

Discourses of Feminism in the Perspective of Allama Iqbal and the West

LES DISCOURS DU FÉMINISME DANS LA PERSPECTIVE D'ALLAMA IQBAL ET D'OCCIDENT

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Abstract

Feminism is a movement for the political, social, and education equality of women with men. In the past, women have been degraded, subjugated, enslaved, suppressed and sexually tortured in most parts of the world. In modern times, women struggled for their emancipation and claimed for 'equality' and 'complete freedom' that appeared in the form of different feminist movements. The apostles of feminism do not waste any chance in painting Islam as a backward and discriminatory religion. Allama Iqbal, a great Muslim philosopher, has also discussed about women's role and status in a society, therefore he may be studied in this respect. More particularly, his lectures, discourses, research papers and poetry like 'Ramooz-eBekhud', 'Zareb-e-Kaleem', and 'Javed Nama' can be analyzed for his feminist approach as well as Allama has analyzed the Western attitude towards women. Iqbal is against that 'equality' demanded by European women because the natural responsibilities and the perceived roles of men and women are different, how both can be evaluated by the same scale. Equality and freedom are relative terms. According to Iqbal feminist movements are a trap and intrigue of the capitalists and money-lenders, devised in the name of 'revolution.' This paper compares and analyzes western feminist movements with Iqbal's perspective on feminism.

Key words: Feminism; Allama Iqbal; Western

feminist movements

Résumé

Le féminisme est un mouvement pour l'égalité politique, sociale, et l'éducation des femmes avec les hommes. Dans le passé, les femmes ont été dégradés, subjugué, asservi, supprimé et sexuellement torturé dans la plupart des régions du monde. Dans les temps modernes, les femmes ont lutté pour leur émancipation et réclamé pour «l'égalité» et «liberté» qui est apparu sous la forme de différents mouvements féministes. Les apôtres du féminisme ne pas perdre toute chance dans la peinture l'islam comme une religion arriérée et discriminatoire. Allama Iqbal, un grand philosophe musulman, a également discuté du rôle des femmes et leur statut dans une société, donc il peut être étudié à cet égard. Plus particulièrement, ses conférences, discours, documents de recherche et de poésie comme 'Ramooz-eBekhud', 'Zareb-e-Kaleem', et 'Javed Nama' peut être analysé pour son approche féministe ainsi que Allama a analysé l'attitude occidentale envers les femmes. Iqbal est contre cette «égalité» exigé par les femmes européennes parce que les responsabilités naturelles et la perception du rôle des hommes et des femmes sont différents, comment les deux peuvent être évaluées par la même échelle. L'égalité et la liberté sont des termes relatifs. Selon Iqbal mouvements féministes sont un piège et les intrigues des capitalistes et des usuriers, conçu dans le nom de «révolution». Ce document compare et analyse les mouvements féministes occidentaux à la perspective d'Iqbal sur le féminisme.

Mots clés: Féminisme; Allama Iqbal; Mouvements féministes d'occidentaux

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Feminism is a movement for the equality of women with men in all domains including political, social, and educational. Great Britain and the United States opened up this movement. It has its roots in the 18th century modernization, humanism and Industrial Revolution. Feminist movements are usually concerned with the issues of employment, equality in the workplace, education, child-care, contraception, and abortion, sexual harassment in the workplace, stereotypes, and political representation (Steeves, 1987). Seminars, books, talk shows, conferences, demonstrations and many other tools are being used to propagate the feminist agenda. However, feminism is perceived differently in different parts of the world as supported by Feminist Standpoint theory of Chafetz (1997). This paper aims to highlight the perspectives of Allama Iqbal, the co-founder of Pakistan, and the west on feminism. A perspective is shaped by experiences that are structured by a person's place in the social hierarchy and may lead to the achievement of a standpoint (O'Brien Hallstein, 2000). Iqbal's perspective is explored on the issue of feminism.

