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Compiled by **New Age Islam News Bureau**

Photo: Woman beats the odds to make Saudi Arabia's first film

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30 women likely to be on Saudi Shura Council

By Habib Toumi

September 1, 2012

Possible appointment confirms King's reformist stance since assuming power in 2005

Manama: In a historic breakthrough, 30 women are expected to be appointed to the all-men Shura Council in Saudi Arabia in 2013.

"The expectations are that up to 30 women will be appointed to the council in its next term," sources close to the consultative assembly told local Arabic daily Al Sharq.

The sources that the newspaper did not identify said that talks have already started with several institutions to provide the names of women they saw as "properly qualified" to become Shura members.

A special commission, headed by the king, will look into the nominees and select the final list.

Criteria include Saudi citizenship, a minimum of 30 years of age, impeccable personal record, high level of competency and practical experience.

The Shura Council's bylaws do not oppose the membership of women and do not specify the gender of the appointed members, the daily reported on Saturday.

However, since it was founded in 1993, the Council had only male members. The first council (1993-1997) had a speaker and 60 members and the second (1997-2001) had a speaker and 90 members. The third council (2001-2005) had a speaker and 120 members and the fourth (2005-2009) had a speaker plus 150 members.

In September, King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz whose stances on reforms, particularly on women's rights, have been obvious since he became ruler in August 2005, said that women would become members of the Consultative Council in the next term.

"We made this decision because we refuse to marginalise women in the Saudi society in their roles that comply with the Islamic Sharia and following consultations with many of our scholars who supported it," King Abdullah said. "Muslim women in our history have had stances that cannot be sidelined, be it through views or advice, since the time of Prophet Mohammad [PBUH]."

According to the Saudi monarch, "balanced modernisation compatible with Islamic values was a significant necessity."

"It is our right to receive your opinion and advice according to the fundamentals of our religion. Whoever trespasses them is arrogant and must take responsibility for those actions," he said.

King Abdullah in the same speech also announced that women would have the right to run and vote in the 2015 municipal elections.

The king's announcements were warmly greeted by women in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and elsewhere.

In Riyadh, the Shura Council has set up an ad-hoc commission to look into the measures and procedures to be taken to ensure a smooth welcome and an adequate working atmosphere for the women members in 2013.

The Shura has 12 women advisers whose work is related mainly to issues of women, families and children.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/30-women-likely-to-be-on-saudi-shura-council-1.1068619>

Growing number of Saudi women excelling in science and medicine

September 1, 2012

Manama, Sep 1 (ANI): More and more Saudi Arabian women are earning global recognition in the field of science and medicine, according to a report.

As Samar Fatany wrote for a Saudi daily, she cited a report by UNESCO and said that the percentage of women graduating from the universities in the country, who hailed from the branch of science and medicine, was higher than that in western countries.

"In the field of science, 40 per cent of Saudi doctors are women and there is an increasing number of successful women who have acquired global recognition as scientists and researchers and have inspired many Saudi women at home," Gulf News quoted Fatany, as writing.

Fatany heaped praises for many women in the country which included Dr Khowla Al Kurai, who is a consultant and principle clinical scientist and cancer researcher, and Professor Samira Islam, who was the head of the Drug Monitoring Unit at a famous hospital and has made significant contributions in drug safety.

"These Saudi women who have reached leadership positions and many others are role models for future generations," she wrote.

Fatany claimed the success of the Saudi women has certainly boosted the morale of the women community in the country and should be prove to be a source of inspiration for all of them.

"The success of these distinguished women has undoubtedly boosted the morale of those members of society who were once abused and marginalised. Women doctors, scientists and researchers are expected to contribute toward a socially, politically and economically progressive Saudi Arabia," she concluded.

<http://in.news.yahoo.com/growing-number-saudi-women-excelling-science-medicine-070812220.html>

Woman beats the odds to make Saudi Arabia's first film

September 1, 2012

VENICE: The female director of Saudi Arabia's first feature film, showing at the Venice film festival, has explained how she beat the odds to produce the heartwarming tale of a girl's quest to own a bicycle.

