

Book Review

***Beyond Honour: A Historical Materialist Explanation of Honour Related Violence* by Tahira S. Khan, Oxford University Press Karachi, 2006, pages 356, price Rs.495.**

In historical process we find a continuous clash between old and new traditions. The conflict becomes intense when the old traditions become weak and powerless to defend against the onslaught of the new. To conserve and preserve their existence they adopt different ways and means to face the challenges: for example, history is used to justify the continuity based on the past experiences; religion is used to make them sacred and holy; and culture is used to show them as an integral part of community life. However, when these methods fail to defend them, then conservative forces resort to violence to check new emerging forces of modernity. This drama goes on and either a society succumbs to violence and keep old traditions and customs or challenge outdated system and lay down foundation of a new world based on fresh ideas.

As far as the phenomenon of honour killing is concerned, history helps us to understand it because it is related to the process of degradation of the status of woman. In the new genre of historiography, feminist historians and archaeologists are challenging the old notion of masculine history in which woman is portrayed as subordinate from the very beginning of human history. It is not correct as Maria Mies in her book *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale (Women in the International Division of labour)* points out that in the early phase of history, what we call hunting and gathering period, there was no difference between man and woman. Both were hunters and gatherers and both equally shared with each other. Archaeological evidence also shows that there was no division of labour between man and woman in the early stage of human history.

The change occurred as result of human settlement and adoption of agriculture for livelihood. In this process, man acquired such tools

which made him more powerful than woman. Moreover, as an agricultural society, required more children as labour force, this turned women as productive tool to beget more and more children for community. Consequently, it slowly brought woman's body under male's control. The relationship between man and woman no longer remained equal and sharing but unequal based on male domination and female subordination which converted woman as property of a tribe and family.

Engles in his work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, attributes degradation of women as a result of the emerging institution of private property and the formation of family and the state. Woman becomes responsible to produce male heir. And the male heir should be legitimate. However, historical and anthropological evidence show that male domination emerged differently in different societies not necessarily based on private property. In some societies, chastity of woman is regarded sacred and any violation of it condemned. In some societies, chastity is not important. For example, in ancient and mediaeval India, if a wife failed to produce male heir as a result of her relation with her husband, she was allowed to have sex with somebody and produce a male heir. In Hindu custom it was known as *Neyog*. It shows that male heir was more important than chastity of woman.

Similarly, premarital relationship was not a sin in all societies. In some Africa tribes, it was the custom that boy and girl had sex before marriage in order to check whether the girl was fertile or barren. In case of pregnancy, the marriage was celebrated, otherwise the girl was condemned to live single because barrenness of a woman was not acceptable by tribal values. Also, in some African tribes, if a woman was abducted and then returned having children with other tribe, she was accepted by her tribe without any problem because woman was regarded as a field and argued that anybody could till her like field and produce children like crop. In Eskimos, it was the tradition to exchange wives to have good and friendly relations with each other. In some cases, wife was offered to a guest as sign of hospitality to spend night with her.

So, it is not only the emergence of the institution of private property that undermined the status of woman but there were other factors too which played important role to assert male domination and subordination of woman as we have discussed above. The significant result of emergence of patriarchy is that woman becomes property of tribe and family. Now, it is up to male constructed traditions how to treat her: use her as a bargain in contracts and treaties, exchange her for political or social benefits, sell her for money, keep her in haram

surrounded by high walls and armed guards, or kill her in the name of honour/shame.

Tahira S.A. Khan's recent book *Beyond Honour: A Historical, Materialist Explanation of Honour Related Violence*, published by OUP Karachi 2006, is a detailed study about the value system which results in subordination of woman by using violent methods in the name of honour and shame. She rightly argues that the tradition of honour killing cannot be abolished by introducing penal codes or stringent laws. The root cause is our social system based on patriarchy and, therefore, unless it is not changed the old tradition would continue to persist. No doubt, Pakistani society is changing. Those tribal and traditional bound people, who are coming to urban centres, are facing new values contrary to their tribal or community's customs. Living in quite different environment, they are trying to preserve their ancestral past customs which is creating a conflict between old and new traditions. The result is that new generation is learning new values and rebelling against the old social and cultural practices which makes the old generation unnerved. As the conflict is becoming intense, violence is used as a last defensive weapon to preserve the status quo. How much time is required for the new forces to win? It is difficult to predict. However, the process of globalization and democratization which is upsetting the structure of Pakistani society and causing incidents of violence against women, the same process might change outdated patriarchal value system and liberate women from subordination and bondage.

