



Who gave men the right to police women's clothing?

VISUAL: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

Men, lower your gaze and stop judging women



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ONE side effect of looking like a typical Muslim male is that people think they can share their hardships with me. And one of the most notable hardships that men in today's day and age suffer from has to be women, and their clothing. The other day, I was on a rickshaw with a female friend who was wearing a collared fatua and trousers. On the way, when she got off the rickshaw to get something from a store, the rickshaw puller said to me in a tone of complaint, "What is she wearing?" In these situations, I always feel like leading them on, so I asked, "What's wrong with what she's wearing?" "I can see her body," he said. "Why are you looking, then?" I asked. "Just don't look, problem solved."

I am often faced with these questions, and in reply I always tell them, "Listen, Allah first told men to practise restraint of the gaze and of sexual desire. After that, He spoke of women's clothing. The first responsibility is yours – the responsibility to avert your gaze. If you don't look, the problem is solved. Let women decide how they will answer to Allah for their clothing and for their actions. Even if a woman walks out without clothes on, men have not been given the right to look at her. Because Allah knows where the root of the problem lies, so He has asked men to control their gaze first. If you can manage your eyes, the rest will also be managed. Women will also be saved from trouble."

Yet, men in our society think it is their birthright to practise superiority over women, to tell them what to do, to use force against them, to dictate their thoughts and their behaviour. But is it really so? I have had the opportunity to study Islam a fair bit, and that opportunity can lead to some discussions on the matter. Firstly, when it comes to husband and wife, the Holy Quran says, "They (your wives) are a clothing (covering) for you, and you too are a clothing (covering) for them." If one looks at the comparison, they can see that there is equality here – there is a matter of companionship. It speaks of equality in honour and respect. It means that in your family, your wife holds a place of honour equal to yours. For the sake of this honour, the two of you will, together, make decisions on family matters. You will have a mutual understanding, and make life plans together. After that comes the matter of the

fundamental rights of women, their right to education and justice. In reality, it is not the place of men to give them these rights. The state and society will provide that. It is not for men to determine whether women will be educated. It is not for men to determine women's rights. It is not for men to determine women's birthrights. Then we can come to the topic of women's authority in society, and in all aspects of womanhood. Men have no rights here. The Prophet (PBUH) discussed all matters of womanhood with his wives, not with men. This is because none other than women have authority over women. It is simply not possible. Yet, our men want to become authorities over this as well. Are men solely responsible for providing for women? Of course not. In fact, the work here is divided. Some will work outdoors, some will

because it was a time when injustice against women was widespread. There is a hadith from the Prophet (PBUH) that speaks of a bumpy road that a woman will travel on alone. So how can we presume to dictate a woman's right to movement, when this right is enshrined right here? It also says that it will be a time when men will become so well-behaved that women will not suffer from a lack of security. It seems to me like, if you adhere to religion properly, you cannot hold authority over anyone. On the contrary, you will become a person of equality, who does not project strength over others, but has empathy instead. Recently, social media has been rife with discussions over women's clothing. After the incident at a train station in Narsingdi and the High Court's statement on the matter, some people congratulated the court. In reply, others came together at TSC to criticise this stance. In that gathering, some women wore clothing of their choice. Then, Facebook became another gathering of online abuse targeting these women, whereas the discussion could have ended where it started. Do men actually have the right to decide what a woman can or cannot wear? If they do, why is it so? Who gave them that right? No

It is not for men to determine whether women will be educated. It is not for men to determine women's rights. It is not for men to determine women's right to justice. All of these are women's birthrights.

work at home. Traditionally, men work outdoors and women at home, but if the opposite is true in certain households, nothing has been said to oppose that either. The Prophet (PBUH) himself married one such woman, who provided for him. In the moments when he was immersed in attaining his Prophethood, she managed the household and the outdoor work, all on her own. Therefore, men are not providing for women, they are only doing their share of the work. If he thinks himself powerful for doing his bit, then he uses his faith as an excuse to exercise his authority. Our men tend to think they can decide on women's right to education, right to justice, and on their freedom of movement. But at the heart of religion, no such edicts exist. In fact, the Prophet (PBUH) had said of women's rights, that if a person raises their daughter well, they will have heaven. The person who raises two daughters will have heaven. Meaning they will have all the rights given to sons. This was said

one. Religion has set out some rules around clothing, but if someone does not follow them, then the responsibility for that falls solely on their shoulders. Yet, some men have presumed they have this authority and are now forcing their decisions on women. And if a woman does not abide by the standards of clothing chosen by these men, they have to face harassment, name-calling, and so much more. My devout brothers, learn to take responsibility for your own gaze instead of blaming women. That will resolve most of the problems. Take responsibility for your own sins, stop policing others, and then you will not have any issues with what women are wearing. If you still must discuss clothing, then maybe you can discuss the history and evolution of clothing in this region. Talk about the politics of clothing, how it can affect your place in society. Talk about how clothing can become a symbol of the beautiful and the ugly. Maybe that might give you some relief!

Translated by Azmin Azran.

