation since the 1980s, *The National* was created in 2008. Several magazines and periodicals, including *7 Days*, are also much more recent. With the opening of Media City in Dubai, several international media agencies have established their regional headquarters in the UAE. While these agencies - including Reuters, Associated Press, BBC and CNN - are allowed to freely report on events in the nation and the region, it is not clear to what extent this freedom is extended to the local press.[155] Even if we look beyond the questions of press freedom, in a population so ethnically, socially and economically diverse, does (and can) the press offer an accurate representation of this complex society?

Bridget Anderson suggests that the media is a form of "reproductive work" in that it "reproduces" society, meaning it takes existing notions within a society and repackages them through the editorial processes and re-presents them to the public.[156] As a reproductive force, the media can be thought of as a tool through which we can ascertain present trends in thought and opinion within a given society. The reporting on migrant workers and on female migrant domestic workers in particular suggests that UAE society is concerned

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[155] "Press Freedom in the UAE," *Gulf News*, March 26, 2008 http://gulfnews.com/opinions/columnists/press-freedom-in-the-uae-1.93127 (accessed April 5, 2008).
[156] Bridget Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work: the Global Politics of Domestic Labour* (NY: Zed Books, 2000), 18.

about this issue. This concern, in turn, suggests that the time is perhaps ripe for legislative and social change in regards to the treatment of these women workers.

In their 2005 book *Analyzing Media Messages*, Riffe, Lacy and Fico assert that media must be analyzed from both the production and consumption perspectives.[157] The effect of the media is contingent upon several factors; it is therefore complicated, and it is not always fruitful to analyze media in order to measure their effect on society. While I firmly believe that the media do have a direct impact on their consumers, I agree with Riffe et al. that it will be difficult to gauge the impact of media messages on attitudes towards domestic workers in the UAE.

On the production side, the assemblage and dissemination of newspapers, we can study which items are on the media's agenda and how they get there. When stories about a specific subject are continually written about and reported, it suggests that this particular topic is of interest to not only reporters, but also to readers. Stories about domestic workers have been in and out of Emarati newspapers for years - this suggests members of society are interested, and in turn the media are able to reproduce this interest and perpetuate the debate.

There are other, more specific factors involved as well. The English

[157] Daniel Riffe, Stephen Lacy and Frederick G. Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), 6.

language editions of the *Khaleej Times* and the *Gulf News* are both primarily staffed and edited by expatriates from around the world.[158] Members of the press, at least the editorial staff, are by and large middle class. It is very likely that most of them employ domestic workers, whether live-in or by day; because they are implicated in the system, reporters may not be impartial when reporting about domestic workers.

Anderson notes a similar phenomenon in Britain where, she argues, the press is not opposed to the institution of migrant domestic workers because it is not impartial in the matter. Anderson claims that members of the press have a strange relationship with domestic workers; they feel that housework is "beneath them" but still feel that they must do something for the "poor people" who work for them.[159] While Anderson is discussing Britain, I believe the analysis can be extended to the UAE as well. With these conceptions of media in mind, we are better able to examine articles on migrant domestic workers.

NGOS, International Organizations (IOs) and international pressure are playing a growing role the UAE. The United Nations has several regional offices based in the UAE, including offices for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Furthermore, the UAE has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence and

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[158] See: "About Us" *Gulf News* http://www.gulfnews.com/aboutus/gulfnews/ (accessed March 25, 2008).
[159] Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work*, 15.

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and there is increasing pressure to ratify all clauses. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is also putting pressure on the government to include domestic workers under the existing labour law so that they have rights.

The growing involvement of these international groups can also be seen through the media. In one article about the laws to regulate the status of domestic workers a Labour Counsellor to the Ministry of Interior is quoted as saying that the new laws were being drafted based on international standards and laws.[160] Another article shares the recommendations of the UAE Human Rights Watchdog and the UAE Human Rights Organization, and quotes the Chairman of the Permanent Committee for Monitoring the UAE's Image Abroad as supporting a new draft law for the protection of domestic workers. The fact that this Chairman, whose role is to defend the UAE's international image, is a part of this debate suggests that international pressure is central to the shifting perceptions of domestic workers. The role of international pressure in Emarati society is of a complexity which merits further research.

In this chapter I rely heavily on two NGO reports about women migrant workers in the UAE. The first is a joint project by four NGOs -- Migrant Forum in Asia, Center for Migrant Advocacy (Philippines),

[160] Ahmed Abdul Aziz, "New Law to Limit Number of Maids for Each Family," *Khaleej Times*, Nov. 27, 2007.

Center for Education and Communication (India) and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (Bangladesh) – which was submitted to the 45th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The report focuses on the laws that pertain to women migrant domestic workers in the UAE. The NGOs acknowledge the positive steps that the government of the UAE has taken to ensure the protection of women migrant domestic workers, but assert that more must be done.

