

Dear Ms Nondini Hussain,

I am highly impressed by your brave and well documented Bengali article named Purush Rochita Dharme Bikalanga Nari, published in the www.mukto-mona.com. You have correctly identified the most vulnerable and dehumanized position of women in Islam.

It is true that in every religion the position of women is more or less degraded. But in Islam it is worst and most wretched. In fact, since its inception Islam has been waging a relentless Jihad against women. And it is extremely cruel, deceptive and hypocritical in this regard.

In this respect, Hinduism may be compared to Islam. But Hinduism is more a social system based on traditions than a religious faith or doctrine. And most importantly, it is not monotheistic and thereby monolithic. Diverse and conflicting ideas and systems are incorporated in it. So it may be difficult, but may not be that much difficult to bring change or reform there. But the same is not true for Islam.

Islam is absolutely a monotheistic religion and thereby it has created a monolithic mind and society. The religious commandments are clearly stated and unchangeable. It is not a religion like Christianity which is not absolutely monotheistic like Islam, because there is division of power between God and Jesus Christ, the founder of the religion. According to the faith of Christianity till the Day of Judgment the entire authority over heaven and earth is bestowed upon Christ, and in the Day of Judgment not God but Christ himself will judge human beings for their sins and virtues. And Islam is not a religion like Buddhism which has no place for the idea of God, heaven and hell. So the problems of women in Islam deserve special consideration, as they are unique in many respects.

Your article has special significance to me, since I believe that the liberation of women is the key to the liberation of human mind in any Muslim society and thereby liberation of the Muslim society as well.

However, we should look at the problems of women in Islam from not only religious or philosophical perspective, but also from political one. And it is easily understandable that Islam is not only a social, but also at the same time a political religion, and Mohammad used religion to establish his political authority as well as a state that the Arabs lacked during the time. In order to achieve his goal he organized the fanatic armed nomadic barbarians as the striking force. Thus came aggressive wars, plunder, rape, slaves, concubines – all justified by the commandments of religion. Since its birth ocean of tears and blood has flowed to appease hunger and wrath of Allah, the idea about the omnipotent, the most magnificent and merciful one.

The legacy continues in a changed world with changed conditions. However, the world may change, but the degradation and humiliation of woman remain unchanged, because the religion demands so.

Thus the politics against woman introduced by Mohammad still continues. Why this politics was introduced, what is its effect and what is its role in perpetuating the all pervasive despotism in a society under the faith of Islam is of extreme importance to understand. Without having answers to these questions it is impossible to pave the way for the uninterrupted development of any Muslim country. Since under Islam no society can generate rational, independent and creative mind, it fails to develop any new thing from within or independently. So, the western countries easily dominate over the Muslim world. That is why the western world and especially the U.S. are so much interested to preserve religion here. They may dislike militant Islam, which is directed against them with destructive power, but they are very much fond of the moderate Islam, which externally may not dare to challenge their domination and exploitation due to its impotency, but internally is no less ferocious and offensive against woman and free thinking. So, in this respect we must realize the politics of the West also.

Since the problem of woman in Islam is essentially a political problem, the problem must also be understood in political terms i.e., from the context of power and must also be solved politically. According to me, the solution lies in the establishment of separate and equal political power for women in every respect of the state and society. So, women will exercise power over the state and society as a separate entity from men, but with equal rights and status.

We should realize that the thought process that leads women to the utterly degraded and enslaved position originates from the concept of absolute oneness, and thereby absolute unity of society. It decries any kind of division of power. Absolute concentration of power in one centre i.e., in one hand is its goal. As it is the only way to attain absolute unification. In Islam the absolute unifying element is a man with sword and whip. A single man must be the absolute authority over all others. This concept is philosophically manifested in Islam in the declaration of the absolute oneness and supremacy of Allah, the idea of a single creator and ruler of the universe i.e., the supreme power.

The very concept of La Shareek Allah is compatible with the absolute subjugation and powerlessness of women in society. Allah is the creation of man's mind. So, through the idea of Allah man sees his own supremacy and singularity. In fact, the very idea of an absolute and supreme One derives from his (in this case Mohammad's) desire to place woman, his primary counter-part, and then all others under his absolute subjugation. But the existence of woman as a separate entity exposes the hollowness of the idea. It reminds him of the fact that singularity is not the whole truth and duality is another truth of nature. Man is only one half of the total and woman is another half. So, truth also may be equally divided or separated.

Thus recognition of woman as a separate and equal entity shatters the idea of absolute singularity or oneness. The existence of woman always shows the incompleteness of man as a human being. So, the solution to him becomes the expulsion of women from social life.

But not only for philosophical or ideological reason women had to be expelled. There was another reason that was practical in nature. Women are basically a pacifying force. But Islam chose mainly the path of war or violence to expand. So, it had to give highest emphasis on inspiring violent instincts of men so that they could fight with all vigor for establishing Mohammad's temporal and religious domain. When war and coercion decide everything, what can women do there? They no longer remain subjects, but become objects to satisfy the appetite of the aggressive, armed, plundering, violent, and rapist males. In this situation women must retreat from social life as far away as possible and take shelter within the walls of the house.