History is witness that woman has always been deprived of their rights and suppressed. Not a single civilization or religion of the world has endowed women their due status except Islam. Nevertheless Islam is getting a hostile treatment from western world especially projected through western media. Recently France has implemented the law of non-veiling for women. If any woman is found veiling, she will be charged 150 Euros on the spot. It's not the women but the men who are formulating and implementing laws for women. This is again a suppression on the voices unheard and marginal. As proposed by Hartsock based on Marx's claim that "a correct vision of class society is available from only one of the two major class positions in capitalist society" (1983, p. 106). Allama Iqbal, a great Muslim philosopher, has also discussed about women's role and status in a society. This paper compares and analyzes western feminist movements with Iqbal's standpoint on feminism. His lectures, discourses, research papers and poetry like 'Ramooz-eBekhudai', 'Zareb-e-Kaleem', and 'Javed Nama' are analyzed for feminist approach of Allama Iqbal and Islam in comparison with the Western attitude towards women.

Iqbal says,

"Johar'e mard ayyan hota ha bey min'nat'e ghair,
Ghair kay haath mein hae johar'e aurat key namood"

It shows that how western society exploits the potential of women. Not only the western woman is facing such condition but also the women of other societies counteract similar conditions. Indian civilization did not recognize woman as an individual rather she was taken as a property or plaything. In Buddhist civilization, seclusion from women was considered the ultimate success of man. In Greece, women were labeled as 'inferior creature' but later

on she was called "goddess of sexual appetite". Romans did almost the same towards their women as the Greece did. History is witness that women has been subjected to suppression, subjugated, degraded, and sexually tortured.

In modern times, women struggled for their emancipation and claimed for 'equality' and 'complete freedom'. Iqbal says, "I openly acknowledge with reference to Quranic verse 'men are protector of women' therefore, I can never be a supporter of equality between men and women" (Mueene, 1963). The term 'equality' is a relative term and has become a hollow slogan which is neither materialized by communism nor by capitalism. Iqbal is against the 'equality' demanded by European women because the natural responsibilities and the perceived roles of men and women are different, how both can be evaluated by the same scale. 'Equality' is a relative term, perceived and explained in different feminist approaches in quite a different manner. Muslim scholars, dominantly male, have interpreted the position of women that is always negotiable. For example, Ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240) and Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) who in contradiction to the proverbially harsh Umer al-Khattab, the second of four righteous caliph, and Khorasan born scholar/philosopher Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111) strongly argued for the emancipation of women (Walther 1993,40). With the expansion of Islam, non-Arab prejudices against women were written into Islamic law (many theologians who later developed and interpreted the Sharia were of non-Arab stock (Walther, 1993). Therefore the egalitarian message of Islam was conveniently forgotten.

According to Iqbal feminist movements are planned strategies and traps devised in the name of 'revolution' to serve capitalists interests. Islam is primarily a cosmopolitan culture that, since its inception, has preached the sort of ethnic and religious tolerance that many Western societies are still trying to achieve, although it has long failed to eradicate certain social and political inequalities based on class, gender, and religion. Miriam Cooke (2001, p. 59) states, "Islamic feminism is not a coherent identity, but rather a contingent, contextually determined strategic self-positioning movement." Islam is practiced differently in the entire Islamic world due to different factors. Therefore the problems faced by Muslim women are different depending on cultural, social, political and economic conditions. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu visited Turkey in the 18th century. She penned down her observations that she "never saw a country where women may enjoy so much liberty and free from all reproach as in Turkey" (quoted in Melman 1992, p. 87). In Islamic countries, women managed to rise to political leadership despite the odds against them. Ibn Battuta, the renowned Moroccan traveler from Tangier was impressed by the large number of women who still attended prayers in the mosque when he was in Sheraz.

It is said that the west champions the concept of

gender equality and brings it to an ideal and desirable level but that concept of equality is not 'rationale'. The non-Muslims point out gender differences maintained at various levels in Islam, they are not able to realize the essence of those differences. Biologically speaking variations and differences exist and add to the beauty of life. In the name of equality or gender revolution, elimination of this diversity and difference is coercion and negation of nature. Iqbal perceived this difference as a biological phenomenon and nature's plan. He did not consider women inferior to men as he narrated, "I went to Italy and came across a gentleman called Prince Caeteni who was fond of Islamic history. I asked him why he was interested in it, he replied, 'Islam turned women to men' (i.e. Islamic faith instilled great faith and enthusiasm in the hearts of its womenfolk that they became equal to men)".³ In the name of feminism and basic rights West have deprived women of the feminine identity and character. Every effort is made to convert her to 'he-woman.' She has been pulled out of her house for the whole industrial sector. Apparently charming yet deceptive slogans of woman emancipation and declarations of gender equality could not eliminate preferential wage structure on gender basis. Exploitations and miseries of women are increased even after about two hundred years of the so-called modernization, emancipation, enlightenment and human progress. As compared to the teachings of Islam, woman is considered as 'woman' and Islam provided her all opportunities for progress. Iqbal is convinced that both men and women are equal as far as human beings as specie is concerned. In Ramooz-e-Bekhudee, Iqbal expresses,

