

# **Feminism, laicity, same fight against integrisms**

Michèle Vianès, présidente de Regards de Femmes  
**Marking the centenary of International Women's Day**  
**An International Conference on**  
**Women's Rights, Sharia Law and Secularism**  
**University of London Union**  
**12 March 2011**

*The Conference is sponsored by the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain, International Committee against Stoning, Iran Solidarity, Equal Rights Now and One Law for All.*

I have to talk to you about theocratic patriarchy; I have to talk to you about feminism and laicity, and about attempts done by obscurantists against these 2 tools for women and men's emancipation.

## **1 Theocratic Patriarchy**

Religions were set by men, for men. Holy texts were transcribed, studied, commented by these same men who had the monopoly of culture access throughout centuries. Among all religions we (one) can find the same misogynous features which led to women's discriminations: these features were used by men and States to possess women's bodies and spirits.

Traditions and religions "explained" the incapability of women. They interpreted biological facts; first amongst them was menstrual blood. This led to the register of pure and impure, enabling some to play on all the range of oppositions: legal and illegal, allowed and forbidden. Forbidding women's access to holy places, refusing women's visibility next to gods under the pretext of impurities has led to demonization & taboos, excuses for women's exclusions.

Woman is considered as a source of disorder, able to lead man away from his duties toward God. According to Ghazali – who was XII century theo-sexologist, but who is today a "scientific" reference for nowadays integrists "Man loses two third of his reason/intellect when he is in erection " (I don't know if this fact has been verified by the weigh and measures service department)

Married, women are getting intellectually sterile because of a heavy load of domestic constraints and ridiculous eating prohibitions which force them to always think about their god.

## **2 Feminism & Laicity**

For all times, there have been some men and women denouncing this hierarchy.

Using Condorcet's ideas: a laic, free and compulsory school for both sexes, Jules Ferry explained "the one who holds woman, holds everything, this is why the church wants to retain the woman, and this is also why democracy is necessary to prevent women from being retained".

The human being, man or woman, is a free human being thanks to his/ her reason and critical spirit, in order to be free from any "volunteered", or imposed servitude.: this is the laic ideal.

Laicity assures the freedom of thinking and expression and the neutrality of public action.

Laicity aims to recognize the same dignity to each person, to command no devotion but simply the freely accepted adhesion to rights and duties. It's the school of the Republic's mission to teach it to students who are citizen to be, for students to feel it, in order to free the students from any "volunteered", or imposed servitude.

Laicity is a way to enable women and men to coexist, even so they don't necessarily share the same convictions, however they have been emancipated by an education based on a national autonomy of judgments. The laic requirements ask self effort to each person.

Laicity is the absolute enemy from obscurantists who base their domination of populations on the refusal of conscious freedom. Considering blasphemy as a felony comes down to forbid people to think and express their thoughts.

Laicity also assures equality in rights, duties and dignity of women and men. The right to contraception and abortion, ethnicist violences refusal, religious and / or communitarian oppression, refusal of women's dissimulation behind a veil-shroud, constituting possessional and obsessional marks of women, considered as sexual objects, are founding our "living together".

The civil link has the pre-eminence on all historical or religious senses of identity, on domestic, local or clan solidarities.

In case of conflicts between groups, in order to arbitrate on behalf of general interest, a State which doesn't have the tool of Laicity – which knows all religions but doesn't recognize any – is disarmed.

If in a State, a religion is compulsory or privileged that is to say imposed, freedom of thought is no longer possible. As religion is gaining the public power for its own profit, equality no longer exists.

Those who don't believe in this religion or interpret it differently, undergo an alienation of their fundamental rights as a human being.

Unicity is just a front. As the diversity of opinions and the equality of rights are not respected, conflicts and "wars of Gods" are developing.

If within a Country, all religions are "recognized" each group will be able to demand the respect of its own communitarian\_life style rules. This diversity would emphasize differences and create walls between groups. There would no longer be the emergence of common principles which are superior to individual values, there would no longer be any mixing of the sexes between groups. Endogamic weddings would be the rule. Specific educations would divide children and young people before opposing adults.