Private sector plastic is killing our environment



A CLOSER LOOK

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TASNEEM TAYEB

A report published by this daily earlier this month suggests that Chattogram, the second largest city in Bangladesh, produces 249 tonnes of plastic waste every day, which has the potential to go up to 428 tonnes per day by 2052. The findings were revealed in a study by the Department of Civil Engineering of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet). The waste includes sachets, single-use utensils and personal care items, among others. Unfortunately, 56 percent of the waste remains uncollected. While these facts present a grim picture of plastic waste mismanagement in Chattogram, the overall scenario of the country perhaps paints a more alarming landscape. According to the World Bank, in December 2021, Bangladesh was one of the top countries in the world in terms of plastic pollution due to inadequate plastic waste management. The annual per capita plastic consumption in Dhaka alone is 22.25kg. The number is more than three times the national average for urban areas. A report by business consulting firm LightCastle Partners on the plastic industry suggests that Bangladesh ranks 10th in mismanaging plastic waste, and in Dhaka, between 2005 and 2020, daily plastic waste has seen a spike from 178 tonnes to a staggering 646 tonnes. The piling up of plastic waste is a worrisome development as it can have severe environmental consequences. Plastic is mostly made from "natural materials such as cellulose, coal, natural gas, salt and crude oil through a polymerisation or polycondensation process," according to Plastics Europe, a leading pan-European trade association. And when exposed to the sun and its heat, these can emit significant volumes of greenhouse gases. This certainly contributes to the increasing temperature, which in turn can facilitate plastic waste in generating more harmful gases, including ethylene and methane, which can further push the temperature higher, creating a nightmarish cycle of destruction. Given that plastic is not naturally biodegradable, the only way forward for plastic management is adopting a circular economic model to manage plastic waste. Of the 646 tonnes of plastic waste collected daily in Dhaka, only 37.2 percent is recycled. The rest ends up in landfills, water bodies, playgrounds, roads and sea beaches, among other places. And this discarded waste impacts the environment, affecting not just the country but, in a holistic sense, the overall health of the entire planet and all its inhabitants. Realising the urgency of combatting plastic pollution in a structured way, the government has drawn up a National Action Plan for Sustainable Plastic Management based on the 3R approach of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. This is focused on the circular economic model and has set specific goals to reduce plastic waste. Some of the goals include recycling 50 percent of plastics by 2025, phasing out single-use plastic by 90 percent by 2026, and by 2030, reducing plastic waste generation by 30 percent based on the 2020-21 baseline. Apart from this, the government, in the past, took some commendable steps to curb plastic use. In 2002, Bangladesh became the first country in

the world to put a ban on thin plastic shopping bags. In 2020, a High Court directive banned single-use plastic in the coastal areas and in hotels and motels around the country. Moreover, the Jute Packaging Act, 2010 proactively promotes alternative packaging for six essential items, including rice, fertiliser and paddy. These are bold and laudable measures, but unfortunately, they are not usually put into practice. And it must be kept in mind that the government alone cannot manage plastic waste. As a significant contributor to this menace, the private sector needs to come forward to claim ownership of the consequences of their actions, and take effective and immediate measures to support the nation in this fight. The private-sector companies, who are daily contributing to the ever-growing problem of generating plastic waste in the form of products, packaging, and bottling, need to rethink how they can fully adopt the 3R approach. Currently, there are about 5,000 companies in the country, many of them small, which are contributing to production and even export of plastic goods. Some of the bigger companies, including some major multinationals in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry, are going out of their way to not only recycle and reuse plastic internally, but also support various city corporations in collecting – through formal and informal channels – plastic waste, so that they can be properly and safely recycled for reuse or repurpose. Many of these companies have set internal targets to fully convert to the use of recycled plastic in their operations in order to minimise their plastic footprint. And some others have taken up special measures such as coastal clean-up drives. But there are companies, especially those with small operations – many of them making cheap plastic products and packaging in shabby workshops in Old Dhaka (often causing fatal fire incidents) – which do not understand the outcome of their actions, and are going on with their business without any hesitation. Such discrepancy in actions among players operating in the private sector create barriers in the making of an ecosystem that promotes implementation of a circular economic model. At this point, the government needs to invest more in helping create policies and frameworks that promote elimination of plastic waste through inclusive and holistic measures. What gives us hope is that awareness of the need for plastic recycling has spread across the country. The plastic recycling business that is thriving in the northern part of the country – with people at the grassroots level taking leadership in driving this business, which consists of about 1,000 plastic recycling factories across eight districts – is really an eye-opener. It goes to show that if there is awareness, if there is a will, people will find a way. But for these businesses to flourish further, adequate policy support and incentives are crucial. The government can consider preparing micro plans – perhaps under the National Action Plan for Sustainable Plastic Management – that are inclusive in nature and require committed action from all the players involved in the production and usage of plastic in the private sector to play their well-defined roles in eliminating plastic waste. And to encourage everyone to play their part, there could be a reward mechanism for companies that are compliant and fulfilling targets. It could be in the form of tax exemptions or other business incentives. It is only through an inclusive model that we would be able to truly embrace the 3R approach of plastic management and reduce our plastic footprint as a nation.



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The following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Publication Date	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date
1	729440	Procurement of DM Plant Process Chemical	07-Sep-2022	25-Sep-2022 14:30 PM	26-Sep-2022
2	727654	Supply of Spare Parts for GT, ST and BoP control valves and shut-off valves.	12-Sep-2022	10-Oct-2022 14:00 PM	11-Oct-2022

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