"Poshish'a uryani'a mardan zan ast
Husan'a dilju ishq ra parahan ast"

This verse is with reference to the Quranic verse that 'the wives are the dress of their husbands and they are the dress of their wives'. Women are a show piece or a sex symbol in the modern 'Hindu' and European society. Apparently she enjoys so-called liberty and freedom but in fact she is not bestowed with the reverence she deserves. In the European society, an aged woman is considered a 'worthless thing'. Only Islam gives women a revered, venerated and sacred status throughout the life, either she is daughter, sister, wife or mother. Islam is facing hostile media coverage from west particularly where the status of women in Islam is concerned; it may be quite surprising that the majority of converters to Islam are women. That's how it is proved that Iqbal's feminist approach that stems from Islam, excels the status of women in every domain as compared to the modern world.

It is noted that there are different kinds of feminism (Cirksena & Cuklanz, 1992). Western feminist movements like Liberal feminism, Socialist/ Marxist feminism and

Radical feminism struggle for the equality and freedom of women and aim to set free women from gender discrimination, exploitation, oppression, male tyranny and subjugation. In the early 20th century, women sought the right to vote in Canada and their efforts are categorized as first-wave feminism. While demanding equality, Liberal feminists fight for those rights and privileges only offered to men through social and legal reforms and gradually seem to be their natural rights (Brunsdon, 1988). Liberal feminists believe that the inequality of women stems from the denial of equal rights and culture reinforces reluctance to demand and exercise such rights by women. The roots of Socialist feminism can be traced in the political, intellectual and socioeconomic changes that took place in North America and Europe in the second half of the 19th century. Socialist feminists view inequality of women deeply rooted in economic dependency, oppressive and exploitative relationships that took shape under capitalism. In capitalist societies women's work often took place in private sector and was unpaid or underpaid. The objectives devised by socialist feminism are to transform basic structural and economic arrangements of society. The barriers of gender, sexuality, class and race should be removed and equal sharing of resources must be promoted. Marxist feminism is an offshoot of socialist feminism that also views women oppression as originating from the right of private property. While capitalism is held responsible for women oppression because women mainly contribute in the production of those goods and services that have no exchange value (e.g., housework, childcare). This phenomenon led the Marxist feminists to work for the dissolution and break up of women's economic dependence upon men. Radical feminism is latest as compared to liberal and socialist feminism as it occurred in the 1970s. It views patriarchy as a "sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and economic privilege." Women's oppression is perceived as the widespread and the deepest form of human oppression. Radical feminists believe that unity among women is the only effective means for liberating women as patriarchy is organized and upheld through men's relationships with other men. The ultimate goal of radical feminists is to eliminate men's violence against women (Steeves, 1987). According to radical feminist's main causes of women's oppression is male control of female sexuality and procreation. In this perspective radical feminists suggest if procreation is removed from the female body, men would not be able to force restrictions on women any longer (Dervin, 1987). In radical feminist discourse the inevitable outcome of the sameness-difference dilemma is that women are 'different but not equal' (Zoonen, 1997). The following table briefly outlines the perceived sources of women oppression in the west.

³<http://www.merawatan.com/iqbal/index.htm> (Retrieved on 26-06-2002)

Table 1
Types of Feminism and Sources of Women's Oppression

Type of Feminism	Source of Women's Oppression
Liberal Feminism Radical Feminism	Social and economic sources. Under-representation Sexual and procreative practices. Men are socialized to have sexual desires while women are socialized to be submissive. Source of oppression is cultural not biological, therefore changing attitudes is desirable.
Socialist Feminism	Social and psychological sources including sexual and procreative practices. Changing social and economic structuring desirable to eradicate oppression.
Marxist Feminism	Class distinctions, corruption of wage labor, and capitalism.
Existentialist Feminism	Inequality of social freedoms. Improving individual liberties and rights are desirable.
Postmodernist Feminism	Dominant discourses, discourses about femininity and masculinity are essential to understand, construction of natural roles through discourses.