In Haifaa Al Mansour's landmark film "Wadjda," 10-year-old Waad Mohammed plays a girl who is also testing the boundaries of a woman's place in a highly conservative society where her love for Western music and fashions land her in trouble.

Mohammed's impish personality and resilience in the face of adversity add to the poignancy of the story and left some of the film's first viewers in tears.

"She had this vulnerability and she embodied what a Saudi teenager is," Al Mansour said, speaking in the lush courtyard of the Excelsior hotel.

"I wanted to show the tension between modernity and tradition," she said.

Al Mansour said she was forced to direct what is her first feature film from a van with a walkie-talkie in some of the more conservative neighbourhoods where she could not be seen in public together with male crew and cast members.

In some areas, screaming local residents would block shooting altogether.

She said finding financing also posed a problem in a country where cinemas are officially banned and any film is considered a commercial risk.

"Wadjda" will only be available in the kingdom on DVD or on television.

"There is no film in Saudi Arabia. Showing films in public is illegal so we don't have this culture of filmmaking. I was never able to go on a film set and get training and see how things are. It was very difficult," she said.

Al Mansour grew up in a small Saudi town as one of 12 siblings and she said her parents were always very supportive of her career even though they came under pressure from relatives who said filmmaking was “not honourable”. They are very traditional Saudis but they gave me all the space to be creative and that does not happen to a lot of girls,” she said.

Born in 1974, Saudi Arabia’s first female filmmaker studied literature at the American University in Cairo and film at the University of Sydney.

She has previously directed three shorts and the award-winning documentary “Women Without Shadows” which explores the hidden lives of Gulf women.

“Wadjda” was co-produced by Germany’s Razor Film and several Saudi companies including Rotana Studios which is linked to the Saudi royal family.

The rights have already been sold in France, Germany and Switzerland.

For all the implicit criticism of the state of women’s rights in Saudi in the film, Al Mansour said things are gradually changing and having a Saudi prince on board showed that officialdom was supportive of this shift.

“The fact that we shot a film in Saudi Arabia with permission and everything says a lot about the country. It says the country is embracing art,” she said.

“I think the authorities really want to see more films,” she added.

“It is changing at a very slow pace. It’s still a very conservative, tribal society, very religious,” she said, adding: “I think women need to stick together in places like this and fight together and empower each other.”

Skipping along the halls of the Excelsior with headphones firmly on, a smiling curly-haired Mohammed said she was just having the time of her life.

“I’m very excited! This is my first time outside of Saudi Arabia and my first time in a film and I’m the lead actress,” she gushed.

Mohammed, who was selected through scouts as an open casting call for women would not be possible in Saudi, said her nature fit the character.

“The naughtiness is me. It’s the real me. I do things I’m not supposed to!”

<http://dawn.com/2012/09/01/woman-beats-the-odds-to-make-saudi-arabias-first-film/>

For faith and much more, women choose to keep covered

By Lornet Turnbull

August 31, 2012

Though of different faiths, Seattle-area women who wear scarves, wigs, hats or turbans over their hair say the practice makes them feel connected to their faith, yes, but also protected and valued.

TZIVIAH GOLDBERG eases into the stylist's chair at Essence Salon in Seattle's Maple Leaf neighborhood, the mirror before her reflecting the image of a woman conservatively dressed: long, flowing skirt, sleeves to her wrist.

The stylist adjusts the wig on Goldberg's head and passes a curling iron through the blonde hair to give it lift.

The wig, too, is part of Goldberg's conservative look.

Orthodox Jewish laws obligate married women, for the sake of modesty, to cover their hair — considered part of a woman's sensual beauty to be shared only with her husband.

An Hasidic Jew and mother of 10, Goldberg wears only wigs when in public, although some Orthodox Jewish women also wear hats and scarves — part of a sisterhood that, while rooted in religion, transcends the boundaries of religion.

Though of different faiths, Seattle-area women who wear scarves, wigs, hats or turbans over their hair say the practice makes them feel connected to their faith, yes, but also protected and valued.

