

Our Credo on

Women's Rights

w.r.t Urban Feminism (Draft v1.0)

WE REJECT U.N.'s Charter for Women's Rights—CEDAW—and seek to have Pakistan withdraw herself as its signatory on scientific and moral grounds.

BY FARHAN NOOR

We believe that there are two kinds of rights: general rights and gender-specific rights. The general rights must hold equal and identical for both genders otherwise it will tantamount to discrimination, e.g.: the right to education, access to health, security of life, possession of property, exercise of will, etc. The gender-specific rights however can neither be equal nor identical due to the inherent dissimilarities of the physiological and psychological characteristics of the two genders. Equality does not mean identity—though men and women are equal (human beings) they are not identical in gender. The facts that men are physically stronger than women and that they cannot conceive or breastfeed a baby clearly suggests inequalities. Would this tantamount to discrimination? No! The exercise of any gender-specific trait is the right of that gender prevention of which will now violate that right. This means that gender-specific rights are only in relevance to gender-specific abilities (traits) and not

comparatively with the opposite gender. What constitutes as men-specific rights cannot be substituted for women, and vice-versa. Just because a woman can conceive and nurse a baby this does not mean that a man can or should do the same as well as a rule. Equality in gender-specific rights therefore cannot and does not exist. In fact, absolute equality between the sexes is not only impossible, it is undesirable!

We believe that when any gender-specific rights are being formulated it should pass the test of Science. Declaring something to be a right without scientifically proving it does not constitute it as one (incl: UN's charter of women's rights). Besides, it must also be borne in mind that Science itself has yet to unravel much of the mysteries of the physiological and psychological differences between men and women. Given the fact that we have not yet conquered any branch of Science and in fact have been creating new ones every other day proves how unreliable Science is to decide whether something constitutes a right or not. The mere fact is that the more we discover the more we realize the enormity of what is still left to be discovered. This leaves us in search of a superior touchstone devoid of all deficiencies of experimental Science to help us conclude what constitutes not only the general-rights but also to identify the gender-specific ones. It is for this reason that we reject the U.N.'s charter of women's rights i.e. CEDAW.

We believe that the only alternate touchstone for specification of general and gender-specific rights is the Holy Quran. Whether one accepts or rejects the Holy Quran as that touchstone is arguable but the assertion that there should be no alternate touchstone to Science as a rule is not. It is agreed-upon that rights cannot be just formulated on whims and desires and that it must at least conform to Science. But conforming to Science would mean conforming to incomplete or half Truths. Would this mean that gender-specific rights in particular will never be arrived at leaving us resorting to self-made rights? Unfortunately this precisely has what

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happened. By denouncing the Holy Quran as that alternate touchstone and finding Science without answers to our questions we have been left with no choice but to give our consent to all these unscientific self-approved general and gender-specific rights (U.N.'s CEDAW). This has resulted in a war of genders. Both men and women are now trying to subordinate the other by acquiring for themselves more and more what in reality has nothing to do with gender rights. No wonder justification is being generated to declare abortion and prostitution as gender-specific rights! Where is the scientific proof for it? There is none! On the contrary—Science disproves the claim by pointing out various health risks associated with it. Even all the major religious Scriptures denounce it. It is for this reason we say that whatever rights are formulated it must either pass the test of Science or the scientific teachings of the Holy Quran—otherwise be rejected.

We believe that the Holy Quran is the ultimate Science which has not been discovered but revealed. When using it to retrieve or qualify proposed general or gender-specific rights, it is imperative that the interpretation of the Ayats should be first done internally, and if required, from external sources. We therefore consider the Hanafi, the Sha'afi, the Maliki, and the Hanbali schools of thoughts as credible points of views but not absolute ones—something which the respected Scholars have themselves iterated. Controversy takes root when we abandon the technique of Quranic self-exposition and instead resort to our imagination and fancy. Controversy further escalates when we unnecessarily devote our energies to interpretation of Ayats that fall in the category of Mutashabihaat i.e. unclear ones while deliberately ignoring the in-your-face dos and don'ts.

