

Book Reviews

***Fettered Freedom* by Zamir Niazi, compiled and edited by Syed Jaffar Ahmed, published by Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, pages 206, price Rs.400.**

Fettered Freedom is a tale of curbed freedom of press told by an old man, the eye witness of five decades of history of journalism – the man of conscience of journalism – Zamir Niazi. This project of Zamir Niazi remain unfinished due to his death. Before its publication, this book *Fettered Freedom* comprising eighteen articles was re-examined and rescheduled by Dr. Syed Jaffar Ahmed, Director of Pakistan Study Centre (PSC), University of Karachi. Though already published in different newspapers and periodicals, these articles have been reproduced for the first time in the form of a book. The editor has compiled them by following the same order and method that was already arranged by the author himself.

Zamir Niazi had close relations with the Pakistan Study Centre, he even donated all his collection of rare books to its library. It is a privilege for the centre that Mrs. Niazi allowed it to publish his unfinished work.

The Press in Chain, Zamir Niazi's first book, appeared in 1986 known as the black period for the freedom of press. This book was considered not a book but a library record of press advices, press ordinance promulgated to curb press freedom, pre-censorship and other constraints, faced by Pakistani Press. *The Press in Chain* gives full account of control over press by all rulers; either men in khaki or dictators in civilian dress. The book not only got repute across the borders but was considered as the first academic book and documented record of history of journalism in Pakistan. Thus Zamir Niazi may be called as pioneer who opened up a new perspective for writing on journalism in Pakistan. His first book got high applause with best selling record.

Published by the Karachi Press Club his second book *The Press Under Siege* records naked violence faced by the press. In his second book, Zamir Niazi narrates a woeful tale of the 'weakness and meekness' of persons associated with the press, along with brave and courageous voices, which stood up against violence, fought back and faced terrible consequences. According to the author 'the book chronicles the systematic brutalization of the press as well as its defiance'.

In *Fettered Freedom*, Zamir Niazi, attempts to trace the historical saga of journalism with an analytical as well as critical view of freedom and restrictions on expression in Pakistan. Further more Zamir Niazi unfolds the chronicles of 'lawless law' imposed by high handed authorities, the elements of corruption perpetuated by government through bribe and *lifafa* culture. The pen of Zamir Niazi also unveils the disgusting and filthy face of press as well, when it turns out to be the mouthpiece of establishment rather than to be the voice of the suppressed and exploited majority.

Newsprint and quota of advertisements has also played a crucial role in controlling as well as corrupting the press. Niazi analyses that 'the press has been treated as enemy number one by our dictators and the dubious democracies of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir were little difference'. Though Zamir Niazi spares Musharraf regime as he had to propound himself as moderate and acceptable dictator to win the support of the international community and to end isolation in which he found himself. However, in order to correct the record Zamir Niazi honestly accepts that in Musharraf era journalists have been threatened and thrashed by country's intelligence agencies. For instance he mentions the case of Shaheen Sehba who belonged to a well reputed newspaper but was victimized by secret agencies and was forced to leave the country. This was not an exception but in Musharraf regime it has been regular exercise for men of junta to call upon press men for interrogation about published investigative reports only to keep press under their invisible pressure. The tragic and frightening aspect of this practice is that all goes on unofficially.

Mr. Niazi also points out the terrifying and alarming situation being faced by the press that is recruitment of incalculable journalists as touts of secret agencies, their loyalty is bound with particular agencies and Islamabad instead of their profession.

Fettered Freedom gives us a detailed account of how infallibility, corruption, dishonesty, misreporting, selectivity of news and half truths as news management entered in the press and polluted the norms of healthy and objective journalism. 'Press is the part of this ailing society. It has to face its share of smoke and ashes', Niazi logically

defines the phenomenon of corruption in journalism. Those days are now part of history when raised voice, raged words and language of arguments were considered as a great threat and sign of danger for any establishment and thus press was controlled by black laws in the form of press ordinance etc. When violence has displaced arguments and logical discourse has been replaced by rash noise then the whole intellectual discourse has disappeared by act of self-censorship. It is the fear of secret agencies, raged and instigated furious mob which forced the man of press 'the watchman of the night and of troubled day' to go through the act of self censorship. He defines the phenomenon of self censorship, in the words of Zubaida Mustafa, 'Self censorship is something different, more dangerous than censorship; technically it does not exist. It is difficult to identify or monitor. But it is there; it is invisible but puts psychological pressure on a writer'. Zamir Niazi called this self censorship as 'prudent conformity and the silence of complicity'. Like hidden virus of incurable disease, self censorship also entered in body of thought and work without being visible, it conditions the mind and does leveling of thought, to keep it at an ordinary level.