"Jewish or Muslim or Christian, this is all about respecting women, no matter what religion it comes through," Goldberg says. "It shows respect for women if they aren't just out there hanging out for everyone to see ... and I think it's great that Muslim women cover as they do."

For many it's also a practice steeped in their culture or part of long-standing traditions they are proud of.

Deshraelle Diallo, a 16-year-old Ballard High School student who is Christian and wrestling with whether to convert to Islam, says she covers her hair out of deference to her mother, who is Muslim.

And 21-year-old Inderpal Kaur of Burien, a student at Highline Community College, wears a turban over hers because it identifies her as Sikh.

But in American society, where women don't traditionally cover their hair, those who do often stand out, whether in the workplace, at school, at the grocery store or on the street.

In the years since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, brought Islam more overtly to the attention of the Western world, head covering has become more polarizing — especially for Muslims.

In some European countries, religious head and face coverings have been banned in public schools and government buildings.

Locally, some Muslim women speak of awkward stares or outright insults from strangers: References to Osama bin Laden are common, as are refrains of "go back where you came from." Immigrant or native born, they say there appears to be an assumption that women who cover are perpetual foreigners, unable to speak or understand English.

One young kindergarten teacher who wears the niqab, a face veil that leaves only the eyes exposed, said a bus driver once refused to allow her to board, telling her to "remove that thing from your face," and asking repeatedly, "Who are you hiding from?"

Others say they are often accused of being controlled — persecuted, even — by male-dominated societies intent on keeping women in their place.

In some Middle Eastern countries, and in some Western communities, women are beaten — some have been killed — for not covering their hair in public.

But around here, where women typically make the choice, they prefer to focus on what a good thing it is for them. It's why many say they don't mind the hassles and questions — that as insensitive as they can sometimes be, they open far more doors than they close in dispelling myths around their cultures and religions.

"I have far more interactions with people because I'm covered," says Aliah Haji, 23, the teacher who wasn't allowed to board the bus.

"People approach me wanting to know. I have an opportunity to tell them about Islam."

VEILING HAS ROOTS much deeper than the three Abrahamic faiths — Christianity, Judaism and Islam — back to the Ancient Near East, thousands of years before the Christian era, when only women of privilege were permitted to cover their hair.

"It signified a division of women based on being respectable, that these were not women available to others," says Nayereh Tohidi, a professor of gender and women's studies at California State University in Northridge.

"From there, it expanded across the world."

Referenced in one form or another in religious texts, the practice was later adopted by the Abrahamic faiths — and over the centuries, it evolved.

Within Christianity, head covering has been mostly lost. By the turn of the 20th century, at least in the U.S., scarves had given way to stylish and more fashionable hats worn in church, until eventually that practice also mostly disappeared.

Even many nuns who used to wear veils no longer do, Tohidi says. Some Catholics and other Christians may choose to put something over their hair when they go to church, she says. And Catholic girls receiving First Communion still wear veils, as do many brides, no matter their religious affiliation.

In a few ultraconservative Christian sects, such as Mennonites and Amish, as well as among some Orthodox churches, women regularly cover in public.

But even among scholars and religious leaders who share a faith — and within all three major religions — the ways and reasons for covering remain in debate.

Within Orthodox Judaism, for example, some question the wig as appropriate head covering because, to the naked eye, it appears no different from real hair.

Goldberg sees it differently: "If you wore a super fancy wig that wouldn't be modest, because it's like saying, 'Look at me, look at me.' "

When she married 28 years ago, she chose a wig — close in color to her own hair — because it allows her to cover her hair more completely than she can with a scarf. She also recognized that it requires far less explanation in public than a scarf or hat would.

Goldberg explains that "the idea is not to look ugly, frumpy or unattractive. You can look very stylish as long as it's not, 'Wow look at me. I'm wearing everything completely covered, but it's skin tight.' "

Raised mostly Christian, the 54-year-old Goldberg converted to Judaism while in law school. Her Jewish husband, who was not overly observant when they met, was not fully onboard with her covering her hair with a wig, she recalls. So they traveled together to New York where she tried on several before settling on one he felt comfortable with.

