

## Review

# Rokeya's Sultana's Dream: A Utopia against a Dystopia

Md. Mohoshin Reza PhD

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT), Mirpur-2, Rupnagar, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Accepted 13 July 2015

Rokeya (1887-1947 A.D) is considered to be the visionary emancipator of women in Bengal (presently Bangladesh). The core inspiration of her literary works rests in her realization of the needs of taking measures against the suppression, oppression and domination of men over the women race for centuries in Bengal. Her mission of sowing the seeds of self strength in the mind of Bengal's women has always been underlying in her literary works. *Sultana's Dream*, one of her distinguished literary pieces in English, written in 1905, is a utopian dream fragment which is a revolutionary attempt of taking remedial measures against the lordship of men over women. In this utopia, the male folk of a land deprive the women race from their rights and manacle them with dominating customs. They consider women as inferior to *homo sapience* and simply beck and call to men. But, actually, the men of the land lag behind in sense of talents and firmness of character. Most men appear archaic, barbarous and simply imposing to women. They disuse and confine women into seclusion (*Purdah*), called *Zenana*. Their social customs completely segregate women from outdoor movement and activities. But things turn reverse in the story. Once, their country comes under a foreign attack. With fragile sense of patriotism, worthless arrogance and incompetence, all men retreat from the battle field and enter their houses to save own lives. In this perilous situation, the ever neglected women race come out of *Zenana* to save the liberty and sovereignty of their land. As per the customs, men and women should not stay alongside. So, when women come out of *Zenana*, men have to go inside the seclusion which is now called *Murdana* (the inner most quarter of the houses). The women folk, however, drive out the invaders and rescue their land. They hold entire power of the state which is now called "Lady Land". The entire male folk falls victim to a catastrophic squash. They keep staying inside. On the other hand, the intelligent ladies of Lady Land now confine the male folk inside the *Murdana* (Seclusion) and rule them along with their so called importance of being masculine in sex.

**Keywords:** Bengal's women, seclusion, utopia, Lady Land, women emancipation

**Cite This Article As:** Md. Reza M (2015). Rokeya's Sultana's Dream: A Utopia against a Dystopia. Inter. J. Eng. Lit. Cult. 3(7): 203-210

This paper attempts to study Rokeya's thoughts to investigate how she has operated the ruthless correction over a biased and dystopian society of contemporary India through constructing the male and female characters in her utopia the-*Sultana's Dream*.

The study is conducted mainly through document

analysis. The information or data are taken from both primary and secondary sources which are simply qualitative in nature. The main text of the literary fiction of *Sultana's Dream* has been found as the primary source of data. And a number of relevant books, research articles and some web sites have been used as the

secondary sources for collecting data which have been analyzed and presented through logical interpretation.

*Sultana's Dream* is a utopian literary work in nature as well as a strong attack against the male dominating social system. In the essay- "Ruby by Rokeya: Conflicts and Conciliation of the New and Old Ones, Women Representation and Politics" Amin (1997) relates that Rokeya has created an imaginary world in opposition to the existing fatherhood world in reality of the then East Bengal in India. Her 'Lady Land' in *Sultana's Dream* is a contrast against the contemporary Indian society to juxtapose each other (Amin, 1997, pp. 38-39). In this regard, Chowdhury (2005), in his article "Woman Emancipation- Contemporary Time- Begum Rokeya", mentions that Rokeya's rationalism and style of expression both are original of her own. This is remarkable that in the fiction, the dialogues of Sultana and Sister Sara reveal the pictures of contemporary Indian society meaning "what is going on". On the contrary, the world in *Sultana's Dream* (the Lady Land) stands for "what should be". Because of the contrary thinking of Rokeya, the men in *Sultana's Dream* are simply at the opposite pole to that of men in reality. In the fiction, very logically the utopian social system of the Lady Land and the anti utopian Indian social system have been placed in juxtaposition to exhibit the antithetical situations of two places face to face.