The second report is written by activist and sociologist Rima Sabban and is published by the International Migration Program, a unit of the International Labour Organization. In 1995 Sabban interviewed over fifty female domestic workers and their employers in the UAE. She also interviewed government officials and representatives from recruiting agencies. In 2001 Sabban updated her research and interviewed forty-five more female domestic workers in different settings – at consulates and at recruiting agencies.[161] Sabban uses these case studies to illustrate the working conditions of these women. While Sabban does discuss the positive experiences and opportunities given to some maids, she focuses on the loneliness, isolation, physical and emotional abuse, and rape endured by others. These abuses will be illustrated in further detail in a later section. Sabban's research is of immense importance because she is

[161] Sabban, "Women Migrant Domestic Workers," 86.

the only academic to publish an essay on domestic workers in the UAE that is based on personal fieldwork. While newspaper articles often provide individual case studies, Sabban's broader research allows her to highlight and analyze trends. For example, Sabban reports that only four out of the 51 domestic workers interviewed in 1995 were allowed to practice their religious beliefs freely, or choose their own clothes and food.[162] None of the workers reported being given a day off every week.[163]

The Demand for Domestic Workers

In *Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy,* Barbara Herenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild develop a framework that links forms of women's work to globalization and a "gender revolution."[164] They contend that as women in the West enter the workforce, their roles within the house are taken and divided among women who have immigrated from the East: maids clean the house, nannies raise the children, and prostitutes satisfy the husbands.[165]

With a rise in female employment and the decreasing support of extended family networks, maids, nannies, cooks and housekeepers are often seen as a necessity.[166] Anderson contends that domestic workers, like prostitutes, are caught in the gap between what are perceived to be public

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[162] Ibid., 93.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Barbara Herenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 3.*
[165] Ibid.
[166] Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work*, 16.

and private domains. The female employer is only free to move between public and private because these workers act as a bridge between the two spaces.[167]

Employment for Emarati women is being promoted by the government, in a women's empowerment movement Wanda Krause describes as state-sponsored. The state encourages women's education and work, saying that it is indispensible for development.[168] According to Krause, Sheikh Zayed encouraged women by saying, "Education is like a beacon lighting your way in the darkness. It teaches you many things, the most important of which is to know your duties towards your nation, homeland, families, and the realities relating to your present, future, and your past."[169] Other state rhetoric emphasizes the role of women in maintaining Emarati culture and religion.[170] In the last twenty years, employment rates for women in the UAE have increased dramatically.[171] Emarati women have joined many fields: the armed forces, police, engineering, computer science, academia and business. Statistics show that in 1998, 47% of federal government employees were women.[172] Many women choose to work in the government, as well as in schools or banks, because they can work in a women-only environment. As Emarati women

[167] Ibid.
[168] Wanda Krause, *Women in Civil Society*, 42.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

pursue their education and careers, their traditional roles at home, such as child-rearing, are filled by domestic workers.

Domestic workers are also a reflection of the social status and wealth of a given family. While there are "limitations" to how many domestic workers a family can hire, a family of four (two parents and two children) may hire as many as two maids, a cook, a gardener and a driver.[173] In the UAE, there is a nationality-based hierarchy in place for judging domestic workers. Anderson notes that "racist stereotypes intersect with issues of citizenship, and result in a racist hierarchy which uses skin colour, religion and nationality to construct some women as being more suitable for domestic work than others."[174] This hierarchy is fluid and changes with social demands. Indonesians, for example, are often preferred because they are Muslim and are therefore assumed to share values and culture with locals. It is also presumed that Indonesians are more likely to pick up Arabic quickly as they have generally had exposure to the Quran. Filipinos are hired because of their presumed efficiency and their ability to speak English. Sri Lankans and Indians are generally paid less as they do not "necessarily" speak English well or have the capability of learning Arabic quickly.[175]

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[173] Sabban, "Women Migrant Domestic Workers," 99.
[174] Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work*, 2.
[175] Sabban, "Women Migrant Domestic Workers," 89.

The Demand for Pakistani Domestic Workers

Based on the apparent criteria for the nationality-based hierarchy for domestic workers, Pakistanis should be in high demand. Like Indonesians, Pakistanis are Muslim and are just as likely to pick up Arabic quickly based on exposure to the Quran. Pakistani workers may be preferred because of the historic ties discussed in chapter one. Indeed, comments and opinion polls in the *Gulf News* suggest that Pakistani female domestic workers are very much in demand, despite the illegality of hiring them.[176] In the 1980s, the Government of Pakistan forbade Pakistani women from working as domestic workers abroad. Official reasons were not given. The *Gulf News* reports that the ban was implemented after several cases of violence against domestic workers came to light.[177] This would suggest that the Government of Pakistan was attempting to protect women workers. To take this further we can utilize Yasmeen Hassan's discussion on honour. In Pakistan women are seen as representative of their families and households' honour. If a woman acts "immorally" she brings dishonour upon her family. If a woman is raped or attacked in any way her family is dishonoured.[178] If a Pakistani woman is abused in the UAE, it is seen as dishonouring Pakistan as a whole. In

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[176] Ashfaq Ahmed, "Expats Want Pakistan Ban on Housemaids Lifted," *Gulf News*, Oct. 30, 2007 http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/employment/expats-want-pakistan-ban-on-housemaids-lifted-1.208522 (accessed online June 20, 2009).
[177] Ibid.
[178] Yasmeen Hassan, *The Haven Becomes Hell: A Study of Domestic Violence in Pakistan* (Lahore, Shirkat Gah, 1995), 14.

fact, it may be said that based on the above notion, if a single Pakistani woman is living in a male employer's home, she and her country may already be seen as dishonoured.