"The bottom line is if you're an observant Jew, you do things because God said that's what a Jew does," Goldberg says.

"But it doesn't mean you have to do it in a way that makes you miserable. You do it with joy and acceptance, and because you want a relationship with God."

ON A MILD day this summer, before rushing out the door of her Burien home to get to her job at UPS, Inderpal Kaur checks to make sure the black turban wrapped on her head is firmly in place. Some baptized Sikh women, like men, wrap their hair in turbans when in public, while others like Kaur's mother, Satvir, wear a headscarf, called a chuni.

While people can be born Sikh (pronounced like "sick"), it is only through baptism that they truly become observant followers of the religion. An only child, Kaur says, "my parents encouraged but never forced me. All they said is 'pray once in a while.' This was my decision. I made this choice."

A computer-science student at Highline, Kaur was baptized five years ago after attending a faith camp in California and just before starting high school.

"I was very nervous; not sure if my friends would accept me this way," she says. "But my dad told me, 'You stepped into this path and you have to put your trust in God. He won't let you down. Don't worry about it.' "

Strict adherence to Sikhism requires steadfast commitment to five principles — the requirements for women generally the same as for men.

Observant Sikhs may not cut their hair and must wear a wooden comb in it at all times. They are required to wear special underwear, a metal bracelet on their wrist as a reminder always to do good and a 6-to-9-inch-long curved dagger they must carry at all times to come to the aid of someone in trouble.

Kaur says she sometimes wears the sword in her hip-length hair as opposed to on her body, in part to avoid "freaking people out."

For Sikh women who choose to cover — Sikhism doesn't strictly require them to — the purpose is not modesty but rather to identify them as Sikh, to keep their hair clean and as a constant reminder to do good.

"I get up, get dressed, and put on my turban and I feel good. This is who I am," Kaur says.

Many baptized women of her faith don't cover their hair because "I guess it's not considered fashionable," she says.

"Most women just want to fit in; they want to look pretty so they put their hair down, they wear fancy little clips. But I feel I have to stand out for my religion. I don't think there's any shame in it. Wearing a turban does not make you less of a woman."

PERHAPS NO religion is as intuitively associated with head covering as Islam. While not all Muslim women cover their hair, veiling is more prolific among them than among any other religious group of women these days.

Still, inside and outside the religion, there's debate about the political implications of headcovering and whether the Quran specifically requires it.

The sole reference is to a passage that urges a woman to draw her veil over her bosom. Most Islamic scholars say the presumption is that the veil is already covering the hair.

But Tohidi, the California professor, doesn't see it the same way, saying that something so important in the lives of Muslims would surely have been specifically cited — the way violations such as alcohol use and the taking or granting of credit are.

Also, she says, there's no specific punishment in the Quran for not covering like there is for other acts considered to be transgressions.

But any discrepancy in interpretation is lost on those women who do wear the hijab, and who say they do so because they believe, as pious, religious women, it is what is required of them.

For Heba Bakhach, 25, the daughter of a Lebanese father and a Nicaraguan mother, it was never a question.

Born in Saudi Arabia, Bakhach and her family moved to Toronto when she was 9, and after high school returned to the Middle East, where she attended college in Lebanon.

She began covering her hair in Saudi Arabia, the way most females there do once they reach puberty. Comfortable clothing has always been part of her natural style, but in Toronto, she was shocked by her father's sudden demand that she begin wearing the jilbab — a loosefitting garment that covers a Muslim woman from neck to ankles.

Bakhach was 16 at the time, and on the girls soccer team, wearing long pants and long-sleeve jerseys to maintain modesty.

"My father was of the opinion I had to wear that dress."

"I was pretty upset for a few years," she says.

A teacher later explained the garment's religious significance to her, and she now wears it all the time.

Except on this June afternoon after a horseback-riding session in Redmond when Bakhach is wearing her riding breeches, a white head scarf framing her pretty face.

Co-workers at the pharmacy where she works in Mount Vernon never ask about her conservative dress, but customers sometimes do: "What's that thing on your head?" some have asked her.