At the root level of every utopian thought, there lays a particular type of societal system. An extreme correction of that degraded society takes place by the utopian thinking. And thereby, there remains a forest of satire, humour, irony and ridicules to attack the existing evils. Azad (2004) says in his *Nari (The Woman)* that Rokeya's *Sultana's Dream* is the only utopia in the then India or present Bangladesh, and the reason of her writing this utopia or dystopia was that during her time, her own society, itself, was a living anti-utopia (Azad, 2004, p. 217). The country of Sara, the Lady Land is a utopian world because its harmful animals (men) are penned into cages and gentle women community is free and is on power- "Virtue, itself, governs there. . ." in the image of women. On the contrary, India, the real country of Sultana, is a dystopia or anti-utopia because the society is ruled by the men. Here, men, the male folk; are compared to lunatic in manner but are set free. Here, the animals roam outside and the tender women community is imprisoned in the seclusion of *Purdah* or *Zenana*. The entire governance and societal conduct of this state are based on envy, arrogance, muscle power and thick thoughts of the dominating male folk.

Rokeya has launched her fierce attack on this intolerable negative state of her contemporary fatherhood Indian society. As a result, eventually, her reverse thinking provides a newer dimension to the plot of the fiction. The male folk of the Lady Land come to be imprisoned inside *Murdana* (seclusion; opposite to

*Zenana*) with chains of *Purdah*. In *Sultana's Dream*, men are not victorious; rather defeated, not lively; rather tired, fatigued and shattered. As to why, from the sense of social and psychological stratum, even the natural instincts like feelings of embarrassment, hatred, or anger of the character of the whole race of the 'Male Folk' in *Sultana's Dream* experiences a 'U' turn reverse.

The male characters in *Sultana's Dream* are prey to an attack accompanied with powerful satire and ridicules. Like the women of *Sultana's* real society of India, confined into the *Zenana* (a complete segregation of women from the outdoor world), all men of Lady Land are confined into the seclusion of the *Murdana* (a ridiculous parallel against the word *Zenana*, standing for the same segregation that men adopted for women in India). The use of the word *Murdana* reveals Rokeya's equal and opposite attack on men with a revengeful attitude to pay back the taste of torture and humiliation that they loaded on women for centuries.

Having been confined and deprived of fresh air, light and sun, above all, having no warmth of life and its agility into the *Murdana*, the male folk in Lady Land, have grown stupefied. They come to transform into a race of thick headed worthless creature that seems to be homogenous to the 'Yahoos'- a creature with no sense, conscience and consideration, a creature crooked with fear and cowardice, a creature too filthy and lustful with no intelligence, the primitive creatures obsessed with "pretty stones" representing the distasteful materialism and ignorant elitism as depicted by Jonathan Swift in his *Gulliver's Travels*. The male folk of *Sultana's Dream* are similar to those Yahoos- living in the dungeon of darkness with no light or air. The males are shy, gooey and ruled by the women instead of being the rulers that they are often supposed to be. They are as badly confined in the *Murdana* as the women of India were confined in the *Zenana* by the men. The men in *Sultana's Dream* are authentically pitiful reflections of the hesitant and diffident women race in reality in India in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (1905-1906). Here lies the creative genius of Rokeya that she raises her opposite thinking against the waves and style of thinking and entire customs and conventions of Indian sub-continent of her time.

The dialogues between Sultana and Sister Sara about sultana's hesitant movement and their criticisms by the pedestrians in Lady Land are interesting. Rokeya made her character Sultana narrate the story -

I asked my friend, "What do they say?"  
 "The women say that you look very mannish."  
 "Mannish?" Said I, "What do they mean by that?"  
 "They mean you are shy and timid like men."  
 (Qadir, (ed.), 1984, p. 337.)

Sultana never heard such a ridiculous satire because she was a woman of male dominated India. The force of

ridicule against men is tremendous here in which men have been used as a symbol of 'timidity' and 'shyness'. Sister Sara felt Sultana's fingers trembling as they were walking hand in hand. Sultana describes-

What is the matter, dear, dear?" She said affectionately.

"I feel somewhat awkward," I said in a rather apologizing tone, "as being a purdahnishin woman I am not accustomed to walking about unveiled. You need not be afraid of coming across a man here.

This is Lady Land, free from sin and harm. Virtue itself reigns here." (Ibid.)

The hesitations, introversion, shyness, or nervousness are treated as manly feeling in the Lady Land. So, the men in Lady Land are the bundle of people bent and crooked in coyness, unable to walk even comfortably.