We believe that such controversies regarding general and gender-specific rights as declared by the Holy Quran can easily be resolved if and when the explicit ones are implemented in full. Who is unaware of the Quranic declaration of rights for men and women regarding inheritance, or marriage, or divorce? These are the ones amongst many others about which there are no two-opinions—why not then enforce it? Controversies take form not because we cannot understand the rule but because we don't want to understand it. This is the Riba of gender-related issues—no matter how hard you try to make them see they will always remain blind. This statement is even more valid in the case of Hudood Laws. What is time and again forgotten and deliberately ignored is that this is a Book 'wherein there is no doubt'. It is only when a person does not believe in Quran and does not wish to see it participate in our socio-economic and

political lives is when he stirs up meaningless controversies. Not that we demand blind faith in the teachings of Holy Quran (we don't and never will) but certainly do expect a reasonable counter-argument based on some acceptable authority like Science or Logic. Mere slogans or lies and deceptions are not honest means to buy consent.

We believe that the life and honor of a woman is sacred violation of which must be severely dealt with. Death penalty by stoning to death or flogging the offender should therefore be accepted as a just form of punishment by all stakeholders if they too believe that a woman's life and honor is nonnegotiable. Honor-killings, acid-attacks, vicious beatings, rape, sexual harassment etc are all cowardly acts against the weaker gender. It is understood that the brunt of gender inequality or gender abuse in our country is actually a legacy of Hindu socio-economic system which commodified and objectified womenfolk through the system of Dowry (dahej), "bride-price" i.e. price-tag on women to be paid to her parents, Sati (self-immolation), child marriages (Bal Vivaha) and forced marriages. Needless to say, women by no means are an inferior sex or an economic burden on a family (another "mouth to feed") and that they should be treated with the respect they rightfully deserve. Proper legislation must therefore be enacted and strictly enforced to counter these uncivilized and dehumanizing practices. However, as mentioned earlier, any right constituted must conform to either scientific facts or the teachings of the Holy Quran (the ultimate Science) and not be based on one's own imagination and fancy or be borrowed from foreign minds otherwise our efforts will either bring no change for betterment or just simply replace one kind of evil with another.

We believe that there are two kinds of intermingling of genders: natural and unnatural. Natural intermingling is an honest interaction between men and women beneficial to the health of the society. These everyday societal undertakings can take form at either micro or macro level such as relationships between doctor-patient, teacher-student, buyer-seller, leader-follower including other specific roles. There is and should be no harm if a woman steps outside her home for any genuine reason. If however it is not genuine it is then unnatural—and unnatural intermingling of genders is a disgrace on society. What takes place in the name of art and culture especially on electronic media is unnatural. Activities such as singing and dancing, modeling, improper dressing, physical contact with men, all lead to extra-marital phenomenon. Unfortunately it is the women themselves who are willingly involved in such practices believing it to be "empowering" and "liberating" for their

gender. Reducing their gender to a mere sex-symbol and creating a lascivious attitude in the behavior of men towards them is hardly empowering and liberating. True empowerment comes from healthy minds (Education), healthy bodies (Nutrition) and a healthy soul (Islam). NOTE: We do not sanction for complete segregation of genders as a religious obligation so proclaimed by religious enthusiasts. On the contrary—we denounce the practice of char-dewaari as inhumane and impractical. Needless to say but women has the right to a healthy social life regulated by strictly defined parameters (the same should be true for men also).

We believe that men and women while being equal (as human beings) do however have separate roles. This stems from the fact that they both have inherently dissimilar physiological and psychological characteristics, otherwise why these differences? If men have been created physically stronger than women then it automatically suggests that it is their job to dig roads, shoulder bricks, and harvest crops. To ask a woman to do this would tantamount to injustice just as it would to ask a man to nurse a baby. As such these roles must never be exchanged otherwise it would recourse to perversion of rights. Unfortunately, this is exactly what has happened—men and women are more readily trying out their opposite gender's role because of which the men are becoming feminine-like and the women, manly. We therefore categorically reject cross-role adoption including cross-dressing and cross-living styles.