However, despite the ban, there are still Pakistani women working as maids, nannies and cooks in the UAE.[179] These women are either brought in on visit visas or have work visas claiming, for example, that they are secretaries for small businesses.

Is this ban actually protecting women? Or does it make it more difficult to protect them? On the one hand, if Pakistani women never migrate to the Gulf States to work in homes then they cannot be harmed (abroad, anyway). On the other, they lose the opportunity to make money. Some have suggested that Pakistani women should be allowed to work for Pakistani families in the UAE.[180] This presupposes, though, that Pakistani families never abuse or ill-treat their servants. Furthermore, a single woman working as a domestic worker abroad may "dishonour" her family in Pakistan, not by any particular action, but simply because the nature of her work probably puts in her close proximity with men.

This dilemma is similar to the age-old discussion on prostitution: if we recognize that prostitution exists then we can regulate it. Or, to go a step further, it is argued that if we legalize prostitution it will be easier to

[179] See Ashfaq Ahmed, "Expats Want Pakistan Ban on Housemaids Lifted," There does not seem to be any official data on this. I have personally met Pakistani domestic workers in the UAE though.
[180]Ahmed Ashfaq, "Expats want Pakistan ban on housemaids lifted."

prevent associated crimes such as rape, abuse and even drug-use.[181] It is suggested, in counterargument, that legal recognition of prostitution would imply social acceptance and an increase in demand.[182]

If the UAE government recognizes that Pakistani women are working as domestic workers and the Pakistani government lifts the ban, then it is more than likely that many more Pakistani women would soon be working as servants in the Emirates. The increase in number may simply exacerbate the problem. Right now if a Pakistani domestic worker is abused nobody finds out, because she is not supposed to be there in the first place. If the same worker is abused when she is in the UAE legally it becomes an international incident. Politically, it may be easier to keep quiet and sweep any bad press under the rug.

Illustrations of Dangers and Abuse

Domestic workers are subject to different kinds of abuse including verbal and psychological abuse, physical abuse, and sexual assault. Half of the domestic workers interviewed by Rima Sabban claimed to have been abused in one of these manners. Many of them reported being ill-treated by recruitment agencies. Sabban notes that although these agencies are

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[181] Many studies show that drug use is common in red-light districts. Brown discusses drug use in Heera Mandi throughout her book.

[182] I have implied here that an increase in prostitution is not to be desired. While I do not wish to judge the profession we must recognize that prostitution is not publicly acceptable in most societies today. Many people firmly believe that prostitution is morally wrong. As I do not intend to discuss different morals or perceptions on prostitution I will just accept that for many, perhaps the majority, the promotion of prostitution is not welcome.

subject to government inspections and regulations, they are not closely monitored.[183] Newspapers in the UAE are diligent in reporting about violence against female workers. Their emphasis is on physical and emotional abuse.

In 2001 Saifur Rahman penned the article "Maid attempts suicide after being locked up for eight days," in *Khaleej Times*. The article documents the story of Ambia, a 28-year-old domestic worker who jumped off the second floor of a high-rise building in Sharjah. Ambia was kept locked in seclusion for eight days with minimal food and no access to a bathroom. Prior to this, she worked for "an Arab family" in Dubai for two months. Ambia's employer, a woman, used to beat her often. Ambia was eventually thrown out of the house and was picked up by "some people" who were not identified in the article, and they locked her in a room. It is unclear whether Ambia herself knew her captors - she said that she did not even know that she was in Sharjah. Ambia survived her jump but was treated for multiple fractures and a hip dislocation.[184] Another, very brief article, discusses the attempt of a 23-year-old Ethiopian maid to hang herself. This story parallels that of Ambia's. The maid, A.N., apparently tried to run away from her employers several times because she was being abused. She attempted suicide after her employer locked

[183] Sabban, "Women Migrant Domestic Workers," 98.
[184] Saifur Rahman, "Maid Attempts Suicide After Being Locked Up for Eight Days," *Khaleej Times,* April 13, 2001.

her in a room to prevent further escape attempts.[185]

These articles show that often the only recourse domestic workers have is to run away. When this is not possible suicide is the only way to get out of their work contract. Another important point to note is that Ambia was unable to find any help in between the time that she was thrown out of the house and the time that she was picked up by her unknown captors. It is quite likely that Ambia simply did not know where to turn. When domestic workers are kept inside the house they are unable to form networks of association for themselves. When they get into trouble they cannot count on anyone's assistance, and they do not know how to assert their rights. Wanda Krause emphasizes the importance of developing social networks in the UAE. She gives an example of a case where an older Filipina maid was able to stand up to her employer on behalf of a younger maid because she was able to communicate to her employers in Arabic.[186] In another case one domestic worker witnessed the abuse of another through a window. The first maid asked her employer for help, and together the women smuggled the abused maid out of the house.[187]

Creating these alliances or networks seems to be an effective way to help a domestic worker out of an abusive situation. For example, a *Gulf*

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[185] Nasouh Nazzal. "Maid to be Charged for Suicide Attempt," *Gulf News*, July 10, 2001.
[186] Krause, *Women in Civil Society*, 164-5.
[187] Ibid.

