

Islam, Middle East and Fascism (continued)

In his Book of Counsel for Kings, Ghazali sums up all that a woman has to suffer & endure because of Eve's misbehaviour in the Garden of Eden:

“As for the distinctive characteristics with which God on high has punished women, (the matter is as follows): “When Eve ate fruit which He had forbidden to her from the tree in Paradise, the Lord, be He praised, punished women with eighteen things: (1) menstruation; (2) childbirth; (3) separation from mother & father & marriage to a stranger; (4) pregnancy; (5) not having control over her own person; (6) a lesser share in inheritance; (7) her liability to be divorced & inability to divorce; (8) its being lawful for men to have four wives, but for a woman to have only one husband; (9) the fact that she must stay secluded in the house; (10) the fact that she must keep her head covered inside the house; (11) the fact that two women's testimony has to be set against the testimony of one man; (12) the fact that she must not go out of the house unless accompanied by a near relative; (13) the fact that men take part in Friday & feast day prayers & funerals while women do not; (14) disqualification for rulership & judgeship; (15) the fact that merit has one thousand components, only one of which is attributable to women, while 999 are attributable to men; (16)... (17) the fact that if their husbands die they must observe a waiting period of four months & ten days before remarrying. (18) The fact that if their husbands divorce them they must observe a waiting period of three months or three menstrual periods before remarrying... “

The Koran, of course, permits men an unlimited number of women: IV.3 And if ye are apprehensive that ye shall not deal fairly with orphans, then, of other women who seem good in your eyes marry but two, or three or four; & if ye still fear that ye shall not act equitably, then one only; or the slaves whom ye have acquired XXIII.1,5,6. Happy now the believers, humble in their prayers, shunning vain conversation, paying the poor-due, & who restrain their appetites except with their wives or the slaves whom their right hands possess: for in that case they shall be free from blame.

XXXIII.49-51 O Prophet! We allow thee thy wives whom thou hast dowered, & the slaves whom thy right hand possesseth out of the booty which God hath granted thee, & the daughters of thy uncle, thy paternal & maternal aunts who fled with thee to Medina, & any believing woman who hath given herself up to the Prophet, if the Prophet desired to wed her - a Privilege for thee above the rest of the Faithful We well know what we have settled for them, in regard to their wives & to the slaves...; that there may be no fault on thy part... Thou mayst decline for the present whom thou wilt of them, & thou mayest take to thy bed her whom thou wilt, & whomsoever thou shalt long for of those thou shalt have before neglected, & this shall not be a crime in thee.”

The inequality between men & women in matters of giving testimony or evidence; or being a witness is enshrined in the Koran: II.282 "Call in two male witnesses from among you but if two men cannot be found, then one man & two women whom you judge fit to act as witnesses; so that if either of them commit an error the other will remember."

On adultery the Koran says: XXIV.4 Those that defame honourable women & cannot produce four witnesses shall be given eighty lashes. "Of course, Muslim jurists will only accept four male witnesses. These witnesses must declare that they have "seen the parties in the very act of carnal conjunction".

In questions of heritage, the Quran tells us that male children should inherit twice the portion of female children IV.11-12 A male shall inherit twice as much as a female. If there be more than two girls, they shall have two-thirds of the inheritance, but if there be one only, she shall inherit the half. Parents shall inherit a sixth each, if the deceased have a child; but if he leave no child & his parents be his heirs, his mother shall have a third. If he have brothers, his mother shall have a sixth after payment of any legacy he may have bequeathed or any debt he may have owed.

The birth of a girl is still seen as a catastrophe in Islamic societies.. The system of inheritance just adds to her misery & her dependence on the man.... If she is an only child she receives only half the legacy of her father, the other half going to the male members of the father's family. If there are two or more daughters, they inherit 2/3rds. This pushes fathers & mothers to prefer male children to female so that they can leave the entirety of their effects or possessions to their own descendants. "Yet when a new-born girl is announced to one of them his countenance darkens & he is filled with gloom"; Koran XLIII. 15. The situation is even worse when a woman loses her husband - she only receives a quarter of the legacy & one eighth if there are. If the deceased leaves more than one wife, all the wives are still obliged to share among themselves a quarter or one eighth of the legacy.