We believe that it is a right of a woman to choose NOT to work though she merrily can if she wants to. Forcing her to contribute in the economic affairs of the family is a direct violation of this right. The responsibility for 'maintaining and protecting' women (physically, financially & emotionally) is an Islamic injunction enjoined upon the male relatives serving in the capacity of: father, husband, brother, or son. It is their duty to provide for all shelter, food, clothing, schooling, medicine, furniture... etc. needs of the family (operational role). The woman, however, however wealthy, is not obliged to spend even a dime from her wealth on herself let alone her family. If she earns, she earns for herself and retains it all. It is for this very reason why Islam has justly reserved a lesser share in inheritance for women and given more to the men based on the gender-roles and not the gender itself per se—thus ensuring equality. Also, the notion that non-working women are in any way less independent as compared to working-women is misleading and false. The idea is to first determine what the working-women are working for and what are they achieving from it which non-working women aren't—economic sovereignty? Is that all? But is that

not already ensured if the woman's male relatives are fulfilling their financial duties, as obligated to? True emancipation of women shall come only when women demand from their men their right to be financially taken care of. This also goes on to clarify the misconception that women in Islam are subservient to men—subservient in what context? Is not the man earning money to support her?

We believe that the ultimate job of a woman serving as a mother is to professionally run the institution of family (strategic role) aptly supported by her other-self in the role of wife, sister, and/or daughter. This however by no means even remotely imply that women cannot or should not work—on the contrary, learned women MUST contribute their intellectual acumen towards the improvement of the society. However, motherhood should remain the biggest priority to which she must look forward to accepting the challenges and responsibilities attached with it. Mistaken are those who believe this to be an intellectually-inferior job as compared to donning business suits and carrying business briefcases. Mistaken again are those who confuse motherhood with housewifery for this is not about cleaning the house and cooking the food—it is about creating quality human beings. And to create quality human beings the mother needs to be well-educated and well-skilled in the fields of Managerial and Psychological Sciences in order to ably cater all physical, mental, emotional & spiritual needs of the child. This involves time. No wonder why Islam has relieved her from all pressures of economic life so that she can remain focused to the task. It is one thing

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to manufacture quality products in factories and entirely another to create quality human beings. Failure of a product is a loss. Failure of a human being—a catastrophe! While it is true that women contribute to the economy, but at what costs? Today, organizations world over, recognize and acknowledge their human resources as a competitive edge and are willing to invest and reinvest for long-term profits. Similarly, unless mothers too invest their time and energy in the upbringing of their children, the society will suffer losses in the longer run. What is deliberately ignored is the

undeniable fact that a mother's milk and her act of breastfeeding is the healthiest possible start to life for the baby to which there is no substitute. To prefer one's own professional life over the child's natural needs and dumping him/her to however qualified nurses at day-care centers shirks the sacred purpose of motherhood and the concept of family.

We believe that the preservation of the institution of family is a fundamental step towards ensuring the rights of the womenfolk. This can be achieved only if gender-specific roles in particular are observed. What this entails is that the husband should do what he should do and the wife (mother) should do what she is supposed to do—in other words, both should not do the same thing i.e. earn livelihoods. Division of labor with respect to gender-specific traits and skills is the way to go. Neglect of motherhood at the expense of making money is an unjustifiable mistake not only for the child but also for the society. Research studies have proven that full-time working women are more susceptible to discrimination and vulnerable to sexual harassment, if not rape, at office, by her co-workers. Further, their marital relationship also tends to be weak leading to divorce in most cases in which case the children either end up being raised up by a single-parent or to a life of absent parenthood at best. It is this lack of motherhood because of which juvenile delinquency is at a rise, and so is the rate of teenage pregnancies, STD, on-campus crimes (killings, rape, sexual harassment, etc) and a culture of smoking and alcoholism. Women must therefore recognize motherhood as an honor and raising children their prime responsibility. This alone can realize the feminine niche which they are after.

We believe that the Urban Feminists are their own worst enemies and that all this hoo-hah about gender discrimination and gender inequality is in fact the result of their own beliefs and actions, or rather lack of it. Their approach to resolve these feminist issues is fundamentally flawed on many accounts which can all be summed up in just one statement: lack of critical self-analysis. Instead of crusading around to change the world, and raising hell, perhaps it is time to change their own ways now. The factors that contribute towards mistreatment of women are to some extent their own invention, and consent also. They are the ones who are championing the prostitutes (euphemized as Commercial Sex Works, CSWs) in Heera Mandi et al towards safe-sex practices and safe-client relationships instead of liberating them. They again are the ones who encourage women towards abortion and family-planning through usage of contraceptive pills; lobby for abolishment

of Hudood Laws pertaining to the womenfolk; and imbibe them against what motherhood necessitates. Experts pinpoint the root-cause of anti-women culture towards the phenomenon of transformation of women-as-subjects to women-as-objects, and more specifically: women-as-sexual-objects. This objectification of women is self-practiced primarily through commercial advertising where their sexuality is publicly bought and publicly sold just like any other commodity in an open-market, and then further reinforced, through more men-cheering activities like their participation in beauty-pageant, modeling for fashion shows, and singing, and dancing. All this is done with the open consent of the woman herself. Is this not a circus of perversion? These women dress up to kill but are instead killed—the irony! Armed with the Divine Right to be financially taken care of and yet readily surrender to the rat-race for livelihoods. Little is wonder why so little a success these Urban Feminists have achieved all these years.