In the Lady Land, men have to cook for women and are segregated from all outdoor activities. The men feel shy at the sight of any woman. So, while going to visit the kitchen with sultana, Sister Sara covers her whole body with clothes so that the men may not feel shy. The vulnerable condition of the men is reflected through the scenes of the cooks in the Lady Land through which the woman race had to pass for centuries.

Rokeya did never, actually, consider the man of Indian sub-continent, specially the Bengali people, as something better than that. Dhali (2004) quoted from the *Complete Works of Rokeya*:

"If the all India is a dew pond, the man of India is a feminine lotus there, if you think that all India is a novel, the Bengali man is the heroine there of it, in the male society of India, man is womanish." (p. 217).

The attitude which Rokeya had often carried gives a complete expression in the *Sultana's Dream*, and thereby, the character of the entire race of man has been portrayed as same as an image of the woman of feudalistic India.

Begum (1993), in her book *Free Intellect, Begum Rokeya and Woman Rights*, opined that Rokeya's concept of an ideal state is expressed in her *Sultana's Dream* through a secular tendency of annihilating the roots of religious dogma embedded in every segment of the society (Begum, 1993, p. 54). Zaman (1994), in her "Rokeya in the Magazine *The Musalman*", explains Rokeya's sensing that religion became too good a tool of the self centered men of India to materialize self interest (Zaman, 1994, p.32). The characters of men in *Sultana's Dream* also do the same. Men make religion as a device to torture the women. Rokeya sends the entire race of men, in the fiction, to the dock of justice for some special

reasons like unjust manners and such crimes and characteristics of men which prevent them to become the real humans from the state of *homo sapience*.

Men have great passion for age old customs and conventions and a "frog of the well" like attitude to society and civilization. Sufi (1986), in his article "Narimukti, Naribad o Begum Rokeya" shows that another passion of the male folk is unethical use of religion, in other words, it is their culture of using the religious principles against the women race (Sufi, 1986, p. 81). They use the sentiment of religion against women by exaggerating religious principles and fabricating their own explanation of it. Overloading of such irrationalization results in exploitation, torture and oppression over and over the woman.

As referred in Zaman's "Rokeya in the Magazine- The Musalman", once Rokeya was furious against the traditional Muslim community (Zaman, 1994, p. 16). Indeed, whenever the women attempted to stand upright, their every endeavor was obliterated with the excuses of religion. And, according to Azad (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 9<sup>th</sup> print, 2004), "Rokeya dismissed all male generated thoughts of religions" (p. 112). So, in Sultana's utopian Lady Land, religions have been abandoned from people's social and personal lives. What is your religion? - In reply to such questions, Sister Sara said, "Beauty and Truth".

However, the male folk in *Sultana's Dream* are lazy, time wasting and hedonistic who like to idle away times through pleasure taking activities. They are neither disciplined nor punctual. Besides the male folk, seen by Sultana in the story, we are also informed of the characteristics of men through the speech of Sister Sara-

They dawdle away their time in smoking. Some smoke two or three cheroots during the office time. They

talk much about their work, but do little. Suppose one cheroot takes half an hour to burn off, and a man smokes twelve cheroots daily; then you see, he wastes six hours every day in sheer smoking. (Qadir, 1984, p. 340).

The male folk appear to be lazy, undisciplined and indifferent of health and time.

According to Azad, the male race of the society of Rokeya was just like animal to her (Azad, 2004, p. 137) and the society that she dreams for has locked her into the cage. So, we hear Sister Sara saying to Sultana-

"You need not be afraid of coming across a man here. This is Lady Land, free from sin and harm. Virtue itself reigns here." (Qadir, Op.cit., p. 346).

Although the character of the male folk has been shown in the fiction as timid and shy in the Lady Land of

*Sultana's Dream*, the presence of animalism and insanity of men belonging to the reality of contemporary India has also been crafted magnificently in the story. The dialoging between Sister Sara and Sultana regarding various relevant issues has been used as the technique of sketching the characters of the male folk. Sara wonders-

As a matter of fact, in your country this very thing is done!

Men, who do or at least are capable of doing no end of mischief, are let loose and the innocent women shut up in the *Zenana*! How can you trust those untrained men out of the doors? (Qadir, Op. cit., p. 413).