Mubarak Ali

***Fettered Freedom*, by Zamir Niazi, compiled and edited by Dr. Syed Jaffar Ahmed, pages 215, price Rs.400. *Sahafat Paband-e-Salasil*, by Zamir Niazi (Urdu translation of *Press in Chains* by Ajmal Kamal), pages 388, price Rs.200. Both books published by Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi.**

The story of Press in Pakistan is as topsy-turvy as is the case with other spheres of our national existence. It has been victimised and it has victimised others, in the process of moving away and further away from the ideals set by the founding fathers. This, again, is in line with our overall national attitude and behaviour. From political dispensation to social ethics, we find ourselves at a certain distance from the principles that were at the core of our efforts to emerge as a fresh entity on the world map.

On 13 March 1947, some five months before we got our independence, the Quaid-i-Azam addressed a gathering of journalists

thus: 'I expect you to be completely fearless. If I go wrong or for that matter, the Muslim League goes wrong in any direction of its policy or programme, I want you to criticise it honestly as its friend, in fact, as one whose heart is beating with the Muslim nation'.

This can be taken as the guiding principle and the ideal behaviour defined for the media by the Quaid. In a certain way, it is to journalism what the famous August 11 speech is to our political orientation. Unfortunately, we have betrayed the Quaid on both counts. How far we have moved can be seen by this gem of a quote from President General Zia-ul-Haq's speech that he delivered on 22 March 1982; some 35 years after the Quaid. 'I could close down all the newspapers, say, for a period of five years, and nobody would be in a position to raise any voice against it. If they try to organise a meeting or procession, I will send them to jail'. The shift is too obvious to need any further comment.

These quotes and a whole lot of other facts are part of the two books under review – *Fettered Freedom* and *Sahafat Paband-e-Salasil*. The first one is a compilation of Zamir Niazi's articles on issues related to the functioning of media in Pakistan, while the other one is the Urdu translation on the history of Press-state equation in the country, *The Press in Chains*.

The compilation has been done by Dr. Syed Jaffar Ahmed, who in recent years has shown a lot of activism towards preserving valuable works for posterity from the platform of Karachi University's Pakistan Study Centre of which he is the head. The translation has been done by Ajmal Kamal. It was first done in 1994, and the second edition of the translated version has now been brought out by the Pakistan Study Centre.

It goes to the credit of those concerned that both the compilation and the translation are worthy efforts and match the quality of work of which Zamir Niazi was known and respected by all and sundry. Having been a working journalist for over four decades, the late Zamir Niazi had ample opportunity to observe the key Press-state equation from a vantage point. But, frankly speaking, there have been others with that much, or even more, exposure to a life in journalism but Zamir Niazi took the arduous path only because he was a man of stronger conscience and conviction than the more illustrious of his compatriots.

In his writings, Zamir Niazi not only pointed out the many ways in which the state has moved both during civil and military period to muzzle the voice of the Press, but has also brought to fore the element of terror being used by certain political entities against the media. There are those who have touched the issues in a transient manner, but Zamir Niazi

did it with the approach of a true research scholar, backing each and every incident with verifiable data and eyewitness account.

Laudable though it well and truly is, it is not the only thing that separates Zamir Niazi from the crowd. He remains the only soul to have given a realistic context to the overall discussion of media in the country. This he did by not shying away from the tricky task of highlighting the shortcomings of 'journals and journalists'. If *Sahafat Paband-e-Salasil* details the victimization of the Press, there is heart-rending introspection in equal measure, if not more, in *Fettered Freedom* where he talks of the 'price-tags' carried by the media and the media practitioners.

Talking of the five decades of independent Pakistan, he writes: 'it is a heroic story of trials and battles which the Pakistani journalists have fought, individually or collectively, to keep the banner of honest and truthful journalism flying. At the same time, it is a sad tale of betrayal and duplicity on the part of a number of newsmen and press barons.'

Page after page in *Fettered Freedom* one finds Zamir Niazi lamenting the disappearance of 'investigative reporting', arguing that it is only once in a blue moon that one finds such a story in newspapers and even that, on a closer scrutiny, reveals 'a hand smeared with muck and blood behind it.' He regrets, and the nation regrets with him, that 'half-truths and sometimes naked lies are told in the name of investigative reporting... there are instances of misinformation, disinformation, news management and deliberate plants'.

In an article written in 1986, Zamir Niazi counted '451 daily newspapers and 4000 other periodicals, published from the four provinces and Azad Kashmir... in about half-a-dozen languages'. But even such a large number of publications, in his view, were struggling to carry news-worthy news. 'We are told more and more about less and less', he says, while quoting T.S. Elliot who said, 'where is wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge? We have lost in information'.