We believe that not only our Government but also our Ulemas have completely failed in their jobs to address the issue of women rights; the former through indifference and the latter through ignorance. What needs to be done as a policy are two things: 1) condemnation of Eastern religious zealots for tolerating women's mistreatment on the basis of tradition; and 2) condemnation of Urban Feminists for advocating for U.N. reforms on the basis of West's family and health problems. It is not the solution we as Muslims are after, but its implementation.

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FAST FOOD FOR THOUGHTS

1. Raped!
 - a. Every 2.5 minutes a woman is raped in America (U.S. Justice Department, 2003); every 30min in India (National Crime Records Bureau, 2004); every 8.6min (167/day) in UK (Amnesty International UK, 2003)
 - b. The research of Dr. Jacob and Dr. James about high growth in cases of rapes in India proves that increasing trend of free intermingling of sexes sponsored by free-sex culture as induced by popular media is the real root cause.
 - c. Only in 1996, the cost of rape, according to U.S. Department of Justice, was \$127 billion, excluding the costs of child sexual abuse, which is a subject of separate discussion altogether! Thereafter, due to more accepting free-sex culture and easy abortion, these rates however decreased.
2. Sexually Harassed & Assaulted At Workplace
 - a. Almost 40-60% of working women are sexually harassed at their workplaces. (Journal of the American Psychological Association)
 - b. 95% of sexual harassment goes unreported. (Equal Rights Advocates)
 - c. 62% of companies now offer sexual harassment prevention training programs and yet each year 15,000 sexual harassment cases are brought to the EEOC—over 13,000 were filed in 2004. (The Society for Human Resource Management)
3. Sexually Harassed & Assaulted At Co-Ed Schools/Universities
 - a. 83% of girls and 78% of boys in grade 8—11 were sexually harassed at school in 2002. (American Association of University Women, AAUW)
 - b. 62% of female and 61% of male college students were sexually harassed at their universities in 2006. (Ibid)
 - c. 2/3rd of all College students experience sexual harassment. (Ibid)
 - d. Only 7% of students report of being sexually harassed. (Ibid)
4. Pregnant Teenagers!
 - a. 82% of 422,197 total births under the age of 20 in 2004 were from non-marital relationship. (National Center for Health Statistics NCHS)
5. Children & Broken Homes
 - a. 4% of preschoolers (3-5 years old)—over a million—are clinically depressed and make up for the fast-growing market for antidepressants. (Psychiatric Services, 2004)
 - b. 1 in 5 high-school students had thought seriously about killing themselves while about 1 in 11 had actually attempted it in the past 12 months in 2001. (Survey by: National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion)
6. Career over Family
 - a. 44% of women in America in the age group of 15-44 did not have children in 2003. (U.S. Census) Why? Because it is impossible to juggle career with family and so these women then decided not to have children altogether! Do you think these are healthy trends?
 - b. Daycare centers are perceived to be a good alternate for working mothers. In contrast, however, the most recent comprehensive study, as conducted by researchers at four universities found that while 15% of day-care facilities were excellent, 70% were "barely adequate," and 15% were abysmal. Children in that vast middle category were physically safe but received scant or inconsistent emotional support and little intellectual stimulation. Says Carolee Howes, a developmental psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles and one of the authors of the study: "When I look at this data and I think about where I would want my child, it is not in this middle clump."¹ Dr. Stephan R. Covey also states that children raised in daycare don't have emotional attachment² with their parents and tends to leave their parents when their parents grow old either to themselves or in some old-age retirement centers.³

1. Lies parents tell themselves about why they work: By Shannon Brownlee and Mathew Miller. Source: <http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Buddhism/FivePrecepts/ParentsLies.html>

2. The Seven Habits of Highly effective Families by Dr. Stephan R. Covey: P # 118

3. Ibid p # 120