In general feminist movements aim to attain two main things; first is "equal rights for women" and the later is "complete freedom". Iqbal is against this 'complete freedom' because Islam does not sanction such freedom as well as he closely observed western societies where women are enjoying so-called freedom. He criticizes this phenomenon in the following words, "Egotism and uneven competition have promulgated peculiar economic conditions in the west. I think that women freedom, experienced in western societies, causes complications and proved to be a failure rather success" (Mueene, 1963). At the advent of 20th century, Turkish women got freedom similar to European women owing to reforms introduced by Mustafa Kamal Pasha. Afzal (1969) notes that Iqbal criticized this gesture of Ata-Turk in the following words, "What Mustafa Kamal Pasha has done in the name of reforms is not based on wisdom... Islamic Sharia has already provided freedom to women, so, what Mustafa is going to grant?" Islamic concept of equality does not affect the position of men or women as far as their responsibilities or accountabilities are concerned. For instance the Islamic law of witness and testimony seems to bring down women in some cases. As such it is not inequality. There are areas where only the witness of woman is accepted like delivery and fosterage etc. In other places only man comes to witness. It is rather the just and equitable treatment suggested by the nature and need to fulfill social and legal obligation. Further Iqbal expressed his feelings in this regard as follows:

"Europe is still worried over the fact that Turkish women have no distinctive role to play in society. This is all due to their ignorance of our domestic life. They have yet to understand wisdom behind the veil. Our women's veiled segregation is not due to the fact the men are immoral. Woman, in fact, is the Lord's holiest creature" (Dar, 1981). Western societies equate unveiling with liberation of women

as recently happened in France. Dougherty (2001) conducted a study on sexual harassment in the workplace and found that women perceived sexual harassment as dysfunctional and distressful behavior, while men interpreted it as a mode of therapy, means of demonstrating friendship, and a form of coping behavior for work related stress. She concluded that sexual harassment may serve some functions for men. This study highlights the wisdom behind the veil.

The meaning and symbolism of a woman's dress in the Islamic world today is still determined by regional attitudes, inherited legacies and the negotiation of identity within the hegemonic structures of capitalism. Still, whether veiled or not, women's conditions are determined not by the clothes they wear, but by the degree to which they manage to forge an identity for themselves that is not manipulated by the discourses of modernity or religious authenticity. The propagators of liberal, radical and socialist feminism criticize that a separation of the sexes is an essential component of patriarchal Islamist society. According to them this separation marks women's inferiority because the system draws boundaries between the sexes and establishes a male-versus-female symbolic order. During Round Table Conference Session in England, a correspondent of the 'Liverpool Post' interviewed Iqbal. During the interview Iqbal passed these remarks about London, "I see now so many things in the streets of London of which the Londoners are unaware; but a minute observer, particularly who has visited this place after years is struck by hard facts and realities of things. I wonder at the change for the worse in the position of the fair sex in the West. Now men seldom leave their seats in trains for ladies; they neither allow precedence to women while getting down a car. I would not blame men for this. It is the result of women's own conduct; they are mad after 'Liberty' and 'Equality' with men. And therefore whatever we observe is the result of prevailing conditions, for which there is not remedy" (Dar, 1981).

Iqbal's approach is purely based on Islam. Islam suggests a division of responsibilities for the survival and growth of its system. Individuals have to perform different roles as family is the corner stone of Islamic civilization. In the family system, male is responsible to meet the fiscal needs of the family and the household. If a husband is poor, even then he has no right to take possession of what belongs to wife, in the name of household expenditure. Islam gives woman the right of property, trade and income-generation and the right to keep her profit to herself. Women has the right to get education however, Iqbal is against western teachings because it incites women to contravene their domain. In "Zarb-e-Kaleem" he expressed his feelings like this:

"The education that de-womanize a woman
(Jis ilm ki taseer sey zan hoti hae nazar)
Intelligencia call that education 'death' of womanhood."
(Kahtain hain uz ilm ko arbabb'e nazar mot.)

