

Feminism is a Fool's Paradise for Women in Search of Self-Worth and a Major Cause of Destruction of Family Life in Pakistan

Allah (swt) created man and woman not to run a gender competition in this world, but to help each other in reaching the required standards set by Allah (swt). Colonialism and its rule over the Muslim world brought the feminist women's rights struggle to the Muslim lands as the Western way of life was adopted. This shows how the style of ruling affects the thoughts and emotions of people. How women in a society are treated says a lot about it. One of the biggest changes that Islam brought to the people of Makkah with its emergence was giving worth to women. Sadly, now, when activists talk about women's rights they relate all the pagan values which are harming the status and treatment of women to Islam. In addition, Muslims representing Islam to the world are not setting good examples either.

Any woman suffering in Pakistan is automatically pronounced as a victim of Islamic values - be it the so-called battle of Malala Yousafzai for education or Mukhtaran Mai's fight for her rights against a gang rape. Both cases, which have been opportunistically manipulated and exploited by secularists and feminists alike, depicted women as being deprived of education in an Islamic Society and being victims of men's lust, and made these women the flagbearers of women's freedom according to Western standards, ignoring the fact that for almost the last 100 years Islam has not been practised as a system in Pakistan or any Muslim land for this region has been invaded physically and intellectually by the West. In the Subcontinent, Hindu culture has always been mixed with Islamic culture and as Hindus and Muslims lived in the same society, many practices and attitudes were adopted intentionally and unintentionally. Furthermore, foreign funded NGO's (non-governmental organisations) in Pakistan are actively working for liberating (or rather westernizing) Pakistani women. The West, for its own material benefits, originally entered these lands under the guise of being friendly helpful traders and quickly turned into spiritual and intellectual reformers. Feminism, as appropriated and defined by the West, has too often become a tool of cultural imperialism. The definitions, the terminology, the assumptions, even the issues, the forms of struggles and institutions are exported from West to East.

The capitalist system (that has become a religion for the ones living under it) cannot provide anyone with the due rights as deserved by the people and wonderfully defined by The Almighty (swt). Allah (swt) has given men authority over women but with this authority comes great responsibility. **﴿وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾** **“And they (women) have rights (over their husbands) similar (to those of their husbands) over them (as regards obedience and respect) to what is reasonable, but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them. And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise”** [al-Baqarah 2:228].

Furthermore, Rasool Allah (saw) commands his people to be kind to women. The Prophet (saw) said: **«فَاسْتَوْصُوا بِالنِّسَاءِ خَيْرًا»** **“I urge you to treat women well.”** [Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 331; Muslim, 1468]

The modern-day aims of feminism are in fact even a step ahead of gender equality. Here in Pakistan, for example, things have gotten worse and the demand from being equals has turned into a demand for being treated as superior. What we must remember is that all this is

coming from a secularism affected society that believes in evolution in thoughts and laws. So according to this viewpoint, the roles of men and women can also evolve. In contrast, Islam, from the beginning, has described the limits in the areas of life as well as the rights and roles of men and women in marriage and the family unit in detail and in the most sound manner which protects family life beautifully and gives it utmost importance, and hence it does not require change. A perfect system does not need to evolve; only a flawed one which both creates problems and is unable to solve them effectively. Hence this flawed system goes through regular changes in a desperate attempt to try and solve the affairs of its people.

One of the consequences of feminism and the secular system from which it was born is that the divorce rate has been on the rise in Pakistan over the last decade. In Lahore city alone more than 100 divorces are registered in family courts in a day. The divorce rate is increasing not only in the upper class of society but also in the lower and middle classes. From February 2005 to January 2008, approximately 75,000 divorce cases were registered. From February 2008 to May 2011, 124,141 divorce cases were filed. Around 259,064 separations have taken place in the provincial metropolis over the last decade. In 2010, 40,410 separation cases were filed in the city's family courts. In the Punjab, the number of Khul' cases (divorce initiated by the woman) rose from 13,299 in 2012 to 18,901 in 2016.

The effect this rise in broken homes has had on individuals, especially on children, is heart-breaking. A number of NGOs working in Pakistan for women's rights facilitate women with all the legal requirements for getting away from a stressful marriage, but does this provide a solution? Do both the parties even know what they really want from life and their marriage and how they will cope with their lives after separation? The Quran on one hand gives a couple the right to be separated but also advises them to first see in themselves if there is possibility for reconciliation.

Allah (swt) in the holy Quran mentions that: ﴿وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَأَبْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا﴾ **“And if you fear dissension between the two, send an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will cause it between them. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Acquainted [with all things].”** [An-Nisaa: 35]

The main reason for this increase in the divorce rate is considered to be the growing financial independence of women as working women who are financially independent are less likely to stay in an unfulfilling marriage. The question is when and how the right for divorce is being used. Marriage is a very honourable institution that raises healthy members in a society and the right for divorce is provided by Allah (swt) to both partners in case of disturbance. Instead, this peaceful mutual relationship has been turned into a battlefield and divorce has become a lethal weapon of destruction which not only affects the partners but destroys the society.

A decision taken in the name of freedom has multiple effects and financial independence is not the only aspect. If a woman has children and gets separated from her husband and earns her own money and spends it on herself and her children's education and upbringing, then this in fact is an exploitation of women as Islam has put the responsibility of financially maintaining children on men. Furthermore, if a woman works while she is married and earns money, the man has no right over her money in Islam.

Islam has provided women with their rights from its beginning - rights which Western women fought for years to secure. Share in inheritance, right to vote, right for a good

education, right on the husband's money and much more. Therefore, Muslim women, instead of blindly following the Western-imposed values, need to see what rights and roles Islam has enjoined upon them. Islam specifies that the primary role of a woman is the upbringing of the children and being a dutiful wife, but this should not restrict her from gaining knowledge, taking part in politics, getting employed or even doing her own business. The Muslim woman needs to understand that she was never deprived of any rights as her rights were defined in the Divine Law.

In addition, another leading cause of the rising divorce rate in Pakistan is extramarital affairs. The West has always targeted men's right to have more than one wife in Islam as an evil act, but has sky high rates of infidelity. In Pakistan, like other Muslim countries, family values are still not as fallen as in the West, as its people are still left with the remnants of the Islamic social system and we as individuals are still linked to the Quran and have inherited Islamic values from our parents, but the deterioration is alarming and bringing the same rotten affects to us as in the non-Muslim societies.

According to a 2005-2006 Aga Khan University study, anxiety and depressive disorders in Pakistan stands at 34 percent, and a news report claims that depression affects 44 percent of the entire population. Its prevalence is higher in women at 57.5 percent, compared to 25 percent in men. A major reason for this mental and emotional turmoil is the high scale of family instability, tension and breakdown. Instead of men and women helping each other and together rising in status, many are spending their lives in racing for the power game. ﴿وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ

“The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give charity and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah will have mercy upon them, for Allah is Almighty and Wise.” [Surat Al-Tawba 9:71]

One wonders how today's Muslim reformists and feminists would have interpreted the experience of Hazrat Hajira, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (AS), when the bond between the husband (Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and the wife (Hazrat Hajira) was not weakened by the hardships faced by Hajira. She had completed faith in her husband because she knew that her husband was obedient to Allah (swt) and when Allah is with you then there is nothing to fear. She definitely went through a tough time but stayed steadfast and relied on Allah (swt), and as a result she got honour in this world and a great reward in the Hereafter. And because of her reliance on the Almighty (swt) she was able to raise a praiseworthy son.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Ikhlaf Jehan

Member of the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir