



THE PRODUCTIVE-INCLUSIVE ERAS OF A DECOLONIZING GENDER-SENSITIZED SECULAR-FRIENDLY ISLAM

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of Islam in light of its relationship with other sects, has diminished the interactive potency of muslims with other cultures. Given the vulnerability in its establishment as a religion, branching out as other Abrahamic faiths, Mohammedanism needs a reformed sense of integration - both within (across genders intrinsic to believers) and beyond (across castes that may or may not share similar histories). This paper discusses literature that attempts to bridge such intrinsic gender discords and external patriarchal divides. It argues that, if Muslim rulers of a past had secular values in conquering parts of the world - there would be no need for a radical enforcement of conversion. Rather, a choice-based adoption of core values of the faith would sustain through milder politics across nations where muslims were (and still are) considered minorities. It further unravels the internal conflicts of a lack of communication between two genders within a household, which has resulted in laws that are patrilineal, dominated by the masculine form of leadership. If an intrinsic dialogue that is inclusive of women's rights within communities is made to happen, it could dissolve insecurities of the male-ego in terms of redefining conquered rule, making room for expression of feminine traits within men, and grounding societies in nurturance and tolerance. Lastly, it points out strategies for secular integration of islamists within pluralistic and heterogeneous cultures - which we feel may negate gender stereotyping or the assumptive doubting of people of other faiths - in relating to a modern world, where there may be no room or necessity for colonizing religions to be established on multi-cultural terrains.

KEYWORDS : Interfaith confluences, culturally pluralistic landscapes, secularism and peace, patriarchal colonisation

INTRODUCTION

Historically, Islam has been ascribed to patriarchy, with majority of muslim rulers viewed as colonizers. Very little documentation reveals the code of secular harmony, as showcased by a South-Indian leader, Tipu Sultan - while he preserved architectural heritage and cultural symbolism - by not razing a temple to build a mosque in the fort town of Srirangapatna - Karnataka.

Other cases include how Akbar translated the Mahabharata so Muslims could read and learn from epics of Hinduism. Contrastingly, Shah Jahan was imprisoned by his own son, revealing disharmony within the caste and family - in the light of succession.

While inter-religious tolerance is preached and prescribed by Muslim men, it is rarely channeled to engage in cross-cultural dialogues in a Hindu-majority country such as India. Islam has been ostracized to the forceful return of muslims, revoking citizenship rights, towards partitioned neighbors of post Indian independence.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Throughout the world, Arab domination and resistance by tribes until successful conversion, reveal tensions of ancestral descent in terms of being truly muslim. The social movement of Amazigh culture and linguistics was supported by many smaller associations scattered throughout northern Africa. This movement highlights an indigenous African collective identity that challenges the identity of the Maghreb with Arabs, Islam, and the Middle East. The historical origins have been linked to migration and resettlement alongside interaction with various tribes and communities before being identified as descendents of Arabs. (Cynthia B, 2009)

In a pursuit of seeking true origins of muslim descent we have forgotten the creative arts and expressive folklore that our ancestors used to express identity while engaging with the masses from other faiths, and living harmonious histories with them.

Problem Statement

Beyond such conflicts, where art is finding its way into expression, there comes a need to highlight contributions from

Islamic scholars - in the fields of Arts and Sciences, that need intrinsic reclaiming - in order to revisit a sense of value and service to the world-at-large.

Islam has been known for mathematical astronomy (that) was essentially Ptolemaic, but in which new variables were introduced and new solutions to problems in spherical trigonometry were derived from India replaced those of Almagest. (David P, 2014)

The vast potentials of islamic scientists and their contributions to present-day technological applications, has been numbed over a period of constant strife with the world. While migrating Islam would have borrowed theories from the Indian subcontinent to be informed in fields the-like-of astronomy, documenting the rich conversations that led to borrowed ideas has gone amiss - alienating the religious members from interacting beyond the immediate concerns of preserving the faith.

Traditional "age of decline" in Arabic science was a "Golden Age" for astronomy, where some techniques and theorems developed during this period were similar to those which were used by Copernicus in developing his own non-Ptolemaic astronomy. (George S, 1995)

METHODOLOGY

This is a review paper and the basic research methods adopted were secondary sourcing of literature from peer-reviewed journals to build this argument.