The character of men sketched by Rokeya has perfectly been portrayed as brutal. But the brutality is not the reflection of the Lady Land's man race, it is the portrait not merely of contemporary Indian men, it reflects the character of the men of the world.

Sister Sara wants to know from Sultana about whether men have made any injustice or not by segregating the women from outdoor into the *Zenana*. Sultana's mind set, being habituated to thinking like in the male dominated society, her answer is still conservative. She says that the male folk have made no injustice by keeping the woman inside seclusion because they (women) are not safe outside home. The way Sara replies to Sultana is-

"Yes, it is not safe so long as there are men about the streets, nor is it so when a wild animal enters a market place?" (Qadir, Ibid).

Women are not safe outside because there are men outside there. The male folk are completely a threat to women's chastity, honour and prestige. Sister Sara opines that women are really not safe until this threatening animal is locked in. This means that as long as the man is free outside, the woman race is unsecured. Here the male folk have got a stand of spreading terror of brutality for the woman race. Thus, the character of men is enveloped with an image of animal terror.

Sister Sara says again-

"Suppose, some lunatics escape from the asylum and begin to do all sorts of mischief to men, horses and other creatures, in that case, what will your countrymen do?" (Qadir, Ibid).

Sultana replies-

"They'll try to capture them and put them back into their asylum" (Ibid).

Here, the comparison of the 'man' with the 'insane' may seem to be exaggerations but actually, the women, really

victimized of such insanity, are well known of the curse.

The roots of the character of men in real India and men in the utopian Lady Land are embedded into the same inferiority. Before the establishment of the Lady Land, the state of Sister Sara was just like a mirror image of Sultana's India. Discarding the differences of these two states, one can see the dissemination of the same masculine mentalities at both of the places.

The male folk of both the real and utopian worlds are greatly similar. Both are hateful to women education and consider that the need of women education is quite unnecessary and objectionable. That the woman can contribute to society being educated is rejected with sheer negligence by the man race of the Lady Land in *Sultana's Dream*:

While the women were engaged in scientific researches, the men of this country were busy increasing their military power. When they came to know that the female Universities were able to draw water from the atmosphere and collect heat from the sun, they only laughed at the members of the Universities and called the whole thing 'a sentimental nightmare!' (Qadir, Op.cit.,, p. 427).

The tediousness and vanity are the remarkable characteristics of the men of *Sultana's Dream*. They are mainly chatter boxes, devoid of scientific awareness with no workability at all. They can't even imagine what the women already do. With rhetorical sentences, they want to prove women's inefficiency, inefficiency and impossibility of their success. They laugh away the technologies of women like the 'sun heat' or 'water balloon'. They call these 'sentimental nightmares' of the women. Later, when women have succeeded to invent the technologies, by this time all the male folk are in the imprisonment of the *Murdana* which they have willingly taken for granted.

The characters of men in the *Sultana's Dream* are found dominating. When Sultana was dozing on her rocking chair in an evening, she was in between a conscious and sub-conscious state. Even then also, the thought of her male servants was a pain for her. She describes:

"I looked again at the moon through the open window, and thought there was no harm in going out at that time. The men-servants outside were fast asleep just then, and I could have a pleasant walk with Sister Sara" (Qadir, Op.cit., p. 413).

Women are deprived not only from the circle of the society, they are, as well, deprived of moon light, fresh air and other mental foods. Women cannot quench the hunger of any of their mental faculties. And this is vividly present in Sultana's description that she is even fearful of

her male servants. May be the men were servants, yet they were male after all! It is the result of practicing the value system adapted by the male dominated culture keeping the women race into the heart of darkness.

Dhali relates in his *Complete Works of Rokeya* that in an essay about the adverse effect of male dominating culture and governance, Rokeya says-

“No light shines in the world of our mind, just as no light can enter our bed room” (Joarder & Joarder, 1980, p. 35).

However, when Sultana felt free to see that all of the barriers (men-servants) of her surrounding were now asleep and she could go for an evening walk with Sister Sara (an unknown lady in her dream seeming to be much known to her), she felt cheerful at the thought. Actually, by this time, she completely fell in her dream. Still, in dream, she felt scared of the presence of her male servants at outdoor. The hostile and dominative spirit of men folk haunts her from her conscious to the deeper level of sub-conscious.

