

Published: Canada Free Press, Nov 10, 2006

Veiled Threats to Democracy

Rape, genocide and gross human rights violations against ethno-cultural groups induce victims to adopt defensive mechanisms. Hindu women in South Asia adopted traditions to protect themselves from Muslim invaders, who perpetrated the largest holocaust in history against Hindus. According to Dr. Younis Shaikh (Pakistani author of the study 'Islam and Women'), eighty million were slaughtered and millions of women were raped. Sexual violence occurred on a gory and unimaginable scale: it was standard practice for Islamic warlords like Ghoris and Ghaznis to unleash the mass rape and enslavement of hundreds of thousands of women after the slaughter of all males. A large percentage of Muslims in South Asia today are the progeny of forcible conversions and systematic rape campaigns by marauding Muslim invaders.

As a result, Hindu women often veiled themselves in public to avoid the eyes of rapacious Islamic conquerors. This was especially prevalent in regions with high Muslim populations, such as Hyderabad under the Nizams. The tradition of sati, where Hindu women voluntarily cast themselves onto burning cremation grounds after their husbands' death, gained widespread acceptance during the Islamic invasions. The most famous instance took place when Muslim invaders overran Chattisgarh in 1568: rather than submit to the rape and slavery that would follow, eight thousand heroic Hindu women committed sati en masse.

Western nations with high Islamic immigration rates are also beginning to see mass rape and sexual violence emanating from Muslim fundamentalists. Paul Sheehan of the Sydney Morning-Herald reported the clear link between Australian rapes and Muslim immigrants. In one instance, a Pakistani in Australia charged with rape argued in court that his cultural background is responsible for his acts. Last week, one of Australia's senior-most Islamic clerics, Sheikh Hilali, compared unveiled women to uncovered meat who invite rape.

In Europe, Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten reported that Oslo police reports found two-thirds of Norwegian sexual crimes are committed by 'non Western immigrants'. The Swedish Crime Prevention Council reports that males born overseas commit rape at four times the rate of natives Swedes. In both of these nations, Muslim immigrants comprise the largest non European population, which is echoed across Europe. TIME magazine reported in 2002 that sexual assault is rampant in France's poverty-stricken suburbs, inhabited primarily by members of the five million-strong French Muslim population.

Thus, we are seeing a repeat in the West of what occurred in ancient Hindu civilization: the freedoms enjoyed by liberated women are steadily being eroded by beliefs diametrically opposed to our values of pluralism and freedom.

Within some societies, it is customary for women to bear the blame and responsibility for sexual crimes. The niqab and hijab cover female bodies and it is the duty of women at all

times to remain covered and avoid male attention. In Pakistan, women are sometimes stoned to death for adultery and imprisoned when they are raped. When Mukhtar Mai's brother was charged with an offence, Pakistani courts ordered her to be gang-raped by four men for her brother's offense.

Viewed in this light, it is apparent why British PM Blair and Italian PM Prodi have recently raised concerns about the wearing of veils. France has wisely banned the wearing of veils in public schools.

Whether or not immigrants can adapt successfully to progressive societies is dependent on how deeply entrenched are the negative values of their homelands. Oppression, enslavement, and sexual violence are rooted within the fundamentalist Islamic psyche. Many Islamic leaders who perpetrated mass rape in South Asia were deeply religious Muslims with considerable authority within the faith.

Fundamentalist Muslim attitudes towards women and minorities are so divergent from civilized norms in other cultures that clashes are inevitable. These conflicts can result in drastic changes in the host cultures, such as regional adoption of veils by Hindu women and an upsurge in sati traditions. In Europe, the massive sexual violence perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalists is slowly changing society. Unni Wikan, professor of sociology at University of Oslo, in 2001 blamed Norwegian women for dressing provocatively in front of Muslim men, and suggested that they should adapt themselves to a multicultural society.

Western societies will soon be forced to decide whether to protect their democratic traditions or submit to medieval standards of conduct.

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