

# **The ugly, backward face of Pakistani cricketers revealed - Shahid Afridi to Abdul Razzaq**

Celebrities who are progressive and advocate for the respect of women stand out as exceptions in Pakistan.

Wednesday 22 November 2023, by [BEGAM Amana](#) (Date first published: 17 November 2023).

**Pakistani cricketer Abdul Razzaq, while referring to the Pakistan Cricket Board, [declared](#) that marriage to Indian actor Aishwarya Rai Bachchan would never result in “good-natured” and “moral” children. Razzaq’s nauseating remarks, which he has since deemed as a “slip of tongue”, don’t exactly come as a shock; they only reveal the sexist and communal sentiment that prevails not just in Pakistan’s cricket team but also in its society.**

It is disturbing to witness a man publically demean a woman like Aishwarya just because he doesn’t agree with her career and life choices. And it’s even more disagreeable to see his teammates laud his inappropriate comparison instead of opposing it. Some might justify these actions as a mistake, except that they aren’t; these responses inadvertently reflect the dark side of a country dominated by men.

This offensive comment targeting a non-Muslim woman exposes Pakistan’s relationship with communal patriarchy. And the repercussions of this mindset are painfully evident in the heart-breaking occurrences of abduction, rape, and forced conversion of non-Muslim women in the country.

## **Conversion is the norm**

Have you ever come across the name [Mian Mithu](#) in the context of Pakistan? Give it a quick Google search. This ‘*pir*’ is “notorious in upper Sindh” for allegedly orchestrating forced religious conversions and marriages of teenage Hindu girls. However, he seems to enjoy peculiar favouritism within the Pakistani establishment, often earning support from prominent political parties such as Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). They have embraced, endorsed and shielded Mithu despite the serious allegations against him.

According to a [report](#) by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Pakistani Minorities, approximately 1,000 girls and women aged 12-25 are forcibly converted to Islam in Pakistan every year. They are then compelled to marry their abductors, which has been [described](#) as nothing short of a “human-rights catastrophe”. These alarming statistics, however, aren’t confined to a small section of Pakistanis residing in villages and towns; it exists as a pandemic across the length and breadth of the country.

Those who convert non-Muslim women believe they are rescuing them from ‘the sin’ of idol worship.

This act is perceived as a religious duty and is considered one of the greatest expressions of humanity. This perspective extends to individuals like Razzaq, a cricketer who clinched the 2009 T20 Cricket World Cup for Pakistan. It is clear that he perceives women like Aishwarya as morally corrupt. How can an infidel woman who works with men in the arts ever bear a morally upright child? This distorted viewpoint finds space in the broader Pakistani psyche.

### **Cricketers mirror society**

The same pattern is evident in Shahid Afridi's demeanour, who was seen chuckling as Razzaq made his controversial statement. While he later called the comment improper and urged Razzaq to apologise, Afridi's views on his daughters participating in outdoor sports reveal his deeply misogynistic mindset. He has explicitly [mentioned](#) that he would prohibit his four daughters from playing cricket and other sports "for social and religious reasons." He also proudly shared an incident where he [smashed a TV](#) after his daughter imitated an *aarti* scene from a *Star Plus* soap. It becomes clear that Afridi's seemingly hollow words of apology are mere showmanship; his immediate laughter aligns more accurately with the communal-patriarchal mindset he truly embodies. The striking part is that none of these regressive and controversial actions have ever invited condemnation from the Pakistani public.

Cricketers reflect the attitudes of the society they're part of. And unfortunately, Pakistani cricketers exhibit not only misogynistic and communal biases but also racist attitudes. Former Pakistani cricketer Ramiz Raja laughed - on national television - at a derogatory and racist joke aimed at former West Indies cricketing great Vivian Richards and his then partner, Indian actor Neena Gupta. This highlights the unsettling reality of how deeply ingrained such ideologies are in Pakistani society. It's regrettable to witness that even among the elite, there exists a tolerance for misogyny, hatred toward minorities, and blatant racism.

Masaba's [critique](#) of Raja reflects this truth: "Sickening to see you laugh on national TV in Pakistan at something the world stopped laughing at about 30 years back. Step into the future."

Celebrities who are progressive and advocate for the respect of women, such as Wasim Akram, stand out as exceptions in Pakistan. Figures like Afridi, Raja, and Razzaq appear to be more the norm rather than exceptions. Razzaq reflects the perspective of an average Pakistani, and individuals like Akram, who enjoys widespread global popularity and love, represent a small minority in Pakistan.

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