There are also obvious reflections of the hesitant, perplexed and scared mind of women cultivated in a male dominated society. This is found in Sultana's behaviour when she walks through the street of the Lady Land with Sister Sara in her dream. Her unstable walk, shaky heart, unsteady mind and wobbly movement are actually reactions of her habituation cultivated in a male dominated land. A woman, used to living in dark prison of *Zenana*, should really fall in an utter disbelief to see infinite liberty to walk, to fly over times unbound (day or night) and to feel free to the full like a fish in the water and bird in the air as in the Lady Land in her dream. Her hesitation is nothing but a product of male domination on women over centuries, the legacy of her inhibition with the *Zenana*. The terror of the domination still makes her hesitate to move and naturally, she was shaken to walk in the land of dream-

The town was fully awake and the streets alive with bustling crowds. I was feeling very shy, thinking I was walking in the street in broad day light, but there was not a single man visible. (Joarder & Joarder, 1980, p. 29).

The white terror of the male domination is widely spread in the field of Sultana's conscious and sub-conscious mind. In this fiction, the terror of Sultana represents the severe vulnerability of the entire Indian women race in India at the dawn of 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is known that altered state offers a metaphor for the need to think differently, and highlight the importance of looking at society in new and alternate ways. Sultana's Dream is a source of creating new consciousness, both political and spiritual. As a feminist utopia, like politically conscious

music, art and other forms of feminist praxis, it is a necessary component of feminist consciousness because it facilitates much needed visions of a more equitable feature of all citizens.

Rokeya takes the technique of narrating Sultana's Dream through dream or crafting a utopia or, it may be called imagination to the severity to deconstruct the foundation of all structures that the male folk have been erecting for centuries. Rokeya, indeed, revolts against all customs and conventions which support the process of getting habituated to men-defined social system. Her dream fragment even attacks inner structures of man-centred languages inside from itself. In the fiction, Sultana or Sister Sara, both, smiled but no one crossed the limit which could be called “laughter”. With this ridiculous refined smile, Rokeya axes down the roots of false thinking and believes of fatherhood social systems. The outdoor-indoor contrast which had long been being constructed turned opposite and deconstructed. Sayed Manjurul Islam (2005), in his article “Rokeyar Swapno ebong Bastabata” (*Rokeya's Dream and Reality*) demonstrates that there was an ever flowing presence of a comic atmosphere from the very beginning of the story as if Rokeya had always cast a scornful look at all that evolved centring the power of the male folk (Islam, 2005, p. 35).

In the view of Humayun Azad, the entire writings of Rokeya are filled with her protests and hatreds against the male folk and fatherhood principles to regulate the society. The idea ‘Masculinity’ was objectionable to her. He adds that such a hateful revolt had never been found in Mary Wollstonecraft even in the west (Azad, 2004, p.174). However, the concept that ‘the man-woman relation keeps the interests of men’ is rejected by Rokeya. Her *Sultana's Dream* is rather a form of deconstruction of this ideology. Simon de Boevauyer, in her *The Second Sex*, writes that actually humanity is another identity of man for which woman is considered to be a creation that is not complete of her own. In *Sultana's Dream*, Rokeya has no where used the singular form of the male folk as ‘man’, she has rather used its plural form ‘men’. Sayed Manjurul Islam argues that the affirmative singularity, talked of by Simon de Boevauyer, is rejected by Rokeya. And thus, the character of the male folk faces fierce rejection in Rokeya's *Sultana's Dream*.

Rokeya's husband Sakhawat Hossain was the first reader of *Sultana's Dream* (1905 A.D) and commented it to be a “terrible revenge” against the male folk. Really, the male folk of Rokeya's *Sultana's Dream* are victims of a terrible vengeance. No stone is unturned by Rokeya in the process of taking the revenge against the community for their injustice and torments over women. She has used satires, humours, ridicules and ironical devices and finally, there occurs the dramatic irony of situation in which all male folk willingly enter the confinement of *Purdah* or *Zenana* and all women community achieve

absolute liberty in the utopian state of Lady Land. The complete reversal of situation is nothing but striking back the community of men through a total retaliation. Rokeya hits back the male folk with her mighty revolutionary vision of an emancipator. This is not from her repulsion or vindictiveness for men. Sirajul Islam Chowdhury (2005), in his "Woman Emancipation- Contemporary Time-Begum Rokeya", said:

Rokeya carries a deeper feeling of sorrow and dissatisfaction. The impoverishment of the women society in educational advancement due to male adapted custom of seclusion, childhood marriage, the aggressive attitude of men against women- these all, indeed, kept the women bound to a socio-economic stand still position and blocked their road to go forward. So, her attack is severe against the entire community of men. (Chowdhury, 2005, pp. 35-36).

