

Mir Sayyid Ali Tabrezi

During the first quarter of the present century when the investigations in the field of art research highlighted importance of research in miniature paintings, the life and work of outstanding miniaturists attracted the attention of art lovers and they began with redoubled energy to explore authentic sources for the lives and works of miniature painters.

Mir Sayyid Ali was an unrivalled master painter of the Mughal and Persian Schools of Painting. He had enjoyed the patronage of three royal connoisseurs of art, i.e., Shah Tahmasp of Iran and Humayun and Akbar the great, of India. This is an epoch making period for the cultivation of learning and art. But the biographical sources of such a brilliant luminary belonging to such a glorious period of aesthetic development are still lost in the murky light of the history of art. The number of his works preserved from the depredation of time do not exceed beyond ten. His extant work is of such a high execution that no account of the history of the Mughal and the Persian Art can afford to ignore his contribution. His biographical data is few and far between. Even the definite date of his birth is still in the dark and his birth place is still controversial.

The scholarly historian of the period of Akbar, Abul Fazl was a contemporary of the artist. He alludes to him in the following terms. "He was born and educated in Tabriz".¹

Abul Fazl was an authentic authority on the history of the period. In view of his statement almost all the historians of miniature painting have cited Tabrez as his birth place.²

The late Professor Mohammad Shafi has contributed an article

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تصنیف

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تصحیح و مقدمہ

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ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in Church."³²

Having examined briefly the condition of women in Judaism and Christianity it becomes evident that the present status of western women is not in line with the real teachings of Judaism and Christianity. Instead, it is an outcome of a multitude of currents brought about by secularism and modernism.

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throughout the rest of her life, she was appreciated not only by society, but by the Church as well.

“She is happier if she remains as she is, and I think that I have the spirit of God.”²⁸

(c) **The wife at Home and Her Public Status.**

As stated before, the myth of creation had brought about a great influence on the position of women. Their whole achievement in life was the love and care for the family and submission and docility to their husbands. They were demanded to prove themselves as subordinate and inferior to the husbands. “The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband.”²⁹ They were excluded from the society and were required to be submissive and quiet before man :

“Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men ; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve ; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”³⁰

They were supposed to remain in seclusion and to apply themselves to weaving, spinning and cooking ; but if they ever went out, then they were required to veil themselves.

“Let her wear a veil. For a man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God ; but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman ought to have a veil.”³¹

Under the influence of St. Paul’s teachings, the orthodox church excluded women from most religious functions and they were not supposed to go to the Church. St. Paul considered women clamorous, silly and imbecile and did not allow them to preach or to express their opinion in the matter of religion.

“The women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them

about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord, but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord."²³

(b) Divorce and Re-marriage.

According to the real spirit of Christianity divorce was entirely disapproved of.

".....that the wife should not separate from her husband and that the husband should not divorce his wife".²⁴

According to Mark, one of the most prominent apostles, Jesus expressed hatred towards divorce in the following words :

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her ; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."²⁵

In fact, what was the real intention of Jesus in the matter of divorce has been a controversial issue among the scholars of Christianity. Different apostles had different views about this matter. Josephus gave the right of divorce only to the husband, while Mark entirely disapproved of divorce either by husband or by wife. For him, it was against the real teachings of Christianity. Nonetheless, on the whole, the institution of divorce was not rejected by the fathers of the Church, who had in fact a great influence over the Church and society. However, they did not accept any divorce which was based on mutual agreement of the spouses, or a divorce given by a wife to her husband. It meant that, on certain grounds, like adultery, they allowed husbands to divorce their wives, but disagreed about giving any legal right to the wives by which they could seek separation from their husbands.²⁶ Generally a Christian widow was allowed to remarry whom she liked.