But Zamir Niazi was an optimistic soul. He knew that the picture he was painting was 'dark and dreadful', so he hastened to add the other side and talked of 'bright, brilliant and hard-working boys and girls' joining the ranks of his 'fossilised breed'. It is some reflection of the times we are living in that even that young brigade has come of age in the last twelve years without there being any change in the situation on the ground.

Humair Ishtiaq

Inayatullah, Rubina Saigol and Pervez Tahir (eds.), *Social Sciences in Pakistan: A Profile*, Council of Social Sciences, Pakistan, Islamabad, 2005.

The volume under review consists of contributions from scholars concerned about the state of social sciences in Pakistan. Since independence, such evaluations have been few and as a matter of fact the first time that one was done was in 1980 after the Centre of Social Sciences and Humanities (COSH) constituted a group of social scientists to conduct a study to assess the needs of five social disciplines – History, Political Science and International Relations, Psychology, Sociology/Anthropology/Social Work and Philosophy. This report was followed by another review undertaken by the Faculty of Social Sciences of Quaid-i-Azam University in 1986. The survey covered 11 disciplines and was published in 1989.

The present volume is a far more comprehensive effort sponsored by the Council of Social Sciences of Pakistan. Apart from its comprehensiveness, the contributions revolve around certain common questions that were provided to the authors. The result is that the volume presents a coherent account of the state of social sciences in Pakistan. It is another matter that it is a 'dismal' account with Pakistani scholars bemoaning the low priority within which social sciences are held in the country. While acknowledging that there has been significant increase in the number of departments of social sciences, from 39 to 149, a more than three fold rise, and rise in the number of teachers from 210 in 1963 to 1168 in 2001 representing a five fold increase, Saigol expresses the general feeling that this quantitative increase has not translated into a vibrant academic environment reverberating with debate and development of new ideas and theories. [p.471]

One recurrent theme that is cited for the lack of vibrancy is the paucity of trained and qualified faculty. Teachers generally do not have a Ph.D and are rarely involved in research. The reasons for such a situation are not far to find. Governments do not provide adequate funds and do not consider social science of much relevance. Emergence of universities and research institutes in the private sector has worsened the problem by luring away the brighter lot with attractive salaries and working conditions. Lack of government funding has also meant that vacancies do not get filled up and, therefore, the teaching load increases pushing out time for research and reflection. Another dimension of poor funding is ill-equipped libraries with lack of material to keep pace with developments in the discipline the world over.

Another theme that is cited for low priority to social sciences is captured succinctly by Syed Jaffar Ahmed when he raises the question: What are the conditions in which academic disciplines flourish and enrich themselves and what are the essential criteria which give credibility to these disciplines at a universal level? And answers it by saying that fundamental pre-condition is the availability of an independent environment in which free inquiry can be carried out [p.307]. He goes on to add that social sciences are nourished by debate and discussion and this can happen only in democratic societies. Similar sentiment is expressed by Mehdi Hasan when he says that the reduced importance of social sciences in the country is due to fragile democratic culture and weak democratic structure. [p.279]. The scenario gets further complicated in many areas like Strategic Studies where as Ayesha Siddiqua points out, the influence of the armed forces dispossesses analysts and academics of the ability to conduct deeper analysis and become stake-holders in the field [p.73].

A third significant issue raised by these reviews of disciplines is the overwhelming ideological orientation of teachers across the disciplinary spectrum revolving around hegemonic religious and nationalist thinking. So deeply rooted are the teachers rooted in these versions of state and society that social sciences are unable to produce alternative visions for debate and discussion. The result is that universities have become dull and insipid places where received knowledge from old books is transmitted from generation to generation in the same unchanging way [p.477].

Many of the problems in the development of social sciences raised by the contributors are not limited to Pakistan. In varying measure all the countries of the subcontinent are grappling with many of these challenges. With onslaught of globalization and liberalization, overall support of public funding to higher education is declining and social sciences are facing crisis of relevance. Private sector is stepping in to fulfil the demands of the market that are concerned with technical and professional courses. Studies are becoming job oriented and better students and faculty both leave for greener pastures. A recent seminar in India reviewing the state of social sciences, lamented that financial crunch is narrowing the focus of social science research making it project or market oriented concerned with 'technical' aspects of the field.