News article titled "Police arrest man for rape of housemaid" documents the case of a 23-year-old Filipina Muslim who works to support her mother and six siblings. "The victim" worked as a housemaid for an Emarati family. On 20 March 2001 her male employer reportedly sprayed insecticide on her face, drove her to a remote place in the desert and raped her. He then took her to a construction site and raped her twice more before dropping her back at his own home. The perpetrator's wife took "the girl" to the hospital where the police were contacted and the rapist arrested.[188] I have not been able to find news reports indicating the outcome of the trial.

It is important to note that violence does not occur in all or even most cases. Nonetheless we must look at the factors that make female migrant domestic workers vulnerable to abuse in the first place. In order to effect positive change we must first understand why and how this abuse occurs.

Factors that Lead to Abuse or Exploitation

As I discussed above, there are three different factors that put domestic workers in a vulnerable position.[189] The first, as we have briefly

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[188] "Police Arrest Man for Rape of Housemaid," *Gulf News,* April 15, 2001.

[189] When discussing violence against women It is easy to fall into the trap of assuming that these women are simply "victims." It is not my intention to portray Pakistani migrant domestic workers and prostitutes as helpless victims. As Krause's discussion on social networks show, domestic workers in the UAE often look out for one another and take extraordinary measures to keep each other safe. The fact that these women also choose to migrate to the UAE is also a reflection of their agency. That said, I do believe

discussed in regards to the demand for domestic workers, is that they work in the private sphere. There is an ongoing academic debate about the nature of public and private spaces/spheres as they relate to women. It is not the purpose of this study to contribute to this specific debate, but I find the terminology useful because the law clearly sees domestic work as a private issue. An article titled "20 Percent of Migrant Domestic Workers Suffer From Employers' Abuse" quotes Rima Sabban as saying: "Legally, domestic work in the Gulf region falls under the private servant concept, in which a worker is considered under the full private realm of the family. Under such a regulation, the sponsor becomes the person responsible for the servant for every single detail of life and the servant is considered as an essential member of the family."[190] This will be discussed further when I examine the *Kafala* (Sponsorship) System. As we will see, the presence of domestic workers in the private domestic sphere has also heightened the fear among Emaratis of the perceived "expatriate threat."

The perceived "Expatriate threat"

The UAE is one of the fastest growing economies today. While Abu Dhabi, in particular, still relies heavily on petroleum production, the nation is diversifying its economic structures, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), and is fast becoming one of the top tourist destinations in the world.

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that there are still inherent social and political factors that make domestic workers and prostitutes particularly vulnerable to abuse and it is important to recognize them.

[190] Prima Suri and Mahmoud Ali, "20 Percent of Migrant Domestic Workers Suffer from Employers' Abuse," *Khaleej Times*, April 6, 2006.

A defining factor of the economy is the nation's heavy reliance on migrant workers. A recent census shows that approximately 80% of the population are foreign expatriates.[191] This ratio has significant ramifications on the social fabric of the nation. The locals are far outnumbered by expatriates. Furthermore, the locals rely on expatriates to drive economic development. This creates a tenuous situation, where the citizens of the UAE feel that their traditions and way of life are being threatened.[192] For example, many Emarati children are educated in schools with Western curricula and are exposed to Peter Pan and Cinderella before Baba Darya and other Emarati fairy-tale characters.[193] Increasingly, English is becoming the predominant language in the country. The question for this heterotopic nation becomes: how can we "modernize" and achieve (or maintain) economic growth while retaining our cultural tradition?

The expatriate "threat" has been recognized since the founding of the UAE, and one step taken to alleviate it regards citizenship. An expatriate, no matter what his/her nationality or ethnic background, is not granted citizenship – even if a person is born in the nation and resides

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[191] Tedad 2005 http://www.tedad.ae (accessed repeatedly Dec. 2007- Oct. 2009).
[192] Culture is often a problematic concept to discuss. What is culture? What is the culture of such a new nation? "Way of life" here refers to all traditions that the Emarati people hold to be theirs. This may involve styles of dress, mannerisms, food etc.
[193] Baba Darya is a *Jinn* (spirit) that attacks and eats sailors off the Arabian coast. Recently four Emarati women have compiled a book of Emarati fairy tales titled *Khrareef* . They began their project when they realized that none of their younger siblings had any recollection of these stories and only spoke of Western fairy tales. See Matt Kwong, "Tales Preserved for the Future," *The National*, Nov. 1, 2009 http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091101/NATIONAL/710319954/1342 (accessed online Feb. 8, 2010).