All Muslim males can at any moment separate themselves from their wives, can repudiate their wives without formality, without explanations, without compensation. It is enough for the husband to pronounce the phrase "You are divorced" & it is done. Up to a period of three months the divorce is revocable. If the husband pronounces "You are divorced" three times, then the divorce is definitive. In the latter case the divorced wife cannot return to her husband until she has been married, "enjoyed", & divorced by another husband. Divorce depends entirely on the will & caprice of the husband - he may divorce his wife without any misbehaviour on her part, or without assigning any cause. As far as the custody of children goes, it is the mother who has the right to keep them. But as soon as she decides to remarry, she automatically loses her right to her children from the previous marriage.... In the case where the husband has the custody of children, if he remarries he does not lose this right to keep his children. Thus the woman is faced with the choice of remarrying & losing custody of her children or keeping her children & not marrying. This of course leads to a total insecurity for the women. Divorce is very frequent in Arab countries; instead of keeping four

wives at the same time, which is rather expensive, a man simply changes his wife several times as recommended by the great Al Ghazali.

If a woman asks a man for a divorce, he may agree if he is paid or compensated in some way...In such a case she is not entitled to the repayment of her dower. The Koran sanctions such a dissolution II.229 "If ye fear that they cannot observe the ordinances of God, then no blame shall attach to either of you for what the wife shall herself give for her redemption."

An annulment of a marriage means a woman loses the right to the dowry & must give back what she has already received. Divorced women do have the right to re-marry but " must wait keeping themselves from men, three menstrual courses." (II. 228)

Umberto Eco: [13] "Ur-Fascism (Eternal Fascism) is based upon a selective populism, a qualitative populism, one might say. In a democracy, the citizens have individual rights, but the citizens in their entirety have a political impact only from a quantitative point of view - one follows the decisions of the majority. For Ur-Fascism (Eternal Fascism), however, individuals as individuals have no rights, and the People is conceived as a quality, a monolithic entity expressing the Common Will. Since no large quantity of human beings can have a common will, the Leader pretends to be their interpreter..."

Liberal democracy extends the sphere of individual freedom and attaches all possible value to each man or woman. Individualism is not a recognizable feature of Islam ; instead the collective will of the Muslim people is constantly emphasized. There is certainly no notion of individual rights, which developed in the West, especially during the eighteenth century. The constant injunction to obey the Caliph, who is God's Shadow on Earth, is hardly conducive to creating a rights -based individualist philosophy. The hostility to individual rights is manifest in these two excerpts, one from the great Ibn Khaldun, and one from a recent Muslim thinker A.K. Brohi, a former Minister of Law and Religious Affairs in Pakistan who has often written on human rights from an Islamic perspective.

First, Ibn Khaldun: "All religious laws and practices and everything that the masses are expected to do requires group feeling. Only with the help of group feeling can a claim be successfully pressed,....Group feeling is necessary to the Muslim community. Its existence enables (the community) to fulfill what God expects of it."

Now A.K.Brohi : "Human duties and rights have been vigorously defined and their orderly enforcement is the duty of the whole of organized communities and the task is specifically entrusted to the law enforcement organs of the state. The individual if necessary has to be sacrificed in order that that the life of the organism be saved. Collectivity has a special sanctity attached to it in Islam."

"[In Islam] there are no "human rights" or "freedoms" admissible to man ...in essence the believer owes

obligation or duties to God if only because he is called upon to obey the Divine Law and such human rights as he is made to acknowledge seem to stem from his primary duty to obey God ." (Note the chillingly frightening, fascist and totalitarian phrase, "the individual if necessary has to be sacrificed.")

Umberto Eco [14] "Ur-Fascism speaks Newspeak. Newspeak was invented by Orwell, in 1984, ...But elements of Ur-Fascism are common to different forms of dictatorship. All the Nazi or Fascist schoolbooks made use of an impoverished vocabulary, and an elementary syntax, in order to limit the instruments for complex and critical thinking."

A.K.Brohi already quoted above, goes on to write, "By accepting to live in bondage to this Divine Law, man learns to be free," which again frighteningly reminds one of Orwell's Newspeak...

"Freedom is Slavery."

As for Arabic, one Muslim philosopher, Shabbir Akhtar who taught at the International Islamic University in Malaysia has written of the limitations of Arabic, "In modern analytical philosophy, there is hardly anything in Arabic or any other Islamic tongue. Philosophical discussion is best conducted in English. Owing to the grammatical limitations of of Arabic, it is impossible to express most philosophical claims with an acceptable degree of rigour and clarity. Moreover Arabic is a devotional language lacking the vocabulary requisite for detached discussion of controversial matters."

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