This is an important book and the distinguished social scientists who have contributed to the volume need to be commended for their frank and candid appraisal of developments in social science in Pakistan. Many of the problems are intractable and are embedded in the nature of state and society. Some can be handled by the opportunities being

offered by the ICT revolution. It is these opportunities that can be explored to widen the interests. It is an uphill task but still needs to be undertaken as the Council of Social Sciences takes a more proactive stand to improve the state of the disciplines. I commend the volume to all those who reflect on these issues and want to enrich the disciplines in Pakistan. For educational policy makers, this volume should help re-orient their thinking.

Kuldeep Mathur

***Hali's Musaddas: A Story in Verse of the Ebb and Tide of Islam*, translated from the Urdu by Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, published by Harper Collins Publishers, New Delhi, India, 2003, pages 241, price Rs.500 (Indian).**

The earlier-written translation of Shackle-Majeed has been examined in some detail. It is a translation with full *apparatus criticus* and hence somewhat forbidding to the ordinary reader – in spite of its faults and shortcomings that have been highlighted. But it served the purpose for which the translators intended it.

In the present edition, there are other forces at play – which seek to reduce the *Musaddas* from a soul-stirring call for revival to a search for ‘personal roots’. As a descendant of the poet who composed the *Musaddas*, the translator, Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, seeks to discover her roots in India after an extended stay abroad. An ungenial picture of her on the dust cover indicates her frustration in this regard.

The ‘translation’ of Syeda Saiyidain Hameed has a foreword by Qurratulain Hyder – another woman of talent who could not decide where her roots lay but who in her life and writings clearly spells out that Indian Muslims are left with only one role to play out [if they are to survive at all] and that is to succumb to the wishes and whims of the Hindu majority and adopt a position of genteel inferiority.

The Introduction indicates a search for the ancestor, Hali, rather than an investigative approach to the decline of the Muslims that Hali wished to check and control in his poem. The many references to ‘*quam*’ made by Hali vis-à-vis the Muslims is stripped of its political associations and treated as a ‘caste’, an ethnic group or clan. The translator likens the Muslims as a ‘*quom*’ to other ‘*quoms*’ like ‘*telis, tanbolis, mughal, pathan, syed, gujar, jat...*’ [pp.21-2] clearly disregarding the complete total and supranational identity of Muslims as Muslims. The idea that Hali was aiming at a glorious revolution leading to the assumption of politico-religious power is too hot to be touched – certainly not by a minority member of a minority. So, all the sound and

fury seem to signify nothing. The assumption that Indian Muslims are doomed to be in a state of perpetual subjection to the aggressive Hindu majority is taken for granted.

The translation contains an English transliteration on one page followed by the Urdu text on the same page and a 'translation' of each of the six-lines of the *musaddas* stanza on the facing page. The need for the English transliteration has not been brought out. If it was meant to spread the knowledge of the text to non-Urdu reading Muslims, then it should have been given in Hindi – which would allow its further transmission into other Indian languages.

Then the translation claims that the title '*madd-o-jazr*' is equivalent to '*ebb and tide*' which is an error of the first magnitude. You can have a '*flow tide*' or an '*ebb tide*' but not an '*ebb and tide*'. This has also been discussed by the present reviewer in the context of the Shackleton-Majeed translation.

A further fallacy is seen in the attempt to give a 'verse' translation – a task beyond the capacity of Syeda Saiyidain Hameed. The basis for this, she claims, 'was my conviction that I knew and understood his mind' [p. 24]. Apart from her claim to be a mind-reader, she also felt that 'all the poetic conventions needed to be adhered to' – the result produced by her is something very different from the intent and spirit of the original. No attempt has been made to implement the rules of prosody, to keep the number of beats and stress patterns except by putting in clumsy end-rhymes. We take one example:

Voh yan eke jab bhes' meln jalwa gar hai
Chhupa jls' ke parde meln us' ka zarar hai

Translation by Syeda Saiyidain Hameed:

It is manifest here in the strangest of form
 Behind veils is concealed its venomous sting

These prosaic lines clearly give no hint at the author's original intent. The '*voh*' and '*jis*' are hopelessly intermixed.

As for rhyme, the *musaddas* form takes *aaaabb* for its scheme. But this is not followed by the translator – who takes all possible liberties generally giving the translation as *abcbdd*. Even within this self-created parameter, the rhyme is not adhered to and in one verse [p.183] it goes like this: *abcdef* What is gained by this futile attempt to juxtapose clashing end-rhymes defies the imagination.

Furthermore, the petition or '*arz-i-hal*' to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) – which is the acme of the poem – has been omitted without any reason being given. What the goals of the translator were and how far does she see herself achieving them and why such a 'translation' was needed now and what needs did it fulfil are all left unanswered. In the

opinion of the present reviewer, her efforts certainly do little justice to her eminent ancestor.

Syed Munir Wasti