there for twenty years, they are still an "outsider." The expatriate is never allowed to feel "at home" as there is always the threat of deportation. Once expatriates fulfill their work contract or reach the age of retirement, they are expected to return to the country of their nationality. As such, it is commonly believed that expatriates have little genuine interest in building the nation or contributing to its improvement. The issue of citizenship has been a matter of contention since the founding of the UAE in 1971, when citizenship was only granted to those who could prove affiliation to certain tribes or families.[194] For the brief period when control of the Trucial States was balanced between Sheikh Shakhbout al Nayhan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, and the British, passports were given to many foreigners. These foreigners, mostly Persians, were considered "second-class citizens" by local tribes and it was unclear whether they were under the governance of Sheikh Shakhbout or the British.[195] Once the UAE was established and Sheikh Zayed took power, foreigners were no longer granted any form of citizenship except in exceptional cases.

Citizenship laws are still strict today. If an Emarati woman marries a non-Emarati man her children do not receive UAE citizenship. While Emarati women can marry men from other Gulf countries with impunity,

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[194] Rima Sabban, "United Arab Emirates: Migrant Women in the United Arab Emirates, The Case of Female Domestic Workers." (GENPROM Working Paper No. 10, Series on Women and Migration. Gender Promotion Programme, International Labour Office, Geneva. 2001), 2.

[195] Frederico Valez, "Abu Dhabi 1959," Paper presented at Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA), Annual Conference, Montreal, 2007.

marriage to other foreigners is discouraged. Marriage to a non-Muslim is illegal. Emarati men may marry whomever they choose regardless of nationality or religion and their children will be citizens of the UAE.[196]

The anxiety caused by the "expatriate threat" often plays out in the domestic sphere, because this is where locals and expatriate domestic workers are in constant close contact.

Domestic workers are foreigners that "infiltrate" even the private sphere and are directly responsible for raising Emarati children. They are, as such, a great "threat" to national culture and social norms. For this reason domestic workers are often required to veil and are subject to the rules of the house. In many cases they are not allowed to leave the home at all. This prevents the workers from meeting with people from their own nations and, in a sense, is an attempt to strip them of their own culture.[197]

A 2002 article by Doaa Zeitoun, titled "Dependence on Housemaids Hits Alarming Level" is a good illustration of Emarati perceptions of this problem. The article is based on data from the Ministry of Planning which suggests that many families in Sharjah had several housemaids, and in some instances "the number of maids exceeds the number of family members."[198] The reporter interviewed Amin Hussain Al Amiri, a member

[196] Krause, *Women in Civil Society*, 44.
[197] Sabban, "United Arab Emirates,"26.
[198] Doaa Zeitoun, "Dependence on Housemaids Hits Alarming Level," *Gulf News*, June 13, 2002.

of the Sharjah Consultative Council and Director of Blood Transfusions.[199] Al Amiri laments that many children in the UAE are brought up primarily by maids and warns that this is dangerous because children become emotionally attached to their caregivers. According to Al Amiri: "We should not forget that Asian maids have customs that are completely different from our habits and Islamic traditions. This could affect the children's behaviour, language, and affiliation to their country."[200] Al Amiri goes on to say that the government should limit the number of maids per family, and that public campaigns must raise social awareness about "the negative effects of housemaids."[201]

The opinion that domestic workers can degrade Emarati culture is not unique to Al Amiri. A 2004 *Gulf News* article, "Curbing negative influence of housemaids on children" opens with the line: "Schoolchildren have urged parents to curb the negative effect housemaids have on the culture and language of children."[202] This student consensus was apparently reached during a teacher-led debate, but the article does not specify the age of the students involved or what school they attend. The students agreed that domestic workers were indispensable, but recommended that the housemaids "be carefully chosen so they don't

[199] It is unclear why the official opinion of the Director of Blood Transfusions is relevant in this case.
[200] Zeitoun, "Dependence on Housemaids Hits Alarming Level."
[201] Ibid.
[202] Tahseen Shaghouri, "Curbing Negative Influence of Housemaids on Children," *Gulf News*, March 13, 2004.

cause trouble at home or misbehave with the children."[203] This trouble, they believe, arises because the domestic workers are from other cultures.

Belief in this idea that domestic workers are changing Emarati culture can make families insecure, and this in turn can perpetuate the cycle of ill-treatment of domestic workers. Domestic workers are needed; no amount of campaigns will encourage people not to employ maids. Instead, suspicion will fall on the domestic worker. Campaigns to raise social awareness about the negative impact of domestic workers will lead to tighter control and harsher working conditions.

The Kafala (Sponsorship) System and the Law

The Kafala, or sponsorship, system is used by the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.[204] In this system a migrant worker can only receive an entry or residence visa if they are employed by a citizen of the country. The sponsor, or *kafil*, takes economic and legal responsibility for their employees for the duration of their contract period.[205] Workers do not have the right to change jobs within the country; if they choose to break their contract they must pay for their own repatriation. Sponsors rarely break contracts because then they would be responsible for paying

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[203] Ibid.