To throw innumerable satirical attacks to the male folk and to send them to an ironical place (*Murdana*), are the indicators exhibiting how terribly Rokeya has grown violent against the male folk. Sultana describes-

"Where are the men?" I asked her.  
 "In their proper place, where they ought to be."  
 "Pray, let me know what you mean by 'their proper places'?"  
 "O, I see my mistake, you cannot know our customs, as you were never here before. We shut our men indoors."  
 "Just as we are kept in the Zenana?"  
 "Exactly so."

Imprisonment of men in the Lady Land is the sheer revenge against the imprisonment of the women in India. And imprisonment of men in the *Murdana* is the vertical revenge against the imprisonment of the women in the *Zenana*. No individual, rather whole community of men is her target of vengeance. Wakil (1997), in his *The Trends of Thoughts of the Bengali Muslims in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* mentions that Rokeya's satires and ridicules are free from repulsion or grossness (Wakil, 1997, p.172). And so, she is rigid and stringent while avenging; she is rigid within the limit. Her comparison of men with the wild animals and the lunatics is the instance of her being severe in avenging men along with a softer smile in her face. According to Abdul Mannan Sayad, it is not a "terrible revenge", he calls it a "dream revenge". But actually, it cannot be called dream revenge. It may be called a terrible revenge of a dreamer because the revenge is severe in degrees, though the shape of the revenge gets its construction by a dreamer; a visionary.

According to Rawshan Jahan (1981), *Sultana's Dream* was a "Shock Therapy" to the contemporary male

dominated society-

She was ready to provoke her society by rude shock to shake it out of complacency. This desire to shock is apparent in the short story, *Sultana's Dream*. (Jahan, 1981, p. 23)

Men in *Sultana's Dream* represent a community with no sense of self respect and self humiliation. Their patriotism or responsibilities to the country in which they lived is questionable. Their country faced an attack by the invading enemies. When enemies were at the threshold and the whole nation was under a sheer threat of existence, the male folk were seen retreating from the battle field. The community of women decided that they would never bear the shackles of slavery. Since, in case of the defeat, there would be no alternative but to abide slavery, so, the women decided that in such a case, they would rather commit suicide than lose their honour.

Men in *Sultana's Dream* did not show responsibilities to self identity, sovereignty and liberty of the country which the women community showed. Due to cowardice and lack of skill, the male folk were retreating. So, they were called back by the women. But the male folk did not feel ashamed for their retreat and leaving the mother land at the edge of destruction. At their shameless return, the women proposed to them to accept complete segregation from the outdoor and take shelter into the cocoon of *Murdana* to live there forever with no light, no air, no will and freedom. It is surprising that the male folk felt happy to accept such an unkind proposal. They considered it as a boon that at least their lives could be saved. They had even no responsive sense to the axiom- 'cowards die many times before their deaths'. They entered into the *Murdana* bowing down their heads. They had a complete disappointment about the recovery of the country. The women took the responsibility of keeping the liberty and sovereignty of their state unharmed and moved towards the battle field and ultimately, the women of the Lady Land won the battle with their intellect, (endowed with modernism), technological supports e.g. solar power etc. and moral courage. The women are aided by technology which enables laborless farming and flying cars; the female scientists have discovered how to use solar power and control the weather. Crime is eliminated, since men were responsible for all of it. The workday is only two hours long, since men used to waste six hours of each day in smoking. The religion is one of love and truth. Purity is held above all, such that the list of "sacred relations" (mahram) is widely extended.