In the industrial revolution, western culture used woman as a labor and destroyed the basic unit of its society i.e. 'home' to reach this target. Therefore their women are facing more psychological and social problems. Contrary to this, Japan used the woman labor for their industrial progress without destroying their 'Home' and family institution. It means progress and prosperity can be achieved through many other ways.⁴

Iqbal's thoughts regarding women's place can be gauged by the following account of Syiad Asad Gilani. Iqbal and Syiad Amjad Ali were in England. One day, both went to 'Selfridges' (a popular shop in London) and asked a sales girl to bring socks. When the sales girl returned, Iqbal was lost in his ideas and contemplating over the role of that sales girl. On seeing her, Iqbal asked that why she was standing there. Syiad Amjad Ali was surprised over Iqbal's question, so, he asked Iqbal the reason of putting that question. Iqbal replied that woman is meant to be the light of someone's home and train her children and not to be the beauty of bazaar and to sell socks (Gilani, 1991). Iqbal stated in his interview, published in Liverpool Post, "It is in Islam that husband is duty bound to provide for his wife's maintenance, in addition to the payment of dowry. In order to enforce her above rights she can take full possession of her husband's property" (Dar, 1981). Allama Iqbal has expressed the significance of women in his poetry that is as follows:

"Color in the portrait of universe is from Woman
From her warmth the inner warmth of life
In glory her dust is greater than stars
Each glory is the hidden pearl of her shell."⁵

'Anjuman Khawateen Islam Madras' presented a paper to Iqbal in January, 1929. They used the word 'Aseeran-

e-Qafs' (captives) for themselves. Iqbal took notice of the words that were used to depict women and commented that from these words he thought of the movement launched by western women in Turkey and Europe for emancipation from men. He further commented that the government of Turkey is perturbed over the increasing suicidal incidents among women even after the aspired 'Liberation' and Equality'. Iqbal expresses his astonishment that when women in Turkey have got freedom from all limitation, now why they are inclined to commit suicide (Afzal, 1969).

The gender concept of Islam does not restrict women to progress rather outlines the roadmap to their higher status. According to Afzal (1969) Iqbal considers that as far as Islamic Shariah is concerned, women can't complain about the deprivation or disparity in their rights. Quran has already conferred upon them the rights that she can demand with rationale. In the light of Quran men and women are equal. Quran states, "If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them" (Surah 4: An-Nisa': Verse 124). Likewise in Surah Al-Imran it is said, "Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be they male or female: Ye are members, one of another" (Surah 3: Al-Imran: Verse 195). Women have to accept the faith with the same conditions and have to follow the same rules to be Muslims. The yardstick for accountability and success or failure is also the same for both in the Hereafter. Quran addresses the two sexes by bringing them together: "For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in Charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who engage much in God's praise, for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward." (Surah 23:Al-Mu'minum: Verse 35). However, the demands from each one are according to the given opportunity, nature and role in one's respective domain.

Islam is understood differently as the basic learning sources is Quran and Hadith. Texts can be interpreted in multiple ways that's why throughout the Islamic world, interpretations are different. The relationship of Islam and feminism is perceived differently in different parts of the Islamic world. The following table outlines the three major standpoints on Islam and feminism.

⁴<http://www.jamaat.org/qa/woman.html>. Retrieved on 25-06-2002.

⁵<http://merawatan.com/pearls/shore.htm>. Retrieved on 25-06-2002.

Table 2
Feminist Standpoints and Main Goals

Types	Standpoint	Main Goal
Islamic Feminists	Islam and feminism are compatible. Scholars: Omaila Abou Bakr, (Egyptian), Sibel Eraslan and Konca Kuris (Turkish), Riffat Hassan (Pakistani)	Feminist theology (reinterpreting religious texts); bridging the gap between theory and practice; shun discrimination against women.
Islamists	Islam and feminism are irreconcilable, feminism is a Western secular concept. Scholars: Heba Raouf Ezzat and Zaynab al-Ghazali (Egyptian Islamists) Cihan Aktas and Serpil Bahtiyar (Turkish)	Women liberation through their participation in economic and political processes; reinterpretation of religious texts; Islam's and feminism's position on family and morality are contrary, women can cherish motherhood.
Secular Feminist	Islam and the objectives of western feminism contradict each other, 'Islamic feminism' justifies unequal gender relations; does not challenge the patriarchal structure. Scholars: (Haideh Moghissi and Shahrzad Mojab (Iranian) Valentine Moghadam)	Religion in the private sphere, promotion of humanism and egalitarian society.