[204] Anh Nga Lngva, "Keeping Migrant Workers in Check: The Kafala System in the Gulf" Middle East Report, No. 211, Trafficking and Transiting: New Perspectives on Labor Migration (Summer, 1999), 20.

[205] Ibid.

for their employee's passage home and for the cost of hiring a replacement.[206] To further complicate the system, sponsors often confiscate worker's passports. The basis for this is crime prevention – if a worker commits a crime they are unable to flee the country. In effect, however, this puts workers in a vulnerable situation. If a worker is being abused or is involved in a conflict with his or her sponsor, their only recourse is to run away, making them "illegal aliens."[207]

In principle, at least, migrant workers are protected under the labour law. They have legal recourse and can take their employers to court. This very rarely occurs, because even if the worker wins the case they will have to leave the country if they are no longer employed. Many workers choose to put up with ill treatment because keeping quiet and fulfilling the contract is often the easiest solution.[208]

Female migrant domestic workers, however, do not even have this legal recourse. According to the General Provisions of the 2008 UAE Labour Law, the law does not apply to "domestic servants employed in private residences and the like."[209] Domestic workers fall under Immigration Law instead. This means that under the current system domestic workers are entirely at the mercy of their employers. There are

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[206] Ibid., 21.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Jurists Association, *UAE's Labour Law and the Ministerial Orders Implementing its Provisions* (Sharjah: Jurists Association, 2008), 96-7.

no controlled working hours, safe environment or guaranteed vacations.

Some positive policy changes have already been made for the protection of domestic workers and others are underway. First, since April 2007, signed contracts between employer and employee have become mandatory and copies of these contracts must be provided to the Dubai Naturalisation and Registry Department (DNRD). These contracts do not necessarily address the concerns of some. The Government of the Philippines, for example, has set a minimum monthly wage of 1,470AED ($450) for any of its nationals working abroad as domestic workers, but many Filipina women are still working for only 700AED ($191) a month.[210] A representative from the DNRD claims that as long as the domestic worker and the employer are in agreement they will accept contracts that stipulate wages under the supposed minimum.[211] Many employers of maids and nannies are not ready to pay a salary over 1000AED ($272.5) a month and they have the upper hand. Under the threat of being sent home, many women accept low wages. Agencies are further perpetuating this problem by recruiting women who are willing to earn a little less. They then sign internal agreements with both the domestic worker and her employer to ensure the legality of the process.[212]

In this case, workers are still being exploited and the new

[210] The UAE Dirham is pegged to the US Dollar. 3.67AED = 1USD.
[211] Wafa Issa, "Maids work in UAE for lower salaries," *Gulf News*, April 8, 2008.
[212] Ibid.

legislation has only served to add levels of bureaucracy. I believe that this is because there is no real agreement between the governments of the UAE and labour-supplying countries. For example, minimum wage cannot simply be set by the Philippine or Bangladeshi governments. The Government of the UAE would have to agree to enforce this minimum for it to be effective. Similarly, while the Government of Pakistan can ban their citizens from working as domestic labourers in the Gulf, the Emarati government must make sure that women are not being smuggled or trafficked in illegally to fill these jobs.

One of the most pressing concerns that all migrant labourers to the UAE face is the reliance on recruitment agencies or middlemen. These agencies recruit workers from target supply countries and offer them incentives for working in the Gulf. They promise high wages and good living conditions – promises that they often break. In the last chapter we saw that Nena was not well-treated by her recruiters. In 2006 a group of Sri Lankan women who worked for a clothing factory were suddenly abandoned when the factory shut down. Stranded in the UAE with no shelter and without their passports, these women were forced to work as part-time domestic workers just to feed themselves.[213]

Recruitment agencies, like employers, are known to take their

[213] Sunita Menon, "Stranded woman say only option is to work as maids," *Gulf News*, Dec. 18, 2006.

employees' passports. This is to ensure that they will not break their contracts and flee the country without notice. In actuality it also means that domestic workers have great difficulty escaping from abusive employers. Domestic workers in the UAE are subject to many forms of abuse. We have already seen the legislation with regards to wage exploitation. In other situations women are severely overworked – they are on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Vacations are few. Other women are prevented from associating with anyone outside the house. If they do not have any friends or acquaintances to turn to when they are in trouble they are less likely to run away. Language can also be a barrier. English, Arabic, Urdu and Hindi are the most dominant spoken languages in the UAE. Many domestic workers do not speak any of these languages and are therefore unable to ask for help.[214] All of these problems are also faced by prostitutes.