"A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If the husband dies she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."²⁷

But if she could exercise self control and remained as widow

Hebrew society, A father, who in the family was called *ba'al*, could sell his sons and daughters. He considered his wife as his property and treated her, in many respects, as if she was a slave to her lord.¹⁶ A vow and pledge made by a wife needed the consent of her husband in order to be valid. If the husband listened to the vow and kept quiet, the vow was valid, but if he expressed his disapproval, all vows and pledges were null and void.¹⁷ The wife did not inherit anything from her husband, nor daughters from their fathers, except when there was no male heir.¹⁸ Since women's vow was invalid, unless it was approved by men, they could not engage themselves in business and were deprived of economic opportunities. The only true aim they had was love and respect for their husbands and to fulfil their marital obligation.¹⁹ As they did not have anything to do outside, they usually stayed at home. The harem system was quite common, especially among the upper classes, and the Kings kept their women in seclusion.²⁰

THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC STATUS OF CHRISTIAN WOMEN

(a) Marriage

Generally, Christian marriage was a contract between the two persons involved into which the idea of 'lasting spiritual union' was absolute and indispensable. According to the Roman Catholic church a valid marriage was sacred and permanent and should last till the death of one spouse dissolved it.²¹ However a great apostle and the premier Saint of Christendom, St. Paul, who was in fact the builder of Christianity, did not recognise marriage as a spiritual and social partnership between a man and woman and did not believe in normal and respectable family life and its enjoyment.²² He permitted marriage as a necessary evil. In the Bible he stated—

‘It is well for a man not to touch a woman. It is well for a person to remain as he is. Do not seek marriage. But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a girl marries she does not sin. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles. I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious

parents in the matter of choosing their life partners, the civil law did not recognise this privilege and gave power to the father to give his daughters into marriage bond or sell them to whosoever he liked.⁸

(c) The Dowry and Dower.

In ordinary circumstances, when marriage was arranged by the mutual consent of groom and bride's guardian, the groom was expected to give some money called *mahr* (dower) to the bride's father, brothers or any other cousin or male relative.⁹ The bride was also expected to bring some gifts or money called dowry to the groom's house given by her parents. Those brides who brought a dowry held a much better and prestigious position in the husbands' family. They were not supposed to cook, wash or to do any other strenuous house hold job.¹⁰

(d) Polygamy and Concubinage.

Polygamy was legalized and a man, in spite of having a wife, could acquire any number of other wives.¹¹ Besides polygamy, a husband was also allowed to have as many concubines as he wished and not only that, he was also entitled to have sexual relations with slave girls and bond women, even if they were married and was not thereby considered a fornicator.¹²

(e) Divorce and Re-marriage.

Under the Hebraic law, divorce was exclusively for the husband and only he was entitled to divorce his wife. To bring divorce into effect he was required to give his wife a bill of dismissal in the form of a written document.¹³ In the case of accusing the wife of adultery on false grounds, the husband lost his right to divorce his wife forever.¹⁴ Women were allowed to remarry after being widowed or divorced; however, they were not allowed to remarry their first husband after their second marriage. If the widow happened to be childless, she was obliged to marry her late husband's brother.¹⁵

(f) The wife at Home and Her Public Status.

Paternal authority and power was the dominant factor in

the Great, did their utmost to denounce women openly and considered them as a 'necessary evil'. Tertullian, for example, considered sexual love to be the essence of sin and woman to be "the gate of hell". Clement of Alexandria went further and claimed that every woman should be overwhelmed with shame at the thought that she is a woman³. Thus, for centuries the Christian world systematically taught women's inferiority and subjection through the Church.

THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC STATUS OF JEWISH WOMEN

(a) Marriage and the Concept of Virginity.

In Jewish society marriage was a private affair in which sanction by the State and religion was not required. It was in fact a matter of business in which the question of dowry paid by the bridegroom had great significance.⁴ The main purpose of marriage was procreation. Therefore, if the marriage union lasted ten years without the birth of any offspring, it could be either dissolved by the husband or he could obtain a second wife. There existed various types of marriage practised by the Jews and all, except a few, were dissoluble.⁵ The virginity of a woman before marriage and conjugal fidelity after the marriage, were the two most important factors of the marriage institution. Hebrew women were asked to guard their virginity till their wedding and if, at the time of the marriage, a bride could not prove to be virgin, she was to be stoned to death by the elders of the city.