Iqbal recommended that as a nation our solidarity depends on our adhesiveness to the religious principles. The moment it weakens, we will stand nowhere among nations. Perhaps we will be like Jews. So, what we can do to strengthen it? Who is the principal depository in a nation? Women and only women! That is why a woman should get excellent and consistent religious education because she is the real builder of the nation. Therefore Iqbal is not convinced of absolute system of education rather education system should be determined according to the needs of a nation along with other systems (Iqbal, 1961).

Since Iqbal perceived gender difference as a biological phenomenon and nature's plan. He did not consider women inferior to men. He takes women as a distinct, different and discrete creature therefore education should not aim to transform them into men. She should take pride in her being woman. She is entitled with the important duty to perform but with her own will. This notion of Iqbal supports Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), who is the founder of modern feminism. She writes in her book "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), "I do not wish (women) to have power over men, but over themselves." Islam has endowed women political as well as economic rights. Muslim women exercised their right to vote when European women did not even know what it really meant. Even in this modern world, woman can neither vote nor be elected in some parts of Switzerland. Women in the United Kingdom and America were endowed the right to vote after the World War I. It is surprising that how western women can claim that they are enjoying more rights and they are free while Islam bestowed them all the rights fourteen hundred years ago. History has witnessed that when Muslim women got power over themselves, they ascended to the seat of president and prime minister of the country. As compared to America that claims to be the champion of equality and complete freedom, not a single woman has ever assumed

these powers. Contrary to this US President Nixon (1969-74) once said "I'm not for women in any job. I don't want any of them around. Thank God we don't have any in the cabinet ... I don't think a woman should be in any government job whatever. I mean, I really don't. The reason why I do is mainly because they are erratic and emotional. Men are erratic and emotional too, but the point is a woman is more likely to be."

Liberal, Social or Radical feminism do not confer upon any grandeur and glory to women status as it is evident from western societies where these movements are at work. The women are still unrest, distressed and perturbed there. The movements have to lessen the misery and despair of women. Iqbal believes that it is in Islam that Women find their right and respectable status. Iqbal maintains that 'a woman lays foundation stone of a society, and if it is uneven, the wall raised up to skies will be irregular'.

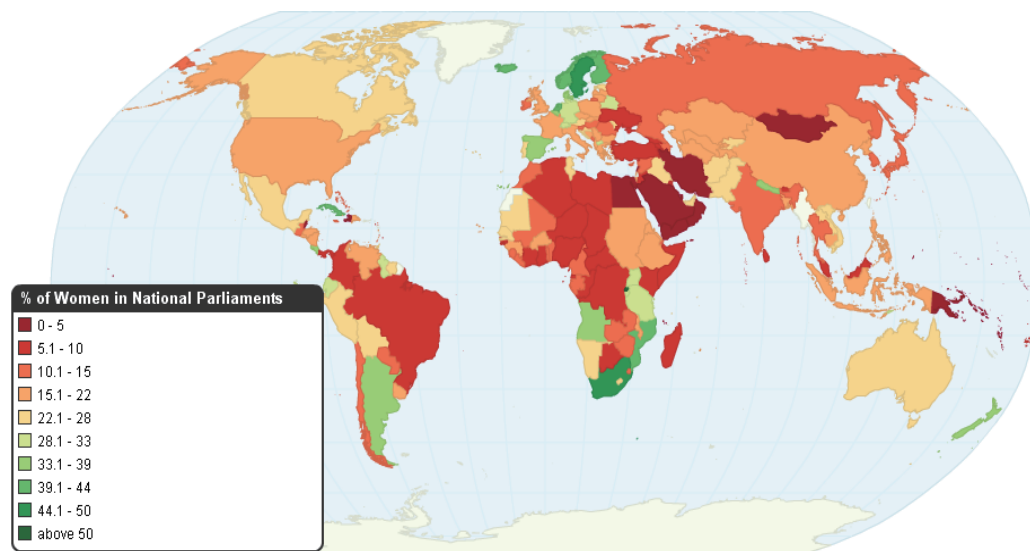
"Khshat-e-aw'al choon nehad maimar kaj
Ta surayya me ra'wadd dewar kaj"