The law has done little to counter these problems. While the *2006 Memorandum of Understanding* with regards to labour between Pakistan and the UAE acknowledged that recruitment agencies and middlemen were problems, no concrete action was suggested.[215] Furthermore, the 2007 contract to protect domestic workers put the onus of this protection on the recruitment agencies and the employers. Recruitment agencies are

[214] See Sabban "Women Migrant Domestic Workers,"94.
[215] "UAE signs MoU with Pakistan," *Gulf News*, Dec. 23, 2006.

to ensure that they find skilled and respectful workers. Employers are enjoined to ensure the well-being of these workers while the workers are told to be efficient and obedient.[216] This is problematic in that the very people who often abuse domestic workers are now responsible for taking care of them. Furthermore if a domestic worker then chooses to break her contract for any reason she is expected to pay her own passage home.[217]

The Indian government has taken the most recent protective measures. In 2006 the government decided to train all workers who plan to migrate to the Gulf. These workers will be literate in their own languages and have a working knowledge of English. They will also be versed in their rights and understand the rules and regulations of the UAE.[218] Furthermore, workers are able to file complaints with the Indian consulate and will receive legal assistance. While this seems like a strong policy there are problems here too. It is reported that Indian maids have admitted to faking claims of abuse in order receive higher pay, change jobs or receive a free flight home.[219] Nevertheless, these laws enable Indian migrant workers to understand their rights and to be able to fight for them, and I believe that this is more important than the fact that a few people take advantage of the system.

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[216] Bassma Al-Jandaly and Alion al-Thoeb, "New Contract to Protect Domestic Helpers," *Gulf News*, April 2, 2007.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Sunita Menon, "India plans to train workers headed for Gulf," *Gulf News*, Oct. 6, 2006.
[219] Sunita Menon, "Maids admit to faking claims of abuse," *Gulf News*, June 18, 2006.

While I find the actions taken by the Indian and Philippine governments laudable I feel that the government of the UAE should ultimately be responsible for the safety of all residents and visitors. Domestic workers should be able to file complaints directly to the UAE government, and these complaints should be addressed rather than filed away. Once a functioning system is in place perhaps the Pakistani government will consider lifting the domestic worker ban. If the ban is not lifted the Pakistani women who are currently working as domestic workers in the UAE will forever be without legal recourse. In the informal labour market they, like sex workers, will be subject to danger.

Prostitution is a slightly different issue. The UAE is an Islamic State and as such it is highly unlikely that it will ever recognize or legalize prostitution.[220] Prostitution is not legally recognized in Pakistan where it has thrived for centuries. As I mentioned in the last chapter, the government of the UAE is very much aware of prostitution, but they turn a blind eye. Perhaps the government can create legislation dealing with violence against women in general. If women are promised not to be punished for coming forward and perpetrators are dealt strict penalties, then violence may be deterred across the board. This could apply to cases of domestic violence and to prostitution. The government is already turning a blind eye to prostitution. If sex workers complain about abuse

[220] This is not to say, of course, that only Islamic states would not legalize prostitution.

the perpetrators should still be punished. As prostitution is illegal it is likely that the sex workers would be deported, but at least the next woman would be safe.

There will always be markets for domestic workers and prostitutes. Recognizing the problems that these women face is the first step to creating legislation that can help them. In the end the only thing that will really stop the abuse of prostitutes in the UAE is if they are prevented from entering the country in the first place. The demand for prostitutes is so high among influential people, however, that this is simply not likely. Furthermore, working in the UAE can be a very positive experience for both domestic workers and prostitutes. The heterotopic experience, the money earned and the possibility for a class jump upon the return to Pakistan are all positive. Many workers do not experience abuse at all, and only have positive experiences. Rima Sabban interviewed one Indonesian woman who was thrilled that her employers had funded her pilgrimage to Mecca, a trip she was unable to afford on her own. Other workers reported that they were treated kindly and tipped very generously on all holidays. Stripping women of these employment opportunities is not the answer. We must simply make these opportunities safer.

Conclusion

Pakistani female migrant domestic workers and prostitutes in the UAE share the same vulnerabilities because their work is considered

illegal. The law banning Pakistanis from working as domestic workers abroad pushes these workers into the more dangerous informal economy. This further compounds the likelihood of abuse. All female domestic migrant workers are vulnerable to abuse because they are not covered under the existing labour law, and because many Emaratis feel threatened by the presence of foreigners within their domestic sphere. It is likely that this threatening fear arises not just because of the "infiltration" of expatriates, but also because of the rapid pace of change and development in the UAE. In chapter one I discussed how this rapid change and constant renegotiating defined the UAE as a heterotopia. This constant reordering of society can be threatening to local Emarati culture and tradition. It is also these heterotopic qualities that allow for laws and regulations to change so rapidly. The government has been quick to respond to the media and society's concerns about the safety of domestic workers. It is this ability to change and adapt so quickly that leads me to believe that positive change can and will occur if domestic workers remain on the social and political agenda.