"For many of them I guess it's the first time in their lives seeing a Muslim," she says. "They'd say: 'I saw people like you on TV. Eeeeslam?'"

She also acknowledges that in some cultures a female who fails to cover "could bring shame on the family," which might even disown her. She remembers the Mutaween, Saudi Arabia's

religious police, patrolling the streets, looking for violators of Islam's rules. But it's not something she thinks of all the time. "It's just a fact of life," she says.

For her, covering is about a commitment to her faith.

"I know I'm pleasing God when I do it; that's the core reason."

EVEN AMONG women who cover their hair, the niqab, a cloth that cloaks the lower part of the face to leave only the eyes exposed, is controversial — at least in this country.

The cloth, worn by the wives of the Prophet Muhammad, is rarely used among Muslims in the U.S. The Quran does not specifically mention it.

But a local group of young Muslim women and friends, all in their 20s, wear it as part of their all-black, conservative attire, what they call their uniform.

They say they first began wearing the niqab to see if they could — and now remove it in public only to take their driver's-license photos and lift it when they eat out.

The women share a special bond; they play tennis together and jokingly question each other about how they will find a husband with their faces concealed.

One of them, Aisha Sharif, 22, says her parents flatly refused to let her wear the niqab when she was still in high school. None of her six older sisters do.

She had researched the niqab carefully and wanted to wear it as a way to emulate the righteous women of the Quran.

But her concerned parents had questions: They said, "How are you going to get a job when you graduate? What if someone physically assaults you?"

Originally from Somalia, Sharif says she couldn't wait to graduate from high school.

"For me, it was embracing my religion, my identity: how I am to be as a Muslim woman," she says. "I had to be comfortable with myself."

In Western society, she says, "everything now is about a woman's beauty — you know, her hips, her curves, her face, her hair."

Sharif says she believes beauty lies within, and she dismisses the idea that she needs "to sway her hips to get a man's attention." She wants to gain people's respect — including men's — for the kind of person she is, not what she looks like.

"I don't have to worry about what society will think about my appearance," she says. "All I worry about is what God will think about me, my heart and my actions. When I dress and walk out, I'm a Muslim. That's the image that people see."

http://seattletimes.com/html/pacificnw/2018971334_pacificheadcover02.html

Blasphemy: Rimsha's bail plea hearing adjourned till September 3

September 1, 2012

ISLAMABAD: A young Pakistani Christian girl accused of blasphemy must wait until at least Monday (Sept 3) to learn if she will be given bail, after a judge adjourned her case on Saturday amid doubts over legal paperwork.

The girl has been in custody since she was arrested in a poor Islamabad suburb more than two weeks ago accused of burning papers containing verses from the Holy Quran.

Judge Muhammad Azam Khan adjourned the case to Monday and asked police to investigate a bail application made on the girl's behalf after prosecutors claimed paperwork had not been signed by the girl or her mother.

Full report at:

<http://dawn.com/2012/09/01/court-adjourns-bail-hearing-of-girl-accused-of-blasphemy/>

Blasphemy case evokes fear in Pakistan Christian town

September 1, 2012

GOJRA: For Rafia Margaret, the case of a young Pakistani Christian girl accused of blasphemy rekindled horrifying memories of the day a furious mob smashed through her front door and torched her house.

On August 1, 2009 Margaret, then aged 28, had just finished breakfast at home in the Punjab town of Gojra when she heard the announcements over the mosque loudspeakers urging Muslims to attack the Christian quarter.

Minutes later an angry crowd massed outside her modest one-storey house in the Korian area of the town baying for revenge after rumours spread that Christians had desecrated a Quran.

As the pack swelled still further and violence erupted, she ran to her roof to judge the seriousness of the situation while her mother and ailing father sought refuge in a Muslim neighbour's house.

The sight of the tall, elegant girl on the roof enraged the mob still further and they began attacking her door.

Full report at:

<http://dawn.com/2012/09/01/blasphemy-case-evokes-fear-in-pakistan-christian-town/>

Another feather in Saudi women's cap

SARAH ABDULLAH

1 September 2012

JEDDAH: Dr. Samia Al-Amoudi has become the first GCC woman to win a prestigious seat in the Union for the International Cancer Control's (UICC) Board of Directors. The announcement was made at a conference in Montreal, Canada on Monday.