The Role Of Muslim Women

As Muslim men, from rulers to the common man, would have refrained from engaging with people from other religions - beyond housing or trade - they even subdued their women from healthy expression within the walls of their own homes. Patriarchy finds commonality across many faiths, and so did conquer and conquest hold as a valid strategy for other migratory religions. But the constant silencing of the other gender, constricted living conditions that travellers who fought wars to spread their religion - is still an imprinted cultural memory for faiths such as Islam to break-free from. While other faiths employed milder political strategies to spread their 'word of God', muslims must acknowledge the trauma of

their own pasts - to liberate themselves from dormancies that are dysfunctional to them - in current-day inter-faith living and relating to the world beyond.

The evolution of female sexuality from the time of the Prophet until the Middle Ages, through the female gendered roles of wifehood and motherhood as found in the Qur'an, hadith and fiqh - where the constitution of sexuality and gendering that exists in the patriarchal society of the modern world; goes amiss - in terms of alienated women's rights while constructing a reformed religious framework that imposes old texts - further subduing feminine expression in modern-day Islam. (Elizabeth S L, 2005)

The masculine second-person voice narrating God's message to a masculine prophet, also treats women as third-person in the holy texts. This inherent gender discrimination manifests in the ways in which men relate to women in marriage, to their mothers and sisters too. For a revolution of-sorts, a recapture in first-person of the first woman to embrace the religion - can offer the feminine's dialogue with divinity, directing a gender-fair parity on contributing to the faith, identifying as musalmans, and engaging with other faiths in terms of gender equality.

Research Findings

The respect for women by patriarchal men, their representation in a patrilineal society, and their freedom of thought and action - needs serious questioning. An intrinsic shift in the way muslim men relate to the other gender within their own sects, in my opinion - will free monarchy off its insecurities and lack of sense of internal power.

The regained faith in the potentials of the opposite gender may break limiting assumptions that currently dictate a masculine-dominant, counter-intuitive semi-productive society caught in a traumatic past of war and colonization. The humble urge here is to heal from a cultural memory of eras of colonial conquests, to integrate muslims across genders and sects into more inclusive communities, enhancing their productive contributions beyond identity and rule, via secular strategies of collaborating with other cultures.

The design of various 'space-types' in which Muslim women were more able to participate in the public forums, was created in large by changes from the impact of colonization. This has originated from India's feminist action pre-independence, and resulted in new public spaces within which reassessed gender relations could develop. These were central to the evolution of Indian Muslim women participating in public space with more power and visibility. (Mahua S, 2001)

In recent times, women protesting against 'Tripple - Talaq' or asserting their rights to education, over land ownership, citizenship etc are evident in terms of representing women's choice in a society dominated by men, irrespective of religion.

Recommended Alternatives

Islamic concepts of public and private space influences how these two kinds of spaces are used differently by men and women, and their differential levels of inclusion and exclusion in domestic private space and extra-domestic public space. This further highlights that faith limits the mobility of women in male public space and provides the context, pretext, and opportunity for women to experience a female-friendly public space. (Shampa M & Sanjoy M, 2001)

Women reclaiming their voice could offer a way towards men comprehending alternate perspectives, thus muslims overall engaging with individuals and groups of diverse castes in a just and empathetic way. This could also change attitudes of other sects, countering Islamophobia with love and

compassion.

Conclusive Questions

The hope is that by documenting struggles of and contributions made by women scholars of Islamic families, it may help shed light on re-examining a passively oppressive, gender-skewed community that is superficially and subconsciously victimizing the other gender(s) to prove the power of hetero-masculinity. In an attempt to modernize religious beliefs, here are a few questions that this research has led to:

- Does Islam need a reprogramming to assert the inclusion of the feminine in order to neutralize certain dysfunctionals of patriarchy and hetero-masculine privilege?
- While modern Islam no longer recognizes the need for an imposed colonial rule, and gains secular rights in pluralistic nations, does it need to re-examine inter-gender relations within the family unit?
- In order to do so, what kinds of further studies could integrate dissolution of past stereotypes around womanhood, with an erasure of the societal memory of colonization - that has left muslim men guarded against neighbors of another religion, and regimental towards their own community members of lower age and opposite / alternate gender?

The research concludes with a need to visibilize the proactive participation of women not just as islands of feminine expression, but an interactive building of a newer argument with the opposite sex and other faiths, on their rightful inclusion and voice in navigating a secular national politic of decolonized democracy.

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