Conclusion

Over the last three chapters, I have examined and contextualized the conditions of Pakistani prostitutes and female domestic workers in the UAE and developed a framework for this examination. I started off by geographically situating our study and looking at a brief history of Pakistan and the UAE, as well as a special relationship between the two countries based on the supply of labour. It was during the 1970s, when Pakistan, under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was trying to befriend Muslim countries of the Middle East that a sudden rise in oil prices brought a previously unimaginable amount of wealth to the Gulf countries and particularly to the UAE. This resulted in massive infrastructure projects being launched in the UAE which required a very large number of foreign professionals, as well as skilled and semi-skilled labourers. This proved to be a great boon to the Pakistani economy as a very large number of workers moved to the UAE in search of a better life and their remittances became the largest source of foreign exchange for the Pakistan economy. The UAE, owing to its fast-paced development and its rapidly changing economy and society, became a very attractive place for expatriate workers, particularly from Pakistan. I argued that to study the condition of the workers in this environment, we needed a broad-based framework that transcended the traditional limitation of academic boundaries. To this end, I introduced the theoretical framework of liminal

spaces and heterotopia, which is a physical manifestation of such liminal spaces, based on theories put forth by Foucault, Bhabha, and Hetherington. I then argued that the UAE represents just such a hetrotopic space for Pakistani workers in that it is both "Western" and "Islamic" -- it shares in the prosperity of the West and yet retains a Muslim character, and it allows Western-style freedoms while still retaining a social space for Islamic practices. Furthermore, it is also an in-between space for Pakistani workers in the sense that upon their return from the UAE they experience a degree of social and economic mobility that otherwise would have been impossible.

Having thus established a theoretical framework, in the second chapter I looked at the history of the institution of prostitution in Pakistan and tried to situate it in Pakistan's social history over the last two centuries. This was done by studying Kanjars, a social group traditionally associated with the practice of prostitution. I looked at the changes this institution has undergone since the Mughal times when it received royal patronage and was primarily a custodian of the "high" arts of classical singing and dancing. The place of prostitutes in the society underwent significant changes with the arrival of the British. The emphasis shifted from classical singing and dancing to providing sexual services to clients. Also, during the colonial period, the traditional family-run prostitution establishments were disrupted as more and more prostitutes moved to

military cantonment areas to service the soldiers, where they were classified as those reserved for the service of the white soldiers and those who served Indian men. British authorities also instituted mandatory VD testing and treatment for prostitutes. We then discussed the role played in colonial times by the Hindu nationalist movement in changing the perceptions on prostitutes in the colonial Indian society. The chapter then discussed the post-colonial era and attempts at "Islamization" by various Pakistani governments and their impact on prostitution. Against this background, the chapter dealt with the pull factors that attract Pakistani prostitutes to the UAE and their experiences there. New dynamics like the influx of trafficked Bangladeshi and Afghan women were also discussed and analyzed. Also discussed in this chapter is the academic debate regarding whether prostitution is "violence" or work. I viewed prostitution as a form of work, but recognized that there are exceptions to this: the Bangladeshi and Afghani women trafficked into Heera Mandi are usually forced into prostitution under threat of violence. When Nena travelled to Dubai for work she was ill-treated by her recruiters; this too is an example of where violence and work overlap.

The third chapter focused on Pakistani domestic workers in the UAE. I looked at the nature of domestic work and use of servants to this end and paid particular attention to the unique heterotopic environment in the UAE. Since the majority of the sources for this chapter are

newspaper articles, the chapter also engaged with the debate regarding the role of the media in a society and how the media shapes public opinion. The chapter then went on to discuss three factors that put Pakistani domestic workers at risk of abuse. These are: the divide between the public and private spheres, the perception of an "expatriate threat" by the local Emaratis and a lack of adequate legislation to protect domestic workers. The chapter also dealt with the nature of demand for domestic workers in the UAE and the recent efforts by the UAE government to legislate changes and a greater awareness regarding the problematic issues surrounding domestic workers.

It is the hope of this study that by recognizing prostitution and domestic work in the UAE and keeping these issues on the national and international agendas, we can effect positive change. The government of the UAE has already taken positive steps to remedy the situation with regards to migrant domestic workers. Their efforts will not help Pakistani female migrant domestic workers until their work is legal. Prostitutes, too, are caught in this "grey area." While the government generally turns a blind eye towards prostitution, if a prostitute is caught she is arrested and deported. A thorough understanding of why Pakistani female domestic workers and prostitutes migrate to the UAE and what they go through upon arrival is necessary before any positive change can hope to be effected.

The purpose of this thesis was to provide the groundwork for such an understanding. While my research was limited to secondary sources, I hope that further primary research on this and related topics will be undertaken in the near future. Thorough examinations of the politics, law and society of the UAE are needed, as are histories of domestic work within Pakistan. It is only by building a more complete and holistic understanding of the UAE, migrant workers and women's work that we can begin to understand how "ordering" and "reordering" occurs in this heterotopic environment, and how, in turn, this affects the people living and working in this society.

On a broader level it was the intent of this thesis to show that the reasons that women choose to participate in migrant work are complex and multi-faceted. Migrant work can provide positive opportunities for women. Maha's story and that of her daughter, Nena, show that migrant work can save a family financially and start a woman's career. Maha boasted of having sold her virginity abroad, and this allegedly raised the price she was able to charge later clients. Female domestic workers continue to migrate to the UAE for work despite warnings from their respective governments and stories of exploitation. Pakistan went so far as to ban Pakistani women from working as domestic workers abroad, but they can still be found. The pull of heterotopia is stronger than the fear of abuse or marginalization. If we view migrant labour as a positive

opportunity for women we see that imposing harsher legislation against it is not useful. Instead, further steps must be taken to protect the rights of female migrant workers.

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