Painting Coal Black



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A Taliban leader, Adnan Rasheed, recently wrote a letter to Malala Yousafzai not apologising for shooting an unarmed, female child in the head, but accusing her of a 'smear campaign' against them. They claimed Malala was tarnishing the Taliban's image in the international arena. I wonder which image the Taliban was referring to – of shooting unarmed people or burning schools? Perhaps these acts are legal in the Talibani books. As far as my basic understanding of Islam goes, I have never heard of any Surahs which advocated the shooting of unarmed minor children or blowing up educational institutes. Rather as a child, I heard a Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) advised us 'to go to the faraway land of China for education'. It did not say that only men should go to China for education or after reaching China, that they should burn down non-Muslim educational institutions there. Perhaps the Talibani version of the Hadith does.

While Rasheed wrote a letter to Malala defending their action, leaders of Hefazate Islam are publishing statements in newspapers, the very media they accuse of running smear campaigns, defending their leader Shah Ahmed Shafi's sermon against women. They say Shafi's sermon is meant for rural people not the urban educated mass; as if it is ok to tell the impoverished villagers not to send their daughters to school and work places, so that they might bring home food to eat. Perhaps the Hefazat has a rationale behind their argument. If the rural population becomes educated and comes out of poverty, they might not listen to such nonsensical sermons or send their children to seminaries, where Hefazat can turn them into robotic zealots, who can be used in their processions and rallies against the 'atheists'.

According to Hefazat, Shafi is not against women's education or career. He just wants them to go to Islamic educational institutes or Sharia approved work places as the existing ones are infected with Western values and ideas. The same values and ideas which according to a World Bank report reduced poverty of the country, improved the health of its people, and reduced mother and child mortality. Hefazat might argue that these achievements are not real since the evaluation has been made by 'ungodly Westerners'.

Let us, for argument's sake, discard the World Bank's report about Bangladesh's progress and say people have not come out of poverty in reality. If that is so, I wonder why Arati, Rehana, Lovely