"They shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones".⁶

If a woman already betrothed or married was raped by a stranger and she did not cry for help at that moment, she lost the right to life and was entitled to be stoned. But in the case of being a virgin, she had no choice but to marry the rapist.⁷

(b) Marriage Consent.

Although women were not supposed to be coerced by the

to grant women their freedom of choice and action. Thus under these two religions, women were controlled and given an inferior position compared to men.

Taking into cognizance the teachings of Judaism and Christianity the following article presents an appraisal of the status of women in terms of some major aspects of their life as laid down by the two religions.

As far as the origin and basic structure is concerned, both these religions are similar as both came through the prophets who descended from the family of Abraham. Moreover both have the same concept of 'creation'. Judaism and Christianity while putting the whole blame on Eve regarding the first sin of Adam, have played a very vehement role in proclaiming and maintaining women's inferior position. The Bible says clearly that as a result of woman's sin committed against the male deity, her husband was awarded the divine right to dominate her and to rule over her.

"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing ; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you".¹

Another concept, which again is common in both religions, is the concept of 'helpmate' which made women inferior to men.

"Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the men should be alone ; I will make him a helper fit for him".²

According to the Old and New Testaments, Eve was formed out of Adam's rib and was presented to Adam as a gift and helper to keep him from being lonely. Under the influence of the two aforementioned concepts, Judaism and Christianity both considered women as temptresses, inferior to men, and wholly responsible for the fall of Adam. According to Judaic and Christian theology, woman's judgment had led to disaster for the whole human species. To preserve and spread the idea of women's inferiority, several early Christian Fathers, such as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Bernard, St Anthony, St. Cyprian, St. Bonaventure, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Gregory

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The Position Of Women in Judaism and Christianity : A Historical Perspective

Since the second half of the nineteenth century various reforms regarding the status of women have been introduced in the Western world which have certainly reduced male authority as husband and father. At present, Western women live in an entirely new world—a world which has changed their position far more dynamically than that of men. The amendments in legislation during the nineteenth century made it possible to pass a host of laws in the first half of the twentieth century which equalized or, at least, improved the status of women with regard to inheritance, property, judicial rights & duties citizenship, education, economic matrimonial and sexual matters, maintenance and guardianship of their children.

This is only a natural sequel of all these changes that the smart Western women of today in their neat, lighter and more revealing brief dress can demonstrate the signs of their new freedom and status. They, at present, are more eloquent and effectively involved in defiance and antagonism than ever before, whether it is a matter of campaigning for liberalizing abortion or improving legislation to provide equal opportunities and wages for women or protesting against the high prices of basic necessities.

However, the present portrait of western women does not bear a great similarity with that presented by the World's two great divine religions i.e. Judaism and Christianity. Both these religions are from the family of Abraham and are patriarchal in nature. Due to their patriarchal nature, it was impossible for them

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that of Rome, and in as many tens of yeas as the latter had wanted hundreds to accomplish her conquests ; by the aid of which they alone of all the Shemites came to Europe as kings, whither the Phoenicians had come as tradesmen, and the Jews as fugitives or captives ; came to Europe to hold up, together with these fugitives, the light to humanity ; — they alone, while darkness lay around, to raise up the wisdom and knowledge of Hellas from the dead, to teach philosophy, medicine, astronomy and the golden art of song to the West as to the East, to stand at the cradle of moderan science, and to cause us late epigoni for ever to weep over the day when Granada fell.”²⁴

The celebrated scholar, George Sarton, author of the monumental work *Introduction to the History of Science*, has been so much impressed by the works of Muslim scholars that he declares enthusiastically :

The main task of mankind was accomplished by Muslims. The greatest philosopher, al-Farabi was a Muslim ; the greatest mathematicians, Abu Kamil and Ibrahim Ibn Sinan were Muslims ; the greatest geographer and encyclopaedist, al-Mas’udi was a Muslim ; the greatest historian, al-Tabari, was still a Muslim.²⁵

It is due to the impact of the Prophet Muhammad on the intellectual advancement of Europe and the world civilization that William Draper stated correctly :

Four years after the death of Justinian was born the man who, of all men has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race—Muhammad.²⁶

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