Communitarian or multiculturalists countries encounter difficulties. Multiculturalism increases ethnicity of social relationships and leads to identity seclusion which creates walls instead of favouring the social links and a common political project.

### **3 Obscurantists against gender equality**

Women's control of children birth has been a revolution, as it has completely changed the old patriarchal and theocratic order. In addition, the financial independence, the control of their body and mind freaked out machocrates who send women back to their natural "mission": sexual gratification of the husband and household tasks. These machocrates called religions for help.

Religious fundamentalists consider the emancipation of women as the reason for all community sins, which would disappear if people were going back to patriarchal and theocratic, submitting human beings and women's acceptance of their own submission.

To convince women to go back to patriarchal theocratic patterns – the submission to gods is materialized on earth by the submission of men – they use two ways. A hypocritical speech protecting women and an intimidating speech: threat of punishment on Earth or Heaven that is to say eternal if women don't abide by their rules.

The control on fertility and women's sexuality was and remains the force of oppression. The holy alliance of all religions fundamentalists, catholics, evangelists, hinduisms, Buddhist, jewish, muslims, the undermining of preachers found allies among women. A voice is given to "concerned Women of America" or muslim women as they have assimilated volunteered servitude.

Ferry wanted to emancipate women by freeing them from priests, this is the opposite for the Algerian Front Islamic FIS: "The muslim woman is a irreplaceable force on psychological, social, cultural levels. The aim is to channel this force and use its potentialities in the most judicious way regarding the strategy of our civilization."

In France, young girls from muslim filiation were successful at school, place of emancipation and would after become independent, they may also get married to a non muslim. This fear among preachers led them to veil their daughters, on one hand while tightening their head, trying to atrophy their brain, and on the other hand, present them as victims of these horrible laic teachers who want to colonize brains of young, by teaching them how to think that is "reject your own beliefs" according to French Philosopher Alain.

But some compassionate "silly minded" people, under the pretext of cultural relativism, racism which forbids people – depending on their place of birth, their ethnicity and their ancestors religion – from having access to fundamental Human Rights, support obscurantists against men and women who fight for the universality of human rights.

These differentialists "tolerate" that women and young girls hide behind a veil, so that even when being outside women remain inside. They accept the idea that women are only a sexual tool, a cause of disorder, and that they have to stay hidden while in the public space. It would be their faith, their choice; however it can't be their right. Their personal choice is not a right that the Republic would have to accept. In our State of right, as in any democratic society, the liberty of one person ends where the liberty of others starts. Only the law enables people's freedoms to live together rather than opposing, the law enables people's freedoms to reinforce each other, even when limiting each other, rather than destroying each other, to be free together.

The fear to be considered "islamophobe" by denouncing the intrigues of "Islamic factions" leads to the abandonment / withdrawal from our fellow citizen, adults or children, at the mercy of fundamentalists

Tolerating the stigmata of submission, darkened by women's blood who are whipped, raped, lapidated, strangled because they refuse to wear it, wouldn't be the proof of "an open mind".

## **Conclusion**

In France, Constitutional principles of Laicity and the equality between men and women are both the key of women's autonomy towards religious and the pillar to resist against fundamentalisms.

For laicity to concern all women and girls, we mustn't remain silent anymore, we mustn't tolerate the intolerable, we mustn't accept the fact that young girls are conditioned to consider themselves as a unique sexual object. We mustn't anymore abandon cowardly our compatriots who are muslims by filiations or denomination, starting by women under the mercy of "political Islam" and communautarisms.

Faced with nowadays obscurantists, the Enlightenment is essential.

As Voltaire wrote on 1768 : "Let's affront the devil, that doesn't exist and the real devilish fanatics of which there are too many" (Lettre au marquis de Villevielle, 20 décembre 1768)