"I feel that being awarded this seat will show the world the great advancement of Saudi and GCC women and the progress we have made, in addition to the obvious support and massive steps taken by government authorities and universities in assisting women in achieving high positions in the local and international community," Al-Amoudi told Arab News.

She further said that being a board member of the UICC will help her greatly in her efforts to spread cancer awareness in the Kingdom and globally.

"It is also a great opportunity to show the West what Saudi and GCC women can achieve. Together we are strong and among other accomplishments, can control breast cancer," Al-Amoudi added.

Dr. Khaled Al- Saleh, secretary-general of the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control (GFCC), echoed Al-Amoudi's statements in a telephone interview. "Al-Amoudi's win is a major breakthrough for Gulf women and proof of the significant development of women in GCC societies."

Full report at:

<http://www.arabnews.com/another-feather-saudi-women%E2%80%99s-cap>

Swat's oldest girl's college reels from teacher shortage

By Fazal Khaliq

September 1, 2012

SWAT: The oldest degree college for girls in Saidu Sharif isn't exactly a hub of learning. Of the 40 teaching posts at the college, 16 have been lying vacant for many months now. Hundreds of girls have no option but to wait for these posts to be filled before they can start real studies.

“I got admission in FA only recently and there is so much stress as teachers for so many subjects have not been posted here yet. We haven’t taken any classes of Home Economics and Islamiyat,” a student requesting anonymity told The Express Tribune.

College sources say there are only 24 teachers on duty for more than 2,000 students. This has left the students with too much free time on their hands.

Shazia, an FSc student, said, “How are we supposed to study when there are no teachers for Physics or Islamiyat? Some well-off girls have arranged for private tuitions but most of us are poor and cannot afford the same luxury.”

Most people in Swat are reluctant to send their daughters to schools. Although the female literacy rate is encouraging up till secondary school certificate level, 80% of the girls quit school after that. The few who manage to take admission in colleges are left with limited options.

Full report at:

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/429312/swats-oldest-girls-college-reels-from-teacher-shortage/>

Child protection: If orphaned, abandoned or adopted, NADRA, Pakistan won’t register you
September 1, 2012

KARACHI: Father, husband or unknown are the only three choices a woman has if she wants to fill in a form for an adopted child’s registration in Pakistan.

The National Database Registration Authority (Nadra) has no column for ‘guardian’, which is what Ayesha Jalil learned when she went to its office to register the baby girl she had so lovingly adopted.

If Jalil could not name the father of the child or a husband, she had to write “na-maloom” (unknown). This raised the issue of single women who want to adopt.

Jalil took the matter to the Sindh High Court, which during the hearing raised the welfare of street children or orphans or those abandoned by their mothers.

The court was told that such children were the responsibility of the State and a law - the Sindh Orphanages Act - existed. It was later replaced by the Sindh Children Protection Authority Act on June 9, 2011.

The law gave the government 60 days to set up district-level units for children subjected to physical and physiological violence within 60 days. According to the act, the minister of social welfare was to be the chairman of the authority.

On Friday, the case was taken up by Chief Justice Mushir Alam and Justice Syed Muhammad Farooq Shah.

Full report at:

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/429295/child-protection-if-orphaned-abandoned-or-adopted-nadra-wont-register-you/>

Noor Jehan Murshid, or a power woman

Tazeen M. Murshid

September 1, 2012

Noor Jehan, born as Noor Jehan Beg in Taranagar, Murshidabad, on 22 May 1925, rose to become a political figure committed to the empowerment of women. She was an educationist, a social reformer, a media personality and deeply liberal and secular in her world view. This owes to the influence of the liberal tradition of the Bengal Renaissance reflected in her home environment, her schooling and a consequent confidence that she had a social and a political role to play in the years to come.