In a culture where accommodation to divine intent is a fundamental principle and human agency is constantly negotiating its boundaries with those of the Revelations, secularization cannot be superimposed. Secularization is a western concept of separation of Church and state. Since it is an intellectual product of a specific moment in European history, it cannot be implemented in all the times throughout the world. According to Iqbal woman is the root of all civilizations (Mueene, 1963). Women role in nation building and development of a society is pivotal and peculiar. It should not be evaluated with reference to men's role. Women are the 'Creative Functionaries' (Dar, 1981). They are entitled with the sacred responsibility of procreation. They cannot get rid of it otherwise, life will cease to continue. His poem titled 'Aik Sawal' (One Question) may be applied on the outcome of feminist movements in the contemporary western societies.

‘Koi poochay Hakeem-e-Europe se
(One might ask from Europe’s intellect)
Hindo-Eunan hain jis ke halqa bagosh
(Whose intellect inspires India and Greece)
Kya yehi hai mua’shirat ka kamal
(Is this the height of civilization)
Mard be’kar w azan tahi aa’ghosh
(Men without job and women without children)
Iqbal feels pity on the pathetic conditions of women as
expressed in his poem ‘Aurot’ (Woman). He says,
‘Mein bhi mazloomi-e-niswan se hun ghamnak bohat’
(I am extremely gloomy on women’s victimization, too)
Nahi mumkin magar iss aqda-e-mushkil ki kashood
(However, this difficult issue cannot be resolved)

He further suggests in another poem ‘Azadi-e-Niswan’

(Women’s Liberation) how to resolve this issue. He maintains that it is only the women’s intellect and vision that can clarify and explain the pros and cons of ‘women’s liberation’ debate. Since equality and freedom are relative terms, interpretation and operationalization of both terms is associated with the prevailing culture and social milieu in a given society. It is assumed that increasing political representation of women in legislatures can facilitate to empower and liberate them. Western feminist discourses suggest this route to achieve equality and freedom. The following image provides details of women’s participation in world’s legislatures.



Source: ChartsBin.com

Figure 1
Women Participation in National Parliaments

Although the percentage of women parliamentarians in Australia and Afghanistan is same i.e. 27.3%, the circumstances and conditions of women are entirely different. In Afghanistan 68 seats are reserved for women in parliament other than the general seats. Women can also contest on general seats. In Pakistan parliament 60 seats

are reserved for women that is 33% besides the general seats. The following table shows the top five and bottom five countries statistics on the basis of %age of women parliamentarians, quoted from Charts Bin statistics collector team 2010.

Table 3
Proportion of Women Parliamentarians in the 21st Century: Top Five & Bottom Five Countries

Country name	Total Seats	No. of Women Parliamentarians	% Women Parliamentarians	Election Year
Rwanda	80	45	56.3%	9/2008
Sweden	349	162	46.4%	9/2006
South Africa	400	178	44.5%	4/2009
Cuba	614	265	43.2%	1/2008
Iceland	63	27	42.9%	4/2009
Palau	16	0	0%	11/2008
Qatar	35	0	0%	7/2008
Saudi Arabia	150	0	0%	2/2009
Solomon Islands	50	0	0%	4/2006
Tuvalu	15	0	0%	8/2006

Source: Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments, ChartsBin.com

The table shows that among the countries with lowest %age of women parliamentarians, only two countries are Muslim. However, it is a dominant perception that Islam is an oppressor of women rights and denies equality and freedom of women. US as a champion of women rights does not fall in the top five list. Contrary to this the %age of women parliamentarians in US is 16.8 and in UK it is 19.5 only. Pakistan and Canada share almost the same percentages i.e. 22.2 and 22.1 respectively. The data shows that women freedom and equality is not related to their increased political participation.

Man is a social animal and socialization is his instinct. Family is the basic unit of society and women is an inevitable constituent of a family. Her position cannot be denied. Radical feminism that believes in separation of men and women on radical basis to attain freedom and equality is not a guarantee of gratification and freedom. Therefore, it is only women who know how to move forward in the given circumstances and get the utmost benefits. Social, liberal, radical and other types of feminism cannot provide them equality and freedom until and unless women themselves make intelligent decisions to move ahead.

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