The self imposed silence leads to a type of alienation and estrangement which is product of self-inflicted fear. Planting a censor on someones conscience creates havoc, a loss of self confidence and finally leads to identity crises, he explains.

His dream for press council, self regulatory body for the monitoring of code of ethics, manned by intellectuals, individuals of good repute from judiciary and men from the press never materialized. Indeed in this way he wanted that the press should also be accountable to society.

Amar Sindhu

***Gender, Nation, and State in Pakistan* by Shahnaz Rouse, published by Vanguard, Lahore, 2006, pages 155.**

Women make a significant component of Muslim consciousness. The practiced religion, professed ideology, cultural values and norms, customary laws and other regulatory aspects of society, all testify to this fact. The book under review has tried to identify the process and factors negotiating, accentuating, and silencing gender issues in Pakistan in a comprehensive way.

After 1857, separate Muslim identity was asserted more forcefully. The colonial masters tried to signify religion as a base of identity by pitting different religious communities. The census figure gave people new reasons to demands privileges and concessions. The

colonial policies and the development of specific colonial institutions also affected debates on gender but they spared the family institution where customary religious and cultural practices governing the gender relations continued. Anyhow other developments outside family, and growing consciousness under modernization among the emergent middle class, spurred the movement for separate state of Pakistan, where the question of expressing and concretizing Muslim identity of Pakistan emerged in the politics of formulating the state ideology and its institutional framework from the very first year of independence.

Rouse has critically examined the dimensions of gender-state interface, which has been largely dominated by traditional religious interpretation and cultural hegemony of patriarchy. The new state has co-opted the religious elements. It has been also trying to deny and suppress the collusion between the secular-modernist bourgeois and Islamists, adhering to the scriptural position. Rouse asserts that the government under the compulsion to hold demands for democratic rights in abeyance adopted a contradictory policy towards gender. In the early period, gender relations were governed by customs and practices, and the policy was that of 'benign neglect'. The pre-independence call for women to participate in nation-building continued after partition, too. Her views about state, religion and social order regulating gender in public space throughout the life years of Pakistan are in consonance with those of Mohammad Abdul Qadeer expressed in his book on social and cultural transformation in Pakistan (Routledge, 2006).

After 1947, women participated in relief and rehabilitation activities within the Islamic framework. The anti-imperialist politics of the sixties geared by the Islamists and the leftists, brought disastrous results for women, like the ones in Iran. The women who had achieved economic and social independence were called as immoral by the Islamists and the leftists criticized them as becoming victims of imperialist consumerist ideology. The popular response to state posture in the sixties was a demand for democracy and social justice expressed in opposition to Ayub Khan by people. The people supported the women's movement during Zia regime, and they voted for Benazir as first Muslim prime minister for ensuring democracy and putting aside gender oppression by the state. Rouse concludes that when state denies democratic and women's rights, they are upheld by people, but in the personal action realm, they act out their beliefs and hold male privileges above women's rights. This pattern, she argues, might have been formed by partial acceptance of both the conservative and modernist ideologies' struggle in the society.

State policies, too, according to Rouse, did not effect much change in women's lives as one can see the law of inheritance was relevant only for the propertied class. The Family Law Ordinance did not contain any sanction against its abuse, but it cast the state as the patron of women's rights. Women of upper class and professional groups were somewhat appeased, and international image of Pakistan was improved a bit by such measures. Bhutto regime after signing the UN declaration on women's rights failed to do much to actualize this action. State policies, as Rouse asserts, have either remained within the aegis of Islamic law or else were of symbolic rather than lasting significance. The same was proved in Benazir's period; she never tried to over-turn the negative laws introduced by Zia. She herself submitted to Islamists' ideals by accepting arranged marriage and covering her head with dupatta.