The fourth of seven daughters of Janab Ayub Hussain Beg and Bibi Khatimunnessa, she received her early schooling at home under the strict guidance of her father, chief of police, daroga, in Lalgola, Murshidabad, under the British Police Service. For her further schooling, her father defied social pressure to marry off his daughter at a young age, and instead sent her to Barisal to his brother Hosamuddin Beg, who was Principal of Broja Mohan College. She attended the school section of the college for two years and went on to finish her secondary education with a first division at Victoria Institution, Calcutta. Despite wanting to study medicine, she was enticed into studying history and politics at the same institution for her undergraduate degree. The discipline and culture of this institution steeped in the ideals of the Brahmo Samaj were to have a profound impact on the mentality of Noor, as she used to be called at the time. Her ideological moorings were eclectic, her style disciplined, but her manner was easygoing, always ready with a smile.

Subsequently, she obtained her Master's degree in history from Calcutta University, where she was taught Islamic History by Professor Habibullah, already renowned as a gold medalist in academic distinction. Alongside her studies, she became superintendent of Munnujan Hostel, which provided accommodation for female students. Simultaneously, she began to work as a broadcaster for All India Radio. Notably, she was the first Muslim woman to work for this establishment.

Full report at:

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=247867>

For women, it's a fight between being equal and complementary: Tunisia

By David Salter

August 31, 2012

TUNIS — On Aug. 6, Habiba Ghribi became the first Tunisian woman to win an Olympic medal, a silver in the 3,000-metre steeplechase.

But Ghribi's historic victory wasn't universally cheered. Her racing gear — briefs and a running top — stirred up controversy in Tunisia.

"Tunisia does not need medals that come from women who are uncovered and naked," said one man on Facebook. "We should strip the nationality of she who has dishonoured Tunisia with her nudity and debauchery."

Arguments over Ghribi's midriff are part of a larger battle in Tunisia over women's rights. Tunisia's 1956 constitution declared women equal, gave them the right to divorce and banned polygamy. It made Tunisia one of the most progressive states in the Arab world.

But last month, the ruling Islamist party Ennahda pushed through language calling women "complementary" to men during negotiations for Tunisia's draft constitution. More than 7,000 women protested that wording in a rally in the capital.

Full report at:

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/women+fight+between+being+equal+complementary/7175474>

Choti Azadi for Kashmiri Women

Raheela Saleem Narchoor

31 Aug 2012

The Kashmir issue is, essentially, my own story. During my stay outside Kashmir I, often reluctantly, have been involved with many conversations and discussions on Kashmir. Almost all people with whom I converse believe that Kashmiri women have no say about the region they

belong to. They have been ignored in taking active part in almost all discussions ranging from human rights violations to religion issues. "Why don't Kashmiri women speak about their experiences? Why are they silent?" There hasn't been a single day when I am not faced with questions like these.

As a native Kashmiri, I accept the criticism of those who look at Kashmir from the outside. But how can I make a simple point in a rabidly patriarchal debate? For instance, not a single male power-holder, like the leaders in the central government or the leaders in the state government or the leaders of the separatist parties or the male activists of all shades of opinion and ideologies or even the much discredited male symbol of the state--the uniformed security personnel--No ONE, No MALE--has ever asked a Kashmir woman this simple question: "What is your position/stand/opinion on self-determination?"

Unfortunately, this absence of women's voices prevails in most social, legal, political and religious discourses. In Kashmir women are considered uninterested in politics or because the gentleness of women's nature is presumed not to have a political opinion. Overall, women in Kashmir are considered less capable of taking part in the political game. All these ideas add up to distance and, indeed, exclude women from political discussions. Even the male political discourses uses "naturalistic" arguments derived from values and rules associated with the public and private sphere.

Full report at:

<http://kashmirwatch.com/opinions.php/2012/08/31/choti-azadi-for-kashmiri-women.html>

URL: <http://www.newageislam.com/islam,-women-and-feminism/by-new-age-islam-news-bureau/30-women-likely-to-be-on-saudi-shura-council/d/8513>

Link: <http://newageislam.com/30-women-likely-to-be-on-saudi-shura-council/islam,-women-and-feminism/d/8513>