The male folk are the designers of the convention of *Purdah* resulting in the complete seclusion of women from any social involvement. In such a case, the entire women race had to keep away from leading lives on earth living imprisoned into the cage of indoor designed and defined by the male folk called- *Zenana*. The system

continued for hundreds of years since the pre-industrial feudal period. The construction of *Zenana* received a concrete foundation to a deeper-wider dissemination of its roots. Rokeya wrote her *Sultana's Dream* during 1905. Through the technique of narrating this fiction as a dream fragment, she sketched a land of utopia. The world of the utopia is called here *The Lady Land*. Like every utopia, she designed it as a tool of conducting a terrific correction of her contemporary Indian male dominated society. Her construction of the plot of the utopia made a complete deconstruction of the male adapted social system by striking back its outer and inner structure and smashing its foundation. Rokeya's opposite thoughts fired off the out worn ideas and dying thoughts of male defined social systems. At the roots of the foundation male dominating society, there laid irrationality, injustice, selfishness, opportunism and a pre-historic barbarism of the male folk who fulfilled all their interests by segregating the women race from the outdoor and confining them into the *Zenana*, through the excuse of *Purdah* (seclusion). The *Purda* worked as the major tool of suppression, oppression, exploitation, domination and all corruptions. And the *Zenana* has performed as the Heart of Darkness. Rokeya's women of the *Lady Land* have succeeded to come out of the heart of darkness to the way of enlightenment and as a rightful revenge on the male folk, they over threw the whole community of men to the hellish dungeon of *Zenana*, the creation of men to rule the women. The turning of the *Zenana* into the *Murdana* (the cocoon for the male folk) is a boomerang to men. So, men in *Sultana's Dream* are entrapped into the trap that they made themselves with evil motive to women. Men were fallen and over thrown. They were avenged, punished, ruled and be fooled by the women.

With the development of the story of *Sultana's Dream*, men got to obey the superiority of women. Since men were considered wild, rude and harmful, so, they had not to be set free on the streets or market places which became a growing concept in the *Lady Land*. They had to be inside home and women were free to live and move outside all day and night. Chawdhury says that the differentiation was like- physical works were men's and mental and intellectual works were women's. As men felt proud and arrogant for their physical strengths, so, all physical works were given to them and they got used to this. Women ruled the state with their intellect.

There was another reason as to why the women imprisoned the male folk. According to Hussen and Qadir, it was because men made women dependent. Another opinion was that to send men to *Murdana* was nothing but removing the impediments on their way to liberation. Men, themselves, could not preserve the liberty of their state. They would rather create unnecessary troubles for women. So, it was well systematized that they would be locked into the *Murdana*. It was simple for women that barriers were removed from

the way on to the supreme goal.

*Sultana's Dream* draws the picture of the utopian kingdom, *Lady Land*, in which the male folk are positioned at a completely opposite pole to a society that is ruled by men. Putting men in such a position, Rokeya constructs a feminist social structure. Men are thrown down to earth from their sky high throne of lordship. Therefore, character of the male folk of Rokeya's *Sultana's Dream* is simply reverse to what is often seen. The boldness, vigour, courage, or strength, pride or a loud voice at least, which usually men possess, are absent from among the men of *Sultana's Dream*. Taking responsibilities of family matters, social affairs or leadership of the state, whatever is found as responsibility of men in the conventional social system, does not touch the men at all in Rokeya's *Sultana's Dream*.

Men are generally the lords at every level in the world-either in husbandhood to wives, or leadership to society or most great places. They are usually heroes of the world. The same race of *homo sapience* in *Sultana's Dream* is found as a character of insignificance. The entire male folk, with no talent and no spirit to develop their faculties, are a community of fallen people; imprisoned inside home, stuck to the kitchen, defeated in the battle field, humiliated in the society, ignored by the state with no sensibility of the humans. They are living like the parasites with human shape in body and hollowness insight. But things are not devoid of reality. Rokeya has certainly depicted the character of men in relation with dismal reality during the period of British colonial India. The dialogues between Sister Sara and Sultana in dream offer the universal portrait of men. These men are the products of Sultana's real life observation and experience. In fine, Rokeya has operated a psycho-analytic investigation while sketching the male characters of *Sulana's Dream*. Light is duly thrown on the sphere of their mind, tendencies, attitudes, habits and frequent mal practices they do for keeping their lordship up dated. Exploration is accordingly launched revealing the egocentricity, dominance and disregard to women. The male characters of Rokeya's *Sulana's Dream* are ultimately found idle, arrogant, and shameless and prey to lethal revenge of the womwn race that made them fall into the dungeon of *Murdana* forever. Our good Queen liked science very much. She circulated an order that all the women in her country should be educated. Accordingly a number of girls' schools were founded and supported by the government. Education was spread far and wide among women. And early marriage also was stopped. No woman was to be allowed to marry before she was twenty-one.