The author asserts that the construction of gender in Pakistan can be better understood not as a struggle between the modernists and traditionalists, but in the light of struggle for democracy by large sections of the society. She concludes that the rift along gender lines is evident only at the level of civil society 'where the discourses of nationalism, anti-imperialism and Islamism coincide in constructing gender as a secondary issue, thereby condemning women who strive to achieve transformation in their personal lives.' Thus the collective ideology prevails.

Rouse argues that in Pakistan the early rulers have been modernists, as they tried to use economic models of the advanced industrialized economies. The family laws remained within the Islamic framework. The state tried to couch an Islamic framework, which suited its own particular needs. While the Islamists model constructed by Mawdudi in contrast to the modernists indicated that the real conflict in Pakistan has been between the Islam and the West. The modernists, however, described it as being between socialism and capitalism. Mawdudi meant that one could live comfortably with capitalists model in the economy but in social and political realm should contain and control the popular forces. He has, therefore, tried to displace the sources of exploitation and oppression away from the economy into the ideological realm, and positions 'western supremacy' as a consequence of the abandonment of indigenous culture and ideas. In a Third World country, such a discursive strategy of Mawdudi is called by Rouse as playing up the factor of 'cultural imperialism', as it takes culture operating separately and independently of economics. This strategy sets women up as repository of culture again, but denies them even limited freedom, except if they agree to operate within the Islamic framework, as understood by Mawdudi. It was only a conservative section against

women before Zia, the gender rules were not much disturbed by the regimes. The Zia regime not only changed them according to the conservative ideals but also collaborated with the international capital. Women were thus attacked then by both the Islamists and the capitalists.

Rouse sees women's socio-political contribution being repressed in scholarship and historical accounts. Women's contribution to the economic production, largely going unrecognized and un-numerated, helps reproduce and reinforce both the orientalist and Islamist stereotypes.

Rouse analyses the factors which lead feminist movement in Pakistan. Till 1981, women worked under official patronage or in the leftists and bourgeoisie opposition parties and the Islamist groups. She finds all of them having one common feature – male domination in decision-making. An independent women's movement, apart from the wings of political parties, signifies their reliance on their own resources and their direct confrontation with the state. International feminism, Rouse asserts, has no relevance in Pakistan. The women's movement searches for its authenticity in the accepted cultural norms. The connection between patriarchy, exploitation and oppression is therefore ignored. The character of women activists has changed now, mingling the modernists and Islamists women groups together. Women have challenged the dominant male order by serious research, by forming a plethora of women groups, and by a recuperation of women's submerged voices and histories in the literature, culture and political practices. But, she laments that despite this, they have not challenged and theorized the every day experiences and sites for the construction of gender – marriage, family, sexuality, notions of honour and virtue. In this way women have been 'silencing' these issues by not addressing them from the logic of modernism or Islamism. This, according to Rouse, 'ultimately signifies yet another victory for patriarchal attitudes and structures.' This observation of Rouse must be compared with the Tahira Shahid Khan's, *Beyond Honour* (Oxford: 2006) who has presented an historical materialistic explanation of the evolution of gender structure, and has found economic relations as the mainstay of divisions, oppression, and to be specific, the patriarchy. The two books may also be taken as complementary, describing two different positions in the discourse on gender.

Rouse finds connections between construction of nationalist identity by nationalist males and fundamentalism, reinforcing oppression on women. She calls the speech by public women active in feminist politics as silencing and veiling of women's real issues. She has elaborated, by comparing two women's biographies, that by thinking in

global/universal categories of western or eastern or Muslim feminism we hide myriad forms of feminism. Every feminists' struggle is not western, but every woman has particular history of her own. By focusing upon experiences and biographies, one can see how each woman's confrontation with modernity generates different forms of struggle and ways of speaking. Rather women's struggle has strengthened existing ideologies privileging the family, marriage and sexual relations through marriage and their attendant hegemonies.

Regarding the role of religion in life, Rouse argues that in Pakistan there is a tendency to return to the secular state, while there has never been a secular state, so the result is a retreat to cultural authenticity which leads to more terrible form of hegemony.

Anwar Shaheen