On the other hand, the culture of systematic and permanent war and violence demands expulsion of women from social life as women are not suitable for nurturing physical violence like men. Their physiology and nature do not allow them generally to be as violent and warlike as men. So, their active and effective role in the society hinders the growth of any perpetual and all pervasive system of warfare and violence. Since the expansion of Islam was based mainly on continuous warfare in the name of Jihad, women had to be expelled from the visible social life and pushed into the dark chamber of society where they remained invisible from outside.

In Islam the relationship between Allah and Satan, in fact, reflects its conceived relationship between man and woman in the life process. So, Allah represents the idea of man and Satan represents the idea of woman. A careful study of the Qur-an and Hadith clearly leads us to this conclusion. In some Hadiths women have been equated with Satan in terms. So, the idea of man represents goodness and that of woman represents badness. However, woman in Islam is a necessary evil, without whom the existence of man would have been impossible. Similarly, Satan is also indispensable to Allah to play His despotic game with mankind. Thus duality and thereby multiplicity of nature are recognized in religion also, but in a wrong and perverted form. So all qualities bestowed upon God i.e. upon one entity and all vices bestowed upon Satan i.e. upon another entity. This kind of judgment forgets or denies the argument that since God is the creator of Satan, so it itself becomes the creator or the supreme and ultimate source of all vices or sins of Satan. So what difference remains between God and Satan? Do not they represent the two sides of a single entity? But religion denies rationality.

In this thought process truth is absolute and indivisible one. So, in the absolute sense, one is either good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, right or wrong, black or white. So any difference with the authority is Satanic. No comparative or relative judgment works here. In the thought process there is no separation or division of power. Everything is unipolar, unilineal, unicentric. So, there is no reasoning, no tolerance and no dialectic. In this context, Islamic mind cannot operate freely. That is why the entire Islamic world is mentally obstructed.

Islamic mind is an aggressive and absolutist man's mind. Islamic world is an aggressive and absolutist man's world. As women are the most destructive elements for this mind and world order, they cannot have honorable and visible place here. So, in order to crush this mind and world order men will have to be forced to accept the position of women

with the separate entity and equal status in every sphere of life. Thus the emancipation of the mind under Islam lies in the recognition of the fact that despite belonging to the same species women constitute a separate entity from men. Women and men may have equal role in building society and civilization, but nature has made them different in many respects. So, their role is also not the same in all respects. But both are equally indispensable for the survival of the human species as well as building civilization. Furthermore, we must realize that the relation between man and woman is the most basic or primary social relation. So, it has formidable role in shaping the mind and body of any society.

In order to make the mind under Islam rational the establishment of women's political power is essential. It is the only way to make the society tolerant. Women are inherently more tolerant than men. Nature has made them so. So, society will learn tolerance from them more easily. Besides, man will learn that he is not the sole proprietor of this universe and there is an independent counterpart to co-operate and compete with him with equal status in every sphere of life. This material or social ground by the division of power between man and woman will pave the way for the development of mental faculties.

Philosophical or ideological struggle is, of course, necessary. Some people should do it. But how many people will become truly secular or atheist in this society, where everybody is supposed to be the slave or Banda of Allah? Practically, it is a slave society. By the commandments of religion everybody is a slave of the system which is opposed to any form of freedom, not to speak of free thinking, and based upon extreme form of tyranny or despotism. Where the vast majority of the people cannot think even and do not tolerate different ideas and are extremely fatalist and fearful of the imaginative supernatural supreme authority, how can we expect them to fight against superstition and religion? Who cares for free thinking here? Those who actually care, what is their number? To speak against religion may be dangerous here. After so many years how many educated people even know the name of Araj Ali Matubbar, the great philosopher of this soil? Under the pressure of the vast masses of the people no free thinking can thrive here. No progressive force can penetrate roots deep under the surface of the social soil.

So, the only way I see is to establish a political system where women will exercise their own power over the state and society as equal partners of men. Thus the very foundation of the unicentric thought process manifested through the declaration of La Shareek Allah (God has no partner) will collapse.

That is why western type of democracy and electoral system can give no solution to our problems. In the statecraft men and women are in a simple way equally treated there. So, in the power structure of the West women have no special rights and privileges in recognition of their special and unique role in the procreative and rearing process of the human species. But their conditions are different from ours. Even many aspects of their religion and culture are vastly different from ours. So our problems deserve different solutions.

Without realizing this reality the imitation of the western democracy and electoral system has failed not only to uplift the conditions of women to any considerable extent, but also to establish a truly secular and democratic society and state in any Muslim country. The rule with the support of the majority voters has only led to the gradual deterioration of the conditions of the people, in general, and women, in particular, almost everywhere in the Muslim world. And most miserable remain or become the conditions of women. Since they are the mothers of humanity, no society with human values can thrive here. Their subhuman conditions compel them to give birth only to a subhuman or dehumanized society. So we are in need of the establishment of women's own power in the statecraft.

Thus only women's power, the establishment of women in the realm of state and society as a separate and equal entity can liberate the mind from the shackle of religion, create the space for reasoning and free the society from mental retardation. The old world of male domination, supported by religion and all other arrangements, will collapse. So this will be a new kind of social revolution in the history of mankind. Let us fight for that.

Thank you for your thought provocative article, which has inspired me so much to write to you to express my ideas on the issue. I hope that some of my thoughts may be of some use to you for your future work on the question of woman and religion.

Thanks again,
Shamsuzzoha Manik.
Dhaka, Bangladesh
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