

**ISLAMIC CULTURE AND FEMINISM FROM A PATRIARCHAL POINT OF VIEW**

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Few days back I had a quarrel with one of my loved ones on the subject of Burkha's purpose in a woman's life. In his words, it saves the chastity of women from the evil eyes of salacious men; "You won't be able to imagine if you don't see"; And I countered him, "What about those poor Muslim women who confronted nympholeptic tendencies of the religiously fanatic goons and was forced to submit to their hankering sexual appetite during the Gujarat riot?" "They were in Burkhas and doted on to purdah system," I added. He replied, it was the plight of a communal outrage and should not be observed separately in the light of the violation of chastity. I remain silent and laughed inside within me as I know in a patricentric societal set up, nothing more can be expected from our opposite sex. But my silence at the very moment is the emblematic taciturnity of a complete crowd of janes, who come within the same brackets of vanquished. So far the story and the bottom line have been identical to each other with the same mundane cry for help. Now, let's have a look at the issue from an altogether different angle.

"One is not born, rather becomes a woman"---The prominent quote from Second sex has bespoken perhaps the most endorsed truth of all

ages: the members of the fair and gentle sex have been tempered to be ornamented as the most loyal and obedient slave to carry out the duties of a patriarchal society. Who is supposed to shoulder the responsibility? Why, our good old mother, aunt grandmother! They are conditioned in a similar environment and would be extremely happy to pass over their lessons to the next generations. Yes, we girls are the 'ornaments' of men who would love to use us according to their wishes and desire. And to introduce the girl child in society, the grooming starts at an early age; where she is not but her brother is the necessary element for the society being the stronger one who would earn for the family. Besides, being a female by biology, it is highly probable that she may fall victim to some titillating eyes. She must blanket her celibacy with the *purdah*. Be existing as a devout Muslim girl, it should be given the utmost priority. Since *Hadees* commands, a woman must wear a Burkha after reaching puberty. But, Burkha does not necessarily ensure to protect the chastity of women from the men's corruptive vulgarity. So far, the picture, as perceived till now, narrates the story of a gender who from the very beginning conditioned to be pushed aside and to be a subaltern. Next, when the girl, now a woman, arrives in the 'safe' hands of



her in-laws, there she confronts certain ball games in the shape of her in-laws that she is forced to bow down to their will and desire. This is the absolute truth of a woman's life if she is not outrageous against all the discriminations and injustices that were done to her. Thus she is a 'double subaltern', as Mrs. Spivak rightly hints (from a different perspective). In addition, if the husband turns out to be a 'quintessential patriarch', it could be the worst nightmare for a helpless woman, who at losses all hope and embraces her sorrowful fate and readily accept the subjugation of her son, again a consummate figure, in the last days of her suffocated earthly life. Thus, the bottom line of the story is a girl child, female by Allah's will, is a quadruple subaltern entity, if she is to be embellished as a domiciled creature. If she ever dares to step out of the threshold of her home, she is inevitably an easy prey for hungry horny men in her workplace; in this way, a feminine figure bestows an identity of a confirmed member of an oppressed sect, who are not ready to take any immediate step to find a remedy. If urged, they would remark, "We are meant to be like this, this is the norm of society." The acidic truth of the canvas is, not the men, it is we, the members of the fair and gentle sex, are the faithful enemy of our own creed. We have never learned to think outside the societal framework.

Now let us turn our vision to 'tolerant' men who owe a bit of sympathy towards our depressed

and desolated class. They shower love. They empathize with our aches, balms our wounds, embrace our flaws with all heart. From such a man, what would one anticipate? Of course, this assurance, that this man would not license anyone to disparage his better half on any terms. But, in reality, these warm-hearted and benevolent men would not be able to drop any single word from their mouth when the issue is connected with their family, friends, and society. These 'generous creatures' pusillanimously abide by the norms, just like 'go, with the flow'. The coward souls would maintain quietude and advise their spouse to endure everything for the sake of the betterment of the family. They do not have the courage to stand by their wives defying against all odds. This is the real good nature of our 'tolerant men' being tolerable to anything and everything, be it unjust humiliation or unbearable harassment, these 'good boys' are just good enough for nothing. The hapless elements comprising of good old grandmothers and tolerant men heavily burdened the free-thinking and open-minded opinions so much so that it has jammed the well-wishing capability of humanity choked the voiced who could have dared to speak out loud against injustices. Our good old grandmothers along with their century-old pessimistic conventions have created such a societal set-up that cheated its own sect.