I must tell you that, before this change we had been kept in strict purdah. (Qadir, Op.cit., p. 413).

In the above quote, "Sister Sara" explains to her guest Sultana how the unusual gender relations prevalent in

"Ladyland" came about. Under the guidance of their scientific Queen separate universities were set up for the women, who developed devices to control the weather and to harness solar energy (the men's universities focused on the development of weaponry). When a neighboring country attacked, provoked by the Queen's refusal to give up some refugees, the Ladyland army, made up of men, was utterly defeated. It was left to the women to save the country and the women of the universities came up with the solution. The remaining men were confined to the zenana, the women's quarter, for their own protection, while beams of solar light and heat were directed at the enemy. Since then, the men of Ladyland have lived in the zenana, now called "mardana" (the masculine form of "zenana"), and now that they are used to it have ceased to complain. Women do all the work since men are considered unfit for most things; the country is a giant, beautiful garden, solar energy is used for cooking and electricity for flying vehicles.

Sultana's Dream was originally published in English in *The Indian Ladies Magazine* of Madras (1905), and is considered part of Bengali literature. It depicts a feminist utopia in which women run everything and men are secluded, in a mirror-image of the traditional practice of purdah.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, Wakil (1997). *Unish Shatake Bangali Musalmaner Chinta O Chetonar Dhara, [The Trends of Thoughts of the Bengali Muslims in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century]*, Dhaka: Bangla Academy, pp 165-175.
- Amin, Nishat Sonia. (1997). "Conflicts and Combination of the New and Old Ones, Women Representation and Politics", ed. Meghna Guha Tagorta, Dhaka: Shomaj Nirikshan Kendra, pp 30-40.
- Azad, Humayun. (2004). *Nari [The Woman]*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 9<sup>th</sup> print, Dhaka: Agamee Prokashon, pp 23-429.
- Begum, Hasna. (1993). *Free Intellect, Begum Rokeya and Woman Rights*, Dhaka: Dhaka University Press Limited, pp 13-22.
- Chowdhury, Islam, Sirajul. (2005). "Woman Emancipation- Contemporary Time- Begum Rokeya", *Begum Rokeya Commemorative Volume 2005*, Rangpur: Rangpur District Administration, pp 19-33.
- Dhali, Kabir Humayun. (2004). *The Complete Works of Rokeya*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Dhaka: Kristy Sahitya Samsad, pp 21-212.
- Islam, Manjurul Sayed. (2005). "Dreams of Rokeya and the Reality", *Begum Rokeya Commemorative Volume*, Rangpur: Rangpur District Administration, pp 34-38.
- Jahan, Roushan. (1981). *Inside Seclusion: The Aborodhbashini of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*, ed. & trans, Dacca: WOMEN FOR WOMEN, pp 33-37.
- Joarder, Hasina & Joarder Safiuddin. (1980). *Begum Rokeya: The Emancipator*, Dacca: Nari Kallyan Sangstha, pp 1-39.
- Qadir, Abdul. (1984). *Writings of Rokeya*, (ed.), Dhaka: Bangla Academy, pp 121-414.
- Sufi, Hossen Motaher. (1986). *Begum Rokeya: Life and Works*, Dhaka: University Press Limited, pp 34-213.
- Sufi, Hossen Motahar. (2005). "Woman Emancipation-Feminism and Begum Rokeya", *Begum Rokeya Commemorative Volume 2005*, Rangpur: Rangpur District Administration, pp 39-48.
- Zaman, Laila. (1989). *Literary Contribution and Social Roles of the Magazine 'Saowgat' (1918-50)* Dhaka: Bangla Academy, pp 23-129.
- Zaman, Laila. (1994). *Rokeya in the Magazine 'The Musalman'*, (ed.) Dhaka